Exploring Prayer through Pentecost and the Incarnation

An extract from a video interview with Rob McDonald. Watch in full on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/ridleyhallcambridge

“The presence of the Spirit with us doesn’t diminish who we are. It doesn’t take away from our humanity. And nor does it give us a sort of superpower gift, as if it turbocharges our natural capacities. The Spirit is God, and God is completely different, and completely other to anything in creation. So when we pray, we’re not becoming little Christian superheroes, but we are being fully human in the presence of a God who made us and loves us and who has a purpose and a calling for us in our lives. And so as we pray in the presence of God, there is that opportunity for God to fill us and take who we are, the fullness of who we are, and transform that and be present in it, in all our actions and our relationships and our words, so that like those first disciples at Pentecost, others might hear and see and know something of God’s truth in what we say and who we are.”

Top or click “subscribe” to be notified as we upload more videos over the summer.

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During this 2018–19 academic year we have sought to be a community defined by gratitude and expectancy.

We give thanks because the Spirit of God continues to guide and shape us, to provide for our needs and to move Ridley Hall towards His hopeful future. We are expectant because God is faithful and all our hope is set on Him both here at Ridley and in the churches and communities to which many of our students will be sent this summer.

In March a review team appointed by the Ministry Division conducted our six-yearly Periodic External Review (PER). At the beginning of April we received a very encouraging summary of the review team’s likely findings. Among other things the summary commended Ridley for the clarity of our formational aims, the sharing of formational space by ordinands and lay ministry students, our proactive approach to working with financial challenges, our creation of a safe space for learners to explore and grow in faith, our robust local partnerships and our hospitality to a diverse traditions. We give glory to God for such a positive report, which is the result of a great deal of prayer and much hard work by staff and students here at Ridley. The full report will be made public later this year and we trust that you will be encouraged by all that you read.

There is so much to be hopeful about here at Ridley as we seek to prepare people to share the gospel of Jesus Christ as lay and ordained ministers. Please continue to pray for us and remember that you are welcome to visit us and witness for yourself all that God is doing here.

REVD DR MICHAEL VOLLAND
Principal
Church activities: ‘Social capital’ or something else?

In an article just published, Dr Sarah Dunlop explores the true nature of social engagement within churches.

Social capital is a concept used by social scientists to describe connections among individual people that foster relational networks and reciprocity. In the UK there is widespread concern about a lack of social cohesion in communities, particularly within, but not exclusive to, urban areas. There can be a temptation among church leaders to promote the Church as a force within society that promotes cohesion and creates social networks, as a means of legitimising the ecclesial presence with a community.

As part of a three-year empirical study of the theologies and practices surrounding social engagement activities of two large Anglican churches in London, I sought to discover whether creating social capital was a priority for these ministries, and whether they were successful. I found that indeed churches worked very hard to create relational networks, not only through refreshments between Sunday services and mid-week fellowship groups, but also through a diverse range of social engagement activities, including toddler and baby groups, addictions ministries, homeless feeding ministries, to name just a few.

However, it became clear that the concept of “social capital” falls far short of the relational dynamics at play in these cases. I did not observe a desire to accumulate relationships in order to improve social standing. Instead, if anything, people were relinquishing social capital by spending time with vulnerable people.

The people I interviewed spoke about how it was an encounter with the love of God that caused them to want to show love to others. One person said, “God’s grace makes us generous”. Social capital may describe some aspects of what is at play in these ecclesial settings, but it falls short because the relationships were rooted in the belief that all people are made in the image of God.

I conclude that it is important for us to resist the impulse to volunteer the church as a site for fulfilling policy purposes, and instead focus on living out a vocation to be the family of God. This notion of family was far more of a prevalent conception of the relational networks within the church than the instrumentalist theory of social capital. Furthermore, it’s biblical and altogether more human.

Dr Sarah Dunlop
Director of Pastoral Studies


Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits
Psalm 103:1

Motivation for Monday

Follow Ridley on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook for daily community snapshots, news and a weekly dose of #MondayMotivation!
Ministry at Beachy Head

My time spent as a volunteer with the Beachy Head Chaplaincy Team was a valuable insight into the challenges and joys of a mission-focused, Christ-centred organisation.

Beachy Head is an infamous suicide spot and in 2004 the charity of the Beachy Head Chaplaincy Team was formed in response to a Christian vision to help those who come to end their lives by suicide. BHCT is, first and foremost, an intervention, search and rescue service and secondly, BHCT chaplains aim to offer the gospel, where appropriate, to those they meet in the course of their work. They are run by a Director and a Head Chaplain who are accompanied by twenty-three volunteer chaplains, from a wide variety of Christian denominations and traditions. And the task they face is staggering. There are roughly 520 incidents per year and people come from all over the world to end their lives from the various jump points, making Beachy Head one of the premier suicide spots in the world.

