The paradox is that although RE is among the most popular subjects with students, there is a crisis in the supply of suitably qualified RE teachers.

Aiming to answer that, a new RE teacher recruitment campaign, ‘Beyond the Ordinary,’ launches this week. It is helping to find individuals who have the drive, interest and personality to teach one of the most diverse, questioning and relevant subjects in schools today.

The campaign is set against the backdrop of newly re-instated government financial incentives to cover training costs, ranging from £9,000 for a candidate with a first or PhD to £4,000 for a 2:1.

There are places for around 800 trainee RE teachers this year. RE teachers come from all walks of life, from post-graduates with relevant degrees to those changing careers to teaching a looking for something a bit different.

To launch, a short film (www.teachre.co.uk/beyondtheordinary) shows the energy, fulfillment and challenge of teaching RE. Students from St Mary’s CE High School in Cheshunt are the face of the new campaign, including on the website and in flyers.

The film looks through the eyes of Lynsey Wilkinson, Head of RE at Redhill Academy near Nottingham and her students. It shows how RE helps young people make sense of the world around them. The short film gives the teacher’s view on a subject, where the answers are rarely straightforward and sometimes raise more questions.

‘Beyond the Ordinary’ is a Religious Education Council initiative. Key partners involved in the project include the National Association of Teachers of RE, the Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education and Culham St Gabriel’s Trust.

RE is unique as it has such an established and supportive community of networks, links and partnerships.

If you know someone who would make a great RE teacher, please visit: www.teachre.co.uk/beyondtheordinary
An Attitude of Gratitude

Now that both my parents are in residential care I have responsibility for their finances. This includes their monthly giving to the church where they have worshipped most of their lives. Reviewing this recently I noticed that unlike the parishes where I served there was no tradition of an annual letter of thanks for the standing order. Now, of course, Christian giving starts with our response to the generosity of God. We give in response to the wonderful God who first loves us. It isn’t predicated on whether the local congregation sends a thank you note! And yet for me this was always part of that culture of thanksgiving – that attitude of gratitude – in which generosity flourishes.

Last year Parish Share (parishes’ contribution to ministry and mission across the Diocese, especially the cost of the local vicar) rose by almost £300,000 from the previous year. Even more significantly the percentage paid against what was asked for rose as well. This represents much generous and often sacrificial giving. THANK YOU for the committed discipleship this represents and the mutual flourishing it enables.

Having said that, and not devaluing that thankfulness, we must ask whether there is more that is needed to foster that attitude of gratitude. It is challenging to be reminded year on year that in relation to the rest of the Church of England St Albans is firmly below average when it comes to our giving against average incomes in each Diocese. It is even more humbling to know that some of the Dioceses with significant communities of deprivation such as Birmingham and Sheffield (where I worked for fifteen years) have giving that is twice our level.

Even more challenging is the recent report Even It Up – Time to end extreme poverty published by Oxfam which highlights the ever-growing inequality in our world. By 2016 it is estimated that the top 1% will own more than 50% of the total wealth of the world; a growing inequality that hinders poverty reduction and drives further inequalities in health, education and life chances. In the UK the top 1% own even more – 55% of the total wealth. The Office for National Statistics calculates that wealth in the South East has been increasing five times as fast as in the whole country.

What is sobering is that the Credit Suisse Global Wealth report calculates that 2.9 million people in this country are in that top 1% and 30 million are in the top 10% of wealth owners. In other words most of us in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire are among the wealthiest in the world. I’m not saying by any means that many of us would call ourselves wealthy, but others would.

There is much to give thanks for! Do we have the attitude of gratitude to match? An attitude of gratitude that permeates all our lives together – even those small but important letters of thanks!

bishopbedford@stalbans.anglican.org

See David Nye’s article with more about money and thanks from him too. Ed
2014 was not just a year when we celebrated the centenary of the reshaping of the diocese of St Albans (and many of us will remember that wonderful day of fun and praise in the Bedfordshire village of Keysoe in very wet conditions last August). It was also a year when the generosity of the thousands of churchgoers across the diocese enabled the receipts into the Board of Finance from the parish share to exceed by almost £300,000 the receipts for the previous year. Not only that, but the percentage of the parish share requested that was received also went up. Good news indeed.

Every single penny of what you give in parish share goes to fulfilling our vision of Living God’s Love. We have paid for 239 stipendiary priests and deacons to serve in our parishes: we house them and pay for their pension contributions. We also spend significant sums on investing in the training of men and women to be the priests of tomorrow: 40% of our priests are 55 or over and will retire within the next 10 years or so and we are intent on ensuring that there will be others to follow them so that this diocese does not see a reduction in the numbers of parochial clergy.

Outside the context of parochial ministry, we minister in the workplace, we work with other faiths to help build good community relations and we speak out about important issues such as penal affairs, race equality and the environment. And we work in over 135 schools and academies.

