

2016

Annual report



WYSOCS ThinkingFaithNetwork

From the Chair

I'm delighted to write this report for three reasons:

1. To say 'hello' as the new chair

Jo and I moved north with my work in 1995 and have loved living in Horsforth where our three children have grown up.

We live about 300 metres from fellow trustees David and Ruth Hanson, who have gently challenged me to think carefully about my work in business. I have been forced to ask questions including what is our business for, what will business look like in the kingdom of God and so, what should business look like now? If those are questions you'd like to grapple with, do let me know!

2. To tell you what's been happening

David and Ruth - along with David Lyon who now lives in Canada - started WYSOCS in 1986 and are now seeking to pass on the baton. In 2015 we put in place new Director, Gareth Jones, and a new structure with more active trustees replacing the previous (very active) management committee, which had been led by Anne Burghgraef. We think this is working well so far.

During the year we have had a number of events across our three strands of RealityBites, LifeMatters and Faith-in-Scholarship and have thought hard about the future...

3. To invite you to join in our future

...which looks - to us - very exciting. We'd like to share our ideas with you. They include a new name and a revitalised programme.

The best opportunity for this is at our celebration and fundraising dinner on Saturday 9th April - see overleaf for more details.

I look forward to meeting you - please make yourself known to me at our meetings or via cal@thinkfaith.net.

Cal



From the Director

Dear friends of WYSOCS,

Let me start by saying what a privilege it has been to take on the role of Director. For many years I have benefited from engaging with WYSOCS as a researcher, consultant and project manager, and now I hope that we can grow our work to help many more people explore how their life and work can be transformed by the imaginative and dynamic application of their Christian faith.

As I reflect on the last twelve months, I am delighted to say that progress has exceeded our expectations. We have:

- developed an ambitious three year programme of events and activities which we would love you to be involved with.
- worked with *Journey Makers* to develop a Christian education curriculum that will be in many schools across the UK.
- delivered courses on work, faith, citizenship and British values.
- expanded our volunteer and staff team with some great and committed people.
- begun work with academics in the UK and beyond to develop a new framework for conservation - leading to an invitation to Tanzania from the Bishop of Central Tanganyika (Revd Canon Dr Dickson Chilongani) to develop and apply our ideas.

Through your continued support and engagement we trust that we can see many of these ideas bear fruit and impact many more lives with the good news of life in Christ.

If you would like to hear more about all that's going on please do

book your place at our celebration and fundraising dinner, or drop me a line on gareth@thinkfaith.net - I'll be happy to do what I can to help.

Lastly, let me thank you once again for your ongoing support and goodwill - we certainly could not do this without you!

Gareth



REALITYBiTES *in the Costa del Sol*

Mark Roques

Last month Anne and I celebrated thirty years of marriage. We wanted a break and so we booked a holiday with Club La Costa World which is located in Fuengirola on the south coast of Spain. Truth be told we got a fantastic discount of 80% which made the gig very affordable.

We had a wonderful time relaxing by the pool and visiting Grenada and Ronda but we had to pay our pound of flesh! We had to spend four hours of the holiday listening to a skilled and persuasive salesman who waxed lyrical about the delights of time shares in Club La Costa. To be frank I was dreading this phase of the holiday but it turned out to be the best moment of our time in sunny Spain.

Frank (not his real name) picked us up in his posh car and took us to a restaurant on the resort. He asked Anne about her work and she told him about working with traumatised asylum seekers as a therapist. Anne asked him about his life and he explained that he had been a soldier in Afghanistan for many years and still suffered sleepless nights mulling over the horrors of war. Anne was delighted to find out that Frank was fluent in Pashtu and Farsi! Frank looked 'emotional' as we probed him about his life and work experiences.

Frank then asked me about my work and I told him a bit about RealityBites. I told him about Randy Lewis and his baptised imagination – employing thousands of autistic and disabled people at Walgreens. I told him several heartwarming 'faith in action' stories and he seemed delighted and intrigued.



When we got to the sales pitch both of us were struck by the endless references to luxury hotels, meals, massages and the ‘five star’ treatment. We explained to Frank that we had no wish to live in this kind of luxury ‘story’. He told us that he had never met anybody who had a well-thought out critique of his pitch. I told him the ‘parable’ about the rich man who spent all his holiday complaining about the shoddy 25 year old malt whiskey in his luxury suite. He smiled and told me that all of his customers were like that!

I then outlined the consumerist ‘way of life’ and told him that we didn’t live in that story! He paused reflectively and told us that he had never met people like us before!

He told us about one of his clients who offered to fight him (bare knuckles) and if Frank won the ‘punch-up’ he would automatically sign up for the time share ‘deal’! Frank contended that many of his clients were rude and ‘nasty’ people. He told us twice that it was an honour and a privilege to meet us! He confided in us that we were the only clients who had ever taken an interest in him! I was astonished to hear him saying this.

In the final moments of our time together he said something quite odd. He blurted out – ‘Muhammed didn’t come back from the dead but with Isa (Jesus) it was different! He has no tomb.’ I was then able to talk to Frank about my conversion to Christianity from atheism and the good news of the resurrection. It’s amazing what goes on in the Costa del Sol. It’s not all beers, sunbathing and sangria!