Such is their success in providing 24/7 coverage with foot and car patrols with night vision equipment, that they have become the first emergency response for crisis rescue and intervention and are supported by the police, coastguard and medical services. The other rescue services realise and value the expertise offered by the chaplains. Hospitals and medical facilities are also aware of the unique experience and understanding these chaplains have developed and they are regularly invited to teach medical students and doctors about suicide and its associated issues.

At the heart of their work is an ongoing spiritual battle calling for the chaplains to bring light where there is darkness, life where there is death. Whilst still the primary intervention and rescue service, the team also spend time praying on the headland in an effort to win back the area for God. They have a clear vision to pray for the suicidal to come to Beachy Head so that they can be engaged by the BHCT chaplains and saved. This is a phenomenal and profound paradox which requires great courage and faith from the chaplains called to offer that message. Everyone who is brought back from the edge is offered immediate counselling and often the gospel is shared in the hope that lives are saved in a way that lasts. Stories of conversions, church attendance, baptisms and new life are abundant amongst those who have met the faithful chaplains who patrol this area.

BHCT would greatly value your prayers and support. Visit www.bhct.org.uk for more information.

NEILL STANNARD
Final Year Ordinand
Mission on the edges

Ridley Lay Ministry graduate Fiona Roberts speaks about her calling to support victims of sex trafficking.

I graduated from Ridley with a real heart for those on the edges of our society. Even though I had specialised in training for youth ministry and I continue to highly value this ministry, through my experiences and studies on the course, God clarified something that I now realise had always been there—a calling to work with vulnerable women of all ages, and in particular those who were or had been victims of sex trafficking. Accordingly, in 2018, I launched theMOVEMENT.

theMOVEMENT is a social enterprise that offers free fitness to vulnerable women, funded by paying Personal Training clients. We partner with a number of charities and offer a range of services, from group classes in women’s refuges to 1to1 Personal Training within a charity drop-in. Although we have only been running for a short time, we are already seeing the benefits of the work we are doing, with women growing in confidence and getting moving.

It is amazing to have moments of breakthrough, being able to get alongside women, walk with them and spend time dedicated to them in a safe and supportive environment. So often women arrive at the sessions weighed down by life but leave in a completely transformed mood, having had that moment of fun, fitness and freedom. A woman just today commented that the session was the most positive thing she had done in years. This is mission on the edges: partnering with God the Holy Spirit so others may experience the truly transformative reality of God’s love.

FIONA ROBERTS (Ry. 2014–17)
Founder and Director, theMOVEMENT

“So often women arrive at the sessions weighed down by life but leave in a completely transformed mood”
EMBER LIST 2019

With this pullout centrefold we invite you to pray for this year’s leavers, and their families, as they prepare for their future ministries, lay and ordained.

ALANNA & JOSH HARRIS; TALITHA
Formerly: Head of Events at Tearfund
Curacy: St George-in-the-East, Shadwell (London)

After three wonderful years, we leave with much gratitude for the Ridley community and all the ways we have been inspired, challenged and nurtured here. It has been a precious time of growing in faith and discovering more of Jesus’ call on our lives. We are excited for the next chapter in East London!

AMANDA JACKSON
RLM Specialism: Youth Ministry
Having worked with the young people at the Salvation Army for the last few years I am eager to see where else this degree might take me. I am looking forward to exploring what God might have in store for me outside of the church.

ANDREW APPIAH
Formerly: IT Services Coordinator
Curacy: Holy Trinity, Barkingside (Chelmsford)

The privilege of training at Ridley Hall has opened my eyes to see the embarrassment of riches deposited in humanity through the ages in tradition, scripture, reason and experience. It has been an absolute joy to share life with some of the best minds on earth. In all, I have been dazzled by the unconditional love of God and excited about sharing that love with all people.

ANNA PILE
RLM Specialism: Children & Families
At times the three years at Ridley felt like a rollercoaster ride, juggling block study weeks with the placement, work and family. Looking back I am filled with gratitude for the learning experience, friendships and the whole Ridley community. Studying and worshipping at Ridley has equipped me for the chosen path of children’s and family ministry.

BEN & ELISE EVANS
Formerly: Team Leader, Student Life Nottingham Agapé Ministries
Curacy: St Mary’s Church, Radcliffe-on-Trent (Nottingham)

Cambridge is a beautiful city to live and study in. Our time at Ridley has been at times joyful and at times challenging, but I leave confident that God was faithful to his promises and used it all for our formation and preparation. I am grateful for my time here.