2014 was a year when we able to do more of what God wants us to do: preaching and teaching and ministering to others. Let’s pray that we can do even better in 2015.

David Nye
Chairman, Board of Finance
General Synod Elections: ‘Just do it,’ says member in new video

A new video from the Church of England has just gone online to encourage people to think about standing for election to General Synod this year.

Those elected will serve a five-year term from November 2015 – July 2020. And the good news is that anyone can stand who is a ‘communicant lay person who is on a church electoral roll (or cathedral roll) aged 18 or above.’

There is no need for lay candidates to be on a PCC, deanery synod or diocesan synod. In addition: ‘Any serving clergy or retired clergy with permission to officiate in a diocese,’ can also stand.

The video, which lasts around 8 minutes can be seen at www.synodelections.org and features a number of lay people speaking about their experiences on General Synod, including St Albans diocese’s own Sam Follett (pictured above), who speaks about the value of young people standing for General Synod.

Other contributors encourage participation by people from all backgrounds, including one who says: “just do it!”

There is a page of useful FAQs which answer most questions potential candidates might ask.

The FAQ’s also give the broad timetable for when nominations need to be in and when voting (by members of Deanery Synods) takes place.

The most important message to emphasise, though, is the one that anyone can stand who is a ‘communicant lay person who is on a church electoral roll (or cathedral roll) aged 18 or above.’

Could you ‘just do it?’ Or do you know someone who you could nudge?

Our current General Synod members are: Mr Simon Baynes, Mr Sam Follett, The Revd Richard Hibbert, The Revd Anne Hollinghurst, The Revd Canon John Kiddle, Dr Edmund Marshall, Canon Philip McDonough, Mrs Christina Rees, Mr Bill Seddon, The Ven Jonathan Smith and The Revd Dr Jo Spreadbury.

Could you be among the list for the next five years?
The Mothers’ Union is still interested in the impact of advertising on children and young people and their latest research shows that parents are too.

Their latest research, published this month, shows that four in five parents are concerned about the commercialisation of childhood and that a similar proportion says that the media encourages their children to ask them to things they see advertised. Pester Power is still alive.

The research also demonstrates that the proportion of parents who think advertising that can be seen by children is well regulated has decreased since the charity’s previous research in 2010. Just 30% of parents in Great Britain agree that advertising is well regulated in 2013, compared to two in five (39%) who said this in 2010.

The Mothers’ Union is keeping this issue alive, hoping that the next Government will heed the call to make sure that neither children nor family life are adversely affected by commercialisation.

Reg Bailey, Mothers’ Union Chief Executive and a Reader in this diocese, said: “Nearly half of parents we spoke to (45%) felt that advertising treated children as adults and 68% felt that advertising seen by children can be harmful to them. It is important that industry adheres not simply to the letter of existing regulation, but also considers how to meet the spirit of the regulation. Parents need to have support in both this way and also in the resources and information available to them, to ensure that the childhood of their children is valued by society as a whole.”

A specific issues that concern parents is online advertising, which 65% of parents agreed was less well regulated than more traditional forms of advertising.

Here are some of the comments made in the report to ComRes.

“I understand that not all marketing is bad - after all products have to be advertised to be sold, and I do understand that people are targeted according to their particular interests, however I do feel that the targeting of very young people should not be allowed. This puts undue pressure on parents who may not be able to afford the products being advertised and also encourages children to feel that they must have a certain product, or take part in a certain activity to be part of the ‘in crowd’. This feeds on the natural uncertainties of being young.”

"There's a lot of pressure, I think, to be a parent in this world and it is expensive. You can fight against it all, you know. I don’t want to do that. I don’t want to do that,’ but ultimately, no one wants their kid to be the only one, the only child that hasn’t got this or hasn’t got that. So it is difficult.”

“It seems to me that children are constantly being bombarded by advertising and promotion of electronics, games consoles, tablets, phones etc. clothes and designer wear.”

Here is an extract from Canon John Kiddle’s address at the commissioning service:

It’s a great privilege to preach this evening as we celebrate the commissioning of chaplains on our waterways and at Luton Airport.

My work as leader of the Church and Society team means that I work closely with John Scott, Delbert Sandiford and the Workplace Matters team and often meet up with chaplains in all parts of this diocese. It’s a growing and exciting part of our mission and our engagement with our increasingly varied communities.

I also had the privilege, some years ago now, of being one of the founding trustees of the Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy which now has a brilliant group of chaplains – lay and ordained – serving in a range of business, retail, entertainment and civic sectors.

The Watford Town centre Chaplaincy helped to give birth to the Waterways Chaplaincy that now covers the national network of 2,000 miles and sees, today, the commissioning of a national chaplain in Mark Chesters. It is amazing to see how the chaplaincy has grown and developed with such speed and life.