CAROLYNE POWELL
Formerly: Ministry Co-Ordinator at Saint Michael’s Paris
Curacy: Saint George’s Coundon (Coventry)

I came to be formed, I leave transformed! I am immensely grateful for the privilege I had to train residentially at Ridley, for the community of love and prayer (and cake?) I experienced, and for new lifelong friendships. I will miss everyone and everything from my time here but am very excited to be joining in God’s work in Coventry.

CHARLOTTE JACKSON
Formerly: Sustainability Manager, Marks & Spencer
Curacy: St John the Divine, Willenhall (Coventry)

The best thing about Ridley is the people. The community here has been wonderful and created a great atmosphere in which to learn, grow and make firm friends. I am excited about the road ahead, to see what God will do in me next among the people of Willenhall.

CHRIS & REBECA BALDING; THEO & ZIPPORAH
Formerly: Student Pastor
Curacy: St Edmund’s in Roundhay (Leeds)

I’ve had a wonderful time here at Ridley; its been such a restful season to read the bible, play croquet, write essays and have two children.

CLAIRe WILKINSON
Formerly: Special Needs Teacher
Curacy: St Peter and St Paul, Wisbech (Ely)

Ridley has given me an amazing opportunity to try new things and spend time learning more about God and myself! It has been a huge blessing to get to know so many amazing people and fills me with hope for the Church of England. I am looking forward to seeing what comes next!

CLARE & STEPHEN GYE COATES; HARRY, BOBBY & MARY
Formerly: Children’s and Families Worker at St Mark’s, Newnham
Curacy: St Andrew’s, Stapleford (Ely)
Ridley is a great community with lots of wonderful people and with a very strong spiritual foundation and I have made some very good friends here. It has been a unique and unforgettable experience! I am leaving Ridley with a huge sense of excitement for what God is calling me on to!

**DANIEL MILES**  
Formerly: Primary School Teacher  
Curacy: Erringden Benefice (Leeds)  
Ridley has been one of the best experiences I could have asked for. I have learned a lot about myself and God. I am really thankful to God for putting a wonderful community around me and pray that it continues beyond here.

**DANIEL WALKER**  
Formerly: Theology Student  
Next: Student Minister in London  
Ridley has been a loving and faithful community in which I was given space to grow in my spirituality and identity in Christ. All through my time here I was surrounded by both prayer and wise direction that have equipped me immensely for the next step in store.

**DAVE & WEIWEI COSSEY; ABIGAIL**  
Formerly: Youth worker  
Curacy: Dersingham (Norwich)  
I’ve appreciated the incredible array of resources available; every book you could ever need is close by and easy to get hold of. It’s been a privilege to be part of a committed community which shares a oneness of purpose to the calling that God has placed on all of our lives.

**EMILY WRIGHT**  
RLM Specialism: Youth Ministry  
After working with my home church for the three years of my degree I am now flying the nest to continue my search for my calling, I have good faith that I am close to what God has in store for me and I believe its bigger than my wildest dreams, I just have to keep pushing further.

**EMMA MANNING**  
RLM Specialism: Youth Ministry  
Over the last three years I have run the youth work at the Church of the Good Shepherd. My experience with RLM has grown and stretched my theological thinking and work practice. I hope to take all my experience and development from the last three years to my new role in Hexetable, where I have accepted a postgraduate children’s and youth mission leader role.

**HEATHER MARTIN**  
RLM Specialism: Youth Ministry  
At the moment, I plan to continue my adventures in Bishop Stortford, working part-time as a teaching assistant while working part-time at the Baptist Church, to further develop their youth ministry and build up links elsewhere before possibly moving on and discerning where the Lord might be calling me to next. It’s been a real blessing and three of the hardest but best years of my life!

**HELEN RICKARDS**  
RLM Specialism: Youth Ministry  
Over the three years I have spent my time in a charity placement, doing different projects in the community. During that time I have learnt to be more reflective and gain deeper knowledge and skills.

**JACQUI PEARSON**  
Formerly: Environmental Education  
Curacy: St Francis Community Church, Beaulieu Park (Chelmsford)  
I am very thankful for my three years at Ridley. I have learnt much about God, about the Anglican church, and about myself. It has been a real privilege and a joy to train here; to spend time in study, in prayer, and in fellowship — all with good friends (plus plenty of tea and cake!)

**JANINE ARNOTT**  
Formerly: Researcher  
Curacy: St George’s and St Gabriel’s, Stockport (Manchester)  
Studying and training residentially full time at Ridley has been a real blessing, I’ve journeyed with some amazing people and made lifelong friends. I’m now looking forward to my curacy and all that God has in store for Stockport.

**JESS BEAUMONT**  
RLM Specialism: Youth Ministry  
My time at Ridley has inspired and challenged me, broadened both my knowledge and my perspectives and prepared me for some of the real, raw and tough parts of life and ministry. I am so excited to discover what God has in store as I continue in ministry in the local church with increased faith, passion and longing for transformation in my community and in this nation.

**JO BARR**  
Formerly: Biology Student  
Curacy: St Mary’s, Berrow and St Bridget’s, Brean (Bath & Wells)  
God has blessed me through Ridley in
so many ways — living and training in such a beautiful place, and sharing this experience with people who have come to be very dear to me. To quote a Swedish diplomat (whose name I can’t spell): “For all that has been — thanks. To all that shall be — yes!”

**JORDAN SPENCER**  
**RLM Specialism:** Youth Ministry  
Whilst studying at Ridley Hall, I have served as a Youth Minister within the Church in Wales. I leave Ridley this year to train for Holy Orders within the Church in Wales. I’ve had an amazing time and look forward to seeing what God has in store.

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**JOSH & ALANNA HARRIS; TALITHA**  
**Formerly:** Civil servant  
**Curacy:** St George-in-the-East, Shadwell (London)  
We’ve had a wonderful time here growing in faith, in knowledge, in family size, and in love with Jesus and his Church. I’ve loved being part of Ridley Hall and our Cambridge church, St Philip’s, and will miss life here a lot — but I’m also excited to join in with what God is doing in east London.

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**JOSHUA BROCKLESBY**  
**Formerly:** Advertising Account Manager  
**Curacy:** St Mary’s Watford (St Albans)  
Studying at Ridley, Cambridge and Yale have been great experiences in my three years as an ordinand. The opportunity to study at two great divinity faculties along with the learning and growth in community at Ridley have meant I am extremely excited about going into curacy. I leave very grateful for my time here and excited for the future!

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**JOSHUA LA PAGE**  
**RLM Specialism:** Youth Ministry  
These three years at Ridley have been amazing. I have learnt so much, getting to explore my faith and youth work with people of all different experience than mine. I plan on staying at my church in Chafford Hundred doing both schools and church youth work, continuing to grow and develop, putting what I have learnt into practice.

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**LIZZIE & BEN OSBOURNE; ELEANOR**  
**Formerly:** Youth and Children’s Worker  
**Curacy:** St Luke’s Kentish Town (London)  
I have really enjoyed my time at Ridley, I have made some excellent friends and my faith has been stretched and deepened. I leave excited for what God is going to do in and through us in Kentish Town.

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**LLOYD & EMILY DAVIS**  
**Formerly:** Hospital school teacher  
**Curacy:** Huntingdon Town Centre (Ely)  
I have really enjoyed being a part of the prayerful Ridley community. After two years learning new things and honing my skills here, Emily and I am thrilled to be moving on to the next stage in our ministry with our two mission-focussed cats Anselm and Alphege!

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**MICHAEL HEPWORTH**  
**RLM Specialism:** Youth Ministry  
Over the last three years I have been in East London, supporting young people both inside and outside of church, also helping the church to direct its focus to serve the outside community. Having seen the church do this beyond expectation, I hope to continue supporting and facilitating this missional growth.

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**NEILL & KIRSTY STANNARD; BEN, GRACE & HOPE**  
**Formerly:** Schoolmaster  
**Curacy:** St Matthew’s (Worthing)  
My time at Ridley has been an incredibly immersive experience during which I have learnt an enormous amount, made some great friends and enjoyed an amazing closeness with God. I am leaving Ridley with a sense of excitement and anticipation for all that God has in store for me and my family in this next part of our walk with him.

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**NICOLA ROBSON**  
**RLM Specialism:** Children & Families  
During my time at Ridley I’ve learnt so much, not only from the lectures but from the people I’ve had the pleasure of interacting with along the way. I hope to continue this learning in whatever I do and trust that God will lead me in my next steps following this degree.

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**OLGA & SIMEON FABRIKANT-BURKE;**  
**Formerly:** Software Engineer  
My six years at Ridley Hall have been instrumental in shaping my dual vocation as a priest and a biblical scholar. Above all, as my time at Ridley comes to an end, I take with me a passion for thoughtful discipleship and a commitment to serious lifelong study.
**RUTH NEW**  
**RLM Specialism:** Children & Families  
Having made the change from working in the commercial and corporate world to working for the Church in lay ministry, the course has given me the opportunity to unpack and put my faith back together, to deepen my own understanding and to further explore how to use my gifts and skills. It has helped me to develop as a person as I continue my journey into ministry and build confidence in working as a missioner with children and families.