However, this evening we commission not a chaplaincy, or even several chaplaincies, but chaplains - men and women who give time and love to others; not least to people with whom the church would otherwise be unlikely to have any contact.

This week Theos released a report into the increasing importance and the impact of chaplaincy. It’s case study is the town of Luton in our own diocese. The report states:

‘There are currently an estimated 15,000 chaplains in the UK, with 169 in Luton alone. While they perform an important spiritual role for many, they are also increasingly plugging the gap in welfare services, mediating in conflict situations and challenging unethical practices in organisations.

Chaplains are assuming an increasingly important role. “The proverbial man in the street seems as – perhaps more – likely to meet a chaplain in his daily life today as he is to meet any other formal religious figure.”

Mark says this about his new Waterways Chaplaincy role: “Whilst many of the public use canals and rivers for leisure and sport, a growing number are choosing to make them their residential home. Depression and illness are just a few of the challenges that some of face, especially when they experience unemployment and financial issues. Chaplains play a critical role in pastoral and practical support.”

“It is my hope and prayer to make a real difference in the lives of those living in the margins of society.”

A couple of years ago I spent a day with the Luton airport chaplaincy. It was a sharp lesson for me that the glamour of air travel (if that’s what it still is) hides much that is, for employees, tough and stressful. This was especially clear to me as I visited the staff room of one of our budget airlines and as I talked with members of the security firm seeking to care for detainees.

One of my first encounters with a Waterways Chaplain was on the tow path of the Grand Union Canal. I saw this tall man walking towards me swinging what looked like a weapon. I admit, I was a little nervous. It turned out to be Andy Taylor (a giant of a man) carrying a lock windlass; ready to lend a helping hand to anyone taking a barge through the lock.

Because in that encounter, in that practical chaplaincy, God is present and made known. And Pharaoh’s daughter, by another waterway, sees a child in a basket and takes practical action to rescue and care for that child. A simple practical act, a seemingly insignificant encounter with a massive significance in God’s plan for the rescue and redemption of a people and a world.

Paul puts it like this: ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God’.
Clergy

David Bain Bell previously Team Leader in Watling Valley Partnership, Oxford Diocese, has been appointed Vicar in the benefice of Silsoe, Flitton & Pulloxhill.

Martin Burrell presently Vicar in the benefice of Bushmead is to retire to a house for duty post as Chaplain to the Gypsies, Travellers and Roma at the end of August.

Lesley-Ann Craddock presently Curate-in-Training at St Mary Magdalene, Hatfield Hyde is to become (Pioneer) Priest-in-Charge at St Oswald’s Church, Glasgow.

Canon Richard Leslie presently Team Vicar (with special responsibility for St Michael and All Angels Borehamwood) and Assistant Rural Dean) is to retire in July.

Other Appointments

Rural Dean of Hertford & Ware

The Revd Canon Jo Loveridge will take on the role of Rural Dean of Hertford & Ware and the Revd Mark Dunstan of Assistant Rural Dean with effect from 19th May. The Revd Canon Pauline Higham and the Revd Nick Sharp have stood down as Joint Rural Deans.
**SeeRound Online Events April 2015**

**Open Days & Festivals**

**St Albans Cathedral, St Albans**
Easter Monday Pilgrimage - gather in the Cathedral from 2pm on Monday 6th April. Service starts at 3pm. Bring picnics.

**St Paul’s Church, Bedford**
Couture Fashion Show on Thursday 23rd April at 7pm. Wine and canapes on arrival, show starts 7.30pm. Raffle. Fashions by ZOKI Couture of London. Tickets £10.00, available from St Paul’s church office Tel: 01234 340163.

**St Peter’s Church Lilley,**
Flower Festival “Travellers Tales” on Saturday 2nd May, Sunday 3rd & Monday 4th May 10.30-5pm. Stalls and refreshments served all day. Entrance £2.

**All Saints Harpenden**
Jubilee events. Ascension Day 50th Anniversary Deanery Choral Eucharist Thursday 14th May 8pm. Also Flower Festival weekend Saturday 23rd-Monday 25th May (Sat. 10-5pm, Sun 1-5pm) Cream Teas and refreshments available. Details from Revd Linda Williams 01582 713007.

**St Michael and All Angels Church, Mildred Avenue, Watford**
Animal Blessing Service. Sunday 31st May at 3pm. Preacher: Revd Prof Martin Henig, Vice President of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals (ASWA). All animals and people welcome! If you have a timid animal, bring a photo for blessing instead. Light refreshments served after service.

**Concerts & Drama**

**All Saints Church, Houghton Conquest**
Concert by “Shannon Express” (a male voice choir) on Saturday 11th April at 7.30pm. Tickets £8 adults and £4 children. Details from Margaret Tyler 01234 740964.