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**PATRICK & EMMA-JANE**  
**KELLEHER; IMOGEN & WILLIAM**  
**Formerly:** UK Sales Manager  
**Curacy:** Church of Christ the King, Kettering (Peterborough)  
It’s been a wonderful gift to be able to study here at Ridley. The opportunity to learn not just through theology but also from others as we seek to discern God’s will individually and as a community. Ridley has been an essential part of my formation giving space to “disagree well” with those from different traditions.

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**RICHARD & KAYLEIGH**  
**MAGRATH**  
**Formerly:** Paralegal  
**Curacy:** St Mary-at-Finchley (London)  
I have had a lovely time at Ridley; it seems to me a prayerful and inspiring community seeking to live, by grace, in the light of the gospel. Though my title post is more catholic and traditional in manner, I will never forget all I have learned and experienced here.

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**TRACY COLEMAN**  
**RLM Specialism:** Youth Ministry  
The last three years I have embedded myself in different youth work experiences and contexts. As I complete my course I am excited to step into the vocation that the Lord has called me into. Loving Jesus, Creating Community & Having Fun!

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**SUSAN & PHILLIP ALLISON; THOMAS & PHILLIPPA**  
**Formerly:** Administrator  
**Curacy:** All Saints Newmarket (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich)  
Ridley has been a gift from God to me every day and one I never thought I would have the opportunity to receive. The community as whole has made this a very memorable time and I have learnt so much about my faith and God’s provision.

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**PHILLIP & LOUISE**  
**YOUNG; TEDDY**  
**Formerly:** Finance (in the City)  
**Curacy:** St Mary’s, Wootton (St Albans)  
I have really enjoyed the opportunity to deepen my understanding of God’s Word and to engage in practical opportunities in mission and evangelism with a lively peer group. We are looking forward to sharing the Gospel and our lives with the people of Wootton.

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**SOPHIE & JON YOUNG; IZZY, MADDIE & GEORGE**  
**Formerly:** Operations Manager  
**Curacy:** St Paul’s Cambridge (Ely)  
We have loved life at Ridley, it’s been an absolute privilege and a huge blessing to us all! Having made lifelong friends and wonderful memories, we look forward with expectation and excitement to the next stage of the journey. We’re really looking forward to settling in at St Paul’s on Hills Road, seeing what adventure is in store there, and delighted not to be going too far from Ridley so we can pop back and visit!

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**PHILLIP & EMMA-JANE**  
**KELLEHER; IMOGEN & WILLIAM**  
**Formerly:** UK Sales Manager  
**Curacy:** Church of Christ the King, Kettering (Peterborough)  
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**REBECCA JOSEPH**  
**RLM Specialism:** Children & Families  
God has a habit of calling the unlikely. As a mum of four who hadn’t written much more than a shopping list in twenty years and was more familiar with Peppa Pig storylines than Christian doctrine, I guess I’m another one to add to that list! Ridley has turned out to be the most challenging yet rewarding three years of my life. I leave full of gratitude and with a deeper appreciation of God’s faithfulness.

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**STEVE & SARAH**  
**OPIE**  
**Formerly:** Civil Servant  
**Curacy:** St Mary’s, Loughton (Chelmsford)  
It has been such a joy and privilege to be part of the Ridley community these last three years. I am incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to train alongside people of great faith, profound wisdom and deep love. Looking back at God’s faithfulness during our time here gives us the confidence to look forward with excitement and expectation.

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**PATRICK & EMMA-JANE**  
**KELLEHER; IMOGEN & WILLIAM**  
**Formerly:** UK Sales Manager  
**Curacy:** Church of Christ the King, Kettering (Peterborough)  
It’s been a wonderful gift to be able to study here at Ridley. The opportunity to learn not just through theology but also from others as we seek to discern God’s will individually and as a community. Ridley has been an essential part of my formation giving space to “disagree well” with those from different traditions.

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**TRACY COLEMAN**  
**RLM Specialism:** Youth Ministry  
The last three years I have embedded myself in different youth work experiences and contexts. As I complete my course I am excited to step into the vocation that the Lord has called me into. Loving Jesus, Creating Community & Having Fun!
The role of theological education in the discernment process

Supporting others in their calling is one of the most profound roles we have. But listening to the tentative reconstruction of short or long-held certainties about life, identity and purpose can also be one of the most daunting. Callings come in all shapes and sizes. But whether the calling promotes a gradual re-imagining of current realities, or a complete change in one’s circumstance, it will always alter the course of those who are called. It is this awareness, and the subsequent realisation that this new path will throw up challenges and truths that otherwise would not have to be, that rightly produces a deep sense of responsibility in those supporting others in this period of discernment.

Theological education plays a particular part in this process. Not only are we charged by the Church to ensure that those training with us are prepared and ready to enter a new phase of their vocation, but we also play a key part in the discernment journey itself. This is not education for education’s sake! Our culture tells us that we must strive and excel at our education in order to… be happy? But we are reminded that the first call on our life is to trust God, step out, and tentatively seek to follow the path we discern God desires for us. Happiness for us is found in such a trust. A trust rooted in faithfulness, hope, and of course, love — God’s faithfulness to God’s nature as a secure and abundantly loving God, and our hope in the promise of God’s rule manifesting God’s nature on earth as it is fully realised in Heaven.

Calling from this perspective is not about getting it right, or about being certain. Calling from this perspective is about learning to trust in a God we are still learning about, and it is in this way that theological education has a particular part to play in the process. Theological education provides an opportunity to explore one’s calling within a unique learning space called a degree. In our society there are few other moments when we are given permission and time to focus our energies on deepening our understanding and knowledge of a particular topic. Let alone deepening our understanding and knowledge of God. So whether you are exploring your calling or supporting someone else to do so, never underestimate the role ministerial training at a theological college can play — not as something to endure on the way, but as part of the process itself.

ROBIN BARDEN
Dean of Ridley Lay Ministry

ROUN DAY 2020

We are delighted to announce that next year’s C. F. D. Moule Memorial Lecture, which will be held on Wednesday 3rd June, will be delivered by The Rt Hon & Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London.
I WONDER WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORDS “TODDLER GROUP”.

For some of you it may conjure up happy memories of a supportive place where you’ve made a much-needed cup of tea and offered a listening ear, or been on the receiving end of one. A place where toddlers have run off energy and where you’ve made friends, still in your life, despite your toddlers now being teenagers sitting their GCSEs. For others of you it’s not a familiar or comfortable place. In fact, it feels quiet alien and not a place you have needed to visit or have felt you had the gifting or time or energy to be involved with.

Whatever your experience there is no denying the fact that toddler groups are one of the most significant and supportive ways that churches can reach out to young families in their communities. It is estimated that half of all 0–3yr olds currently attend a church run toddler group. That’s a lot of families!

Reduced funding to local authorities has resulted in the closure of many children’s centres and family support services, leaving many families struggling, overwhelmed and isolated — now more than ever is the time for the Church to respond to those families in their communities who need connection, support and the transformative love of God in their lives.

The Church of England recently published an excellent resource, It’s Just the Toddler Group, based on a presentation by Mary Hawes, National Children and Youth Adviser. It highlights the huge missional opportunities toddler groups bring to the Church and challenges those in leadership to view these groups as an integral part of the Church’s strategy and vision. If you have a “toddler group” running at your church perhaps take some time to ask yourself these questions — do I take an active interest and view it as a significant part of the church community? How do we as a Church support those who run it? Do I know what goes on and how local people really feel about the group? Are we using the opportunity to be distinctively Christian in our approach?

If your toddler group has been running for years or you’re thinking of setting one up, look to engage the whole church in recognising what a fantastic opportunity toddler groups offer to love and serve, nurture faith journeys and seek transformation of lives across the whole community.

RACHEL BENNETT
Tutor in Children’s and Family Ministry

It’s Just the Toddler Group is a free booklet conceived and designed by Chris Priddy and Dan Jones in the Diocese of Bristol, based on a presentation by Mary Hawes, National Children and Youth Adviser for the Church of England. You can download it from: www.going4growth.com/downloads/Toddler_Booklet.pdf
TOP TIPS FOR LOCAL RADIO

BILL SHAW has a Postgraduate Diploma in Radio Journalism and teaches journalism at Harlow College. He has previously worked as a reporter for BBC and independent local radio and the BBC World Service.

A good way to think about the media is as a Twenty-First Century ‘Areopagus’; and, just as Paul accepted the invitation to speak at the Areopagus of his time (Acts 17: 19–34), we should take advantage of opportunities to engage with our local media.

So, if you’re being interviewed on student, community or local radio, it’s worth checking:

• if the interview will be live or recorded
• roughly how long it will be
• whether any other people will be taking part (or will you be part of a phone-in programme?)
• the areas the interview will cover.

If you’re asked to go into the studio, please do so, rather than doing the interview over the phone; the quality of the interview will be much better; you will have a much better rapport with the presenter/journalist; and it will be a good way of building contacts for the future. Swap business cards!