**St Andrew’s Church, Cuffley**
Brass Band concert by The Enfield Citadel Salvation Army Band on Saturday 18th April at 7.30pm. Tickets £10 (inc light refreshments) from Jessica Hollings, tel: 01707 873821.

**All Saints’ Hockerill, Bishop’s Stortford**
Three Valleys Male Voice Choir & the Snowdown Colliery Male Voice Choir. Open bar & raffle. Saturday 18th April 7pm £8 adults £4 concessions available at the door or tel: 07917 368770

**St Mary’s Church, Luton LU1 3JF,**
Luton Choral Society presents Haydn Theresa Mass and Mozart Requiem, conducted by Crispin Lewis. **Saturday 25th April** at 7.30pm Tickets £12, £10 conc, £5 U18, from 01582 547474, online at www.lutonchoralsociety.org.uk or on door.

**St Mary’s Church, Ashwell,**
62nd Ashwell Music Festival, www.ashwellmusicfestival.org Box Office: 30 Angel’s Meadow, Ashwell 01462 742500. **Thursday 7th May** 7pm - Young Musicians’ Concert & Compline. **Friday 15th May** 8pm at URC - Fawn An evening of Celtic Folk with a modern twist. **Saturday 16th May** 8pm Re-Take That! **Sunday 17th May** 7.30pm - Opera Meets West End, Emily and Katie Rowley Jones Entertain. **Thursday 21st May** 7.30pm - An evening with Ben Goldscheider Compline. **Saturday 23rd May** 8.00pm - Strictly A band of former marines with Big Band/Jazz singer Marlene Hill. **Sunday 24th May** 6.30pm Festal Evensong.

**RSCM Principles of Singing & Gospel Day in Maulden Village Hall, Bedfordshire.** **Saturday 9th May** 10-4pm. Sessions with Deborah Miles Johnson (10-12.30pm) and Dawn Thomas Wallace (1.15-3.45pm) £6 per session or £10 for the whole day. For details visit www.rscm-stalbans.co.uk.

**Holy Cross Church, Marsh Farm, Luton.**
Grand Organ Concert by Nicholas Martin (formerly of Turners Musical Merry-go-round) on **Saturday 30th May** at 7pm. He will be palying both his own and the Holy Cross organ. Tickets £6. Contact David on 07944 422098 for tickets and directions.

**St Paul’s Church, St Albans**
‘Experiencing God & Healing’ with Ed Rocha, Pastor from Rio de Janero - series of four events: **Thursday 23rd April** 10-4pm ‘Growing a Healing Ministry’ **Friday 24th April** 10-4pm ‘Increasing your anointing’. **Friday 8-10pm** Evening Meeting: Healing Service, **Saturday 25th April** 9.45am-1pm ‘Living a Supernatural Life.’ Each event is stand alone and you are welcome to attend all. Visit www.stpauls-stalbans.org/ed-rocha for more info or to book.

**Equipping God’s People Courses**
www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/find-a-course

**First Aid Course**
Saturday 25th April 9.30am - 1pm.
St Hugh Lewsey, Leagrave High Street, Luton, LU4 0ND.
This is a basic first aid course for anyone who wants to know how to help people - adults and children - in an emergency. Cost £12. Book in advance online or contact: Gabby 01727 818141 pdadmin@stalbans.anglican.org

**Caring for God’s Earth - Growing Sustainable Communities**
Saturday 25 April 9:30am – 4.00pm.
Churches have a presence in every community and are guardians of sacred building and sacred land - how can we become a prophetic voice in our local community?
St Albans Cathedral, Holywell Hill, St Albans, AL1 1BY. For more information or any questions, please contact Helen Hutchinson, 01727 818148 environment@stalbans.anglican.org

**Talks & Courses**

**Andrew Bradstock**
National Secretary for Church & Society at the URC is coming to BELIEF to speak on:

“How should we as Christians approach a general election”

**Saturday 18th April**
10am-1pm
at Priory Methodist Church
Newnham Ave. Bedford MK41 9QJ.

Cost is £10 per person, payable on the day.
To book please call 01234 330314 or email belief@standrewsbedford.org

**The Hitchin Christian Centre, Bedford Rd, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1HF.**
Theology Cafe Evening event series continues on **Tues 28 Apr** - ‘Was Jesus Inclusive?’ All events are free with refreshments and will take place at 7.30pm each evening.

**Holy Saviour Church, Radcliffe Rd Hitchin**
A talk by Richard Taylor, TV presenter and author of ‘How to read a church’ on **Sunday 10th May** at 3pm. Admission £8 including refreshments. Contact Clarefleck7@gmail.com or tel 01462 646257

**SeeRound Online Events April 2015**

The Diocese of St Albans in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton & Barnet

www.stalbans.anglican.org/news/seearound