Talk to your press office before the interview—they should give you some “key messages” and guidance for your interview.

You will be nervous! So:

• please be aware you will be nervous
• arrive early
• relax during the interview; just get your main points across
• be aware that nerves can mean you talk too much! Keep your answers concise, and be guided by the interviewer
• enjoy yourself!

Please do engage with your local media—it’s a great way to communicate with local people, and can be an important part of our Mission.

Building the foundations

The Prayer Weekend for me was the starting point of me feeling like Ridley would be not just a place where I had to be, but my home and community that I would enjoy and thrive in over the next three years.

It was a perfect mix of time to worship and pray, time to be by myself and reflect, time to stop and breath, time to cement friendships — talking late into the night.

The first term at Ridley is a whirlwind of finding your feet, getting to know new people, telling people again and again which diocese you come from, what you did before Ridley, what course you’re on, it is exhausting!

To have space at the beginning of the second term, to get away with the people you are going to be with for the next three years, reminded me of my commitment to journey with this group when it is easy and when it is not. It created space to move conversation and friendship from general chitchat to deep and meaningful conversation. I discovered at the Prayer Weekend that Ridley was going to be a place where I was challenged and supported, where I could laugh and cry, where I would change my own opinions and those of people who are with me through the journey of formation.

The Prayer Weekend is, in my view, essential in building the foundation of community for the time that we are going to be at Ridley, and I am so thankful for it.

LOTTIE JONES
First Year Ordinand
Mixed-Economy Mission

In contexts marked by deprivation and decline, how can dioceses or deaneries turn around the prevailing narrative that churches do not grow?

This case study examines how a creative reimagining of church organisation, local collaboration and vision has led to regrowth and missional vigour in formerly worn out and isolated congregations. It argues that a mixed-economy approach to ministry can nurture diverse and healthy ecosystems, as traditional forms of church are pruned and revitalised, and new expressions take root and grow.

*Mixed-economy Mission: Collaborative Ministry for Multi-church Growth* is booklet no. 126 in the Grove Mission & Evangelism Series and is written by the Anna Brooker (Ry. 2001–03) and Andrew Dunlop (Tutor for Context-Based Training and Pioneering).

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**Going upstream in mental health care**

A recent study showed that 75% of all mental health problems are established by the age of 24, and whilst 23% of NHS activity is taken up by mental illness, mental health trusts are only receiving 11% of the funding.

Furthermore, only 35% of that funding goes to services focused on young people, despite the amount of young people experiencing mental health complications. This just isn’t good enough.

We need to be going upstream — as Archbishop Desmond Tutu famously said — to the very root. I believe as Christian ministers, one way we can do this is to build and strengthen communities. Community is being present for others. It’s looking at someone and saying “I see you” and having them look back at you and say, “I see you.” Community is showing up for people, rooting for them, and allowing them to show up and root for you too. Because when we do that, that’s when you have people who feel accepted and worthy of love and belonging. That’s when you have people who feel able to be vulnerable in front of others. That’s when the “mental health conversation” becomes more open and reaches those struggling in silence. That’s when stigma shifts and you have a society who knows they are not alone, that their stories are valid and deserving of hope.

*“We need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream to find out why they’re falling in”* — Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Whilst I believe that mental health should receive more government funding, it would be naïve to assume this to be the “magic solution”. Even if services were more available and with better resources, would people really use them when there is so much stigma surrounding mental health? Would young people really seek help and admit that they’re struggling when mental health problems are treated as something to be afraid of and ashamed of?

That’s when you have people who feel able to be vulnerable in front of others. That’s when the “mental health conversation” becomes more open and reaches those struggling in silence. That’s when stigma shifts and you have a society who knows they are not alone, that their stories are valid and deserving of hope.

**Alice Heeseltine**

Second Year Lay Ministry Student
Getting the Word Out

Recent and forthcoming publications from Ridley staff, students and alumni

MISSION & EVANGELISM

The Word’s Out: Principles and Strategies for Effective Evangelism by Paul Weston and David Male (Abingdon: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2019)


BIBLICAL STUDIES

What Would Jesus Post? A biblical approach to online interaction by David Robertson (Abingdon: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2018)

“Paul and Jesus” by Michael B. Thompson in The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies, available online at www.oxfordhandbooks.com (2019); forthcoming in print

SPIRITUALITY


“Future Present Contemplative” by Ian Adams in Future Present (Proost, 2018)

THE CHURCH FATHERS


CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

“In Praise of Pentecost: The gift of tongues and the practice of theology” by Rob McDonald (paper for Theology Seminar, University of Otago, April 2019)

LEADERSHIP

The Orchard: A story of working together for a hopeful future by Michael Volland (Cambridge: Ridley Hall, 2019)

THE ARTS


On the Road

A snapshot of some of the past year’s speaking engagements by Ridley staff

GAIL ADAMS co-led with Ian Adams Beloved Life “Breathe Deep” retreats in the summer of 2018 at Tremorran, Ammerdown, Lee Abbey and Scargill.

IAN ADAMS contributed to the Hull Advent Calendar project and performed the Temenos poems series at Whirlow Spirituality Centre in Sheffiled. This Spring he led the CMS staff retreat in Oxford and performed poems from his book Unfurling at St Bene’t’s in Cambridge.

ANDREW DUNLOP gave a talk on “What is success in pioneer ministry?” at the New Housing Hub Conference for Pioneers.

SARAH DUNLOP delivered a paper at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting entitled “The Future of Practical Theology”.

ROB MCDONALD spoke on the Holy Spirit at Leadership College London in October, and gave a series of talks to the Community of Anselm in Lambeth Palace on “How we do Theology”.

CHRIS PEMBERTON spoke in Switzerland for a week of prayer for Christian unity. He also lectured at Westminster Theological Centre on spiritual formation and 18th-century British Revivals, and gave a series of lectures at the Leadership Academy, Cambridge.

MIKE THOMPSON spoke in July at St Saviour’s Church in Brockenhurst on “Why we can trust the New Testament”. He also preached at Magdalene College Chapel in Cambridge and addressed the Christian Graduate Society of Cambridge University on “Leading Bible Study” and “The Authority of the Bible”.

PAUL WESTON delivered a lecture on “Jesus and Evangelism” at a Pastors’ Conference in San Francisco. He has also preached regularly and led an evangelistic evening on “The Hunt for Truth?” at Christ Church Chilwell. He recently led a Research Seminar at London School of Theology, and delivered a paper on David Bosch & Lesslie Newbigin at Research Consultation at Stellenbosch, South Africa.

MICHAEL VOLLAND preached at the May graduation of the first cohort of students from Ridley’s London teaching centre at St Andrew’s, Enfield and at General Theological Seminary, New York on the parable of the treasure hidden in the field.
Rumours of Transcendence

In this abridged version of the closing chapter of his recent book *Redeeming Transcendence*, former Ridley tutor and alumnus Jeremy Begbie encourages us to consider how “rumours of transcendence” can be prevented from turning into “empty gossip”.

There are few places in the world as dazzlingly attractive as Vancouver on a cloud-free day in August. Snow-topped mountains encircle an ocean-carved landscape of forests, glistening waterways, and tan-beige beaches. It was on just such a day that a painter came to see me. He had been attending a class I was teaching on theology and the arts at Regent College. He claimed no particular religious belief. He told me he had been walking home the previous — equally dazzling — day. He was unexpectedly gripped by the thought “that none of this had to be; that everything I was gawping at didn’t have to exist, and didn’t have to exist in this form”. He wanted to know what the Christian faith might have to say about this.

For him, the fact that there is something and not nothing had suddenly turned from being an unremarkable fact into a compelling challenge. He was starting to ask: could there be a reality we can’t explain in terms of this world but which explains why there is a world in the first place? Moreover, he told me that being a painter was key to this sudden intuition. As a painter he found himself taking nothing for granted, seeing the world as never just “there”, but as a kind of gift. It was one of the most illuminating conversations I have ever had. I began to speak of the Christian belief that this world is not just “there” as a brute fact, but the outcome of a gratuitous love that belongs to the very heart of its Creator. In turn, he began to say more about his work as an artist, in a way that made me think much more deeply about what it means to call God the Creator.

These days, there is much talk of transcendence in connection with the arts. The arts seem to offer experiences that gesture toward something that exceeds what we can know and tell here and now. Of course, care is needed. The temptation is to affirm every intuition of transcendence that comes along, and simply give it a Christian gloss. Rumours of transcendence can turn into empty gossip. But if we constantly take our cue from what God has shown himself to be in Christ, then we will find that the arts can help us re-think — and re-experience — divine transcendence in surprisingly fresh ways.

**REVD PROFESSOR JEREMY BEGBIE (Ry. 1980–82)**
Thomas A. Langford Distinguished Professor,
Duke Divinity School, Duke University
Director, Duke Initiatives in Theology and the Arts

This article was abridged from *Redeeming Transcendence: Bearing Witness to the Triune God* (London: SCM, 2018), pp.183–186. Used by permission.