Originally published by Mark Roques on the RealityBites blog on 3rd June 2015.



You are invited to our

Celebration & fundraising dinner

We'd love you to join us at our celebration and fundraising dinner.

Enjoy live music over excellent food, and hear our exciting vision for the future - with opportunity to support our work through regular giving.

Saturday 9th April 2016

19.00-21.30

Jubilee Centre (opposite the Cathedral)
Jermyn Street, Bradford, BD1 4EJ

Entry by free ticket, places are limited,
RSVP at **thinkfaith.net/rsvp**.



Thinking**Faith**Network

We've got an exciting programme of events confirmed for the rest of this year (with more still being planned), starting with our celebration and fundraising dinner (see left). You can book for all of our events online - and our new 'early bird' tickets will save you money. Book now, and we hope to see you soon!

REALiTYBiTES

Events



Wednesdays 22nd June to 13th July 2016 (4 sessions)

Mark Roques unpacks biblical teaching on work, rest and play, providing inspiration and space to explore how to 'live life in all its fullness' every day.

19.00-21.00, Leeds Church Institute.

£24 (£19 students) in advance.



Thursday 20th October 2016

Consumerism, materialism and the dignity of life: **Mark Roques** explores Christian and secular views on ethical business, citizenship and social responsibility.

19.30-21.30, Outwood House, Horsforth.

£7 (£5 students) in advance.

More details and booking at **thinkfaith.net/events**



Saturday 14th May 2016

Alan Storkey, Cat Thatcher, Gareth Jones and Alex Jones explore politics and power in the Bible, social justice and protest and a Christian approach to politics.

10.00 - 16.00, Leeds Church Institute.

£25 (£18 students) in advance, including lunch.



Friday 3rd and Tuesdays 7th/14th/21st June 2016 (4 sessions)

How do we understand our neighbours if their culture is different to ours? How can we engage in dialogue and evangelism with those of other faiths? And how can we build strong communities through peace-building and reconciliation?

Bishop Toby Howarth, Bruce and Deborah Warren, Suzanne Vernon Yorke, Helen Reid, Philip Lewis, Wahida Shaffi and Jonathan Pritchard explore building cohesive communities.

19.00 - 21.30, The Thornbury Centre (Friday).

19.00-21.00, Leeds Church Institute (Tuesdays).

£30 (£22 students) in advance, including curry on Friday.

Friday/Tuesday only tickets also available.

In partnership with **Faithful Neighbours**.

Brons & Biglands



Friday 24th June 2016

Join us for a fantastic evening of music with exceptional musicians **Dave Brons** and **John Biglands**, who will share their music with us, chat about the stories behind the songs they write, and explore how their music, lives and faith interact.

19.00-22.00, 'Seven', Chapel Allerton.

£7 (£5 students) in advance.

The Bible in Six Acts

Mondays 12th September to 17th October 2016 (6 sessions)

How does the big story of the Bible unfold? Packed with new ideas, real-life stories, discussion, prayer and worship ideas, this course will help you to read the Bible in a fresh light and live out your faith in day-to-day life.

19.45-21.30, Quaker Meeting House, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds.

£30 (£18 students) in advance.

Re-imagining Church



Saturday 29th October 2016

Graham Cray and **David Hanson** explore what the Bible calls the Church to be, and how we should gather, break bread, do mission, make disciples and worship.

10.00-25.00, Leeds Church Institute.

£17 (£12 students) in advance, including lunch.

Events

More details and booking
at thinkfaith.net/events

Events

FAITH-IN-SCHOLARSHIP



Saturday 24th September 2016

Jeremy Ive explores how a Christian philosophy is foundational to relational peacebuilding, from experience in South Africa, Rwanda and Sudan.

10.00 - 11.30 / 14.00 - 17.00, Quaker Meeting House, Leeds

Lecture: £8 (£2 students) in advance.

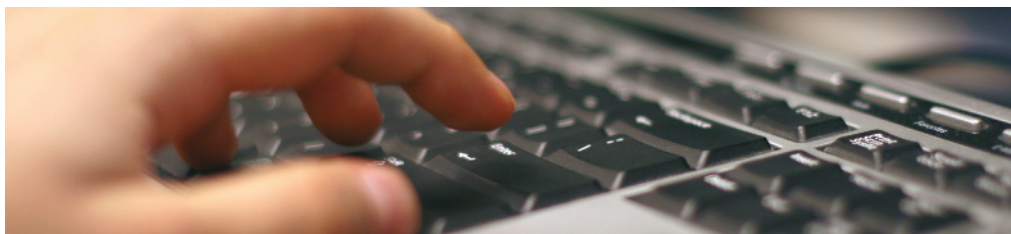
Workshop: £44 (£20 students) in advance.

More details and booking at **thinkfaith.net/events**

Keeping you in touch

If you've not found it yet, we've got a new website! Visit **thinkfaith.net** for more information about us, our three strands, or to book for any of our events with our improved booking system. You can also use our old addresses and you'll be redirected.

We also send out a regular email newsletter - if you've not been receiving these, please check your spam or bulk folders (particularly in gmail). If you haven't already, sign up at the bottom of any page of the website or at **thinkfaith.net/signup**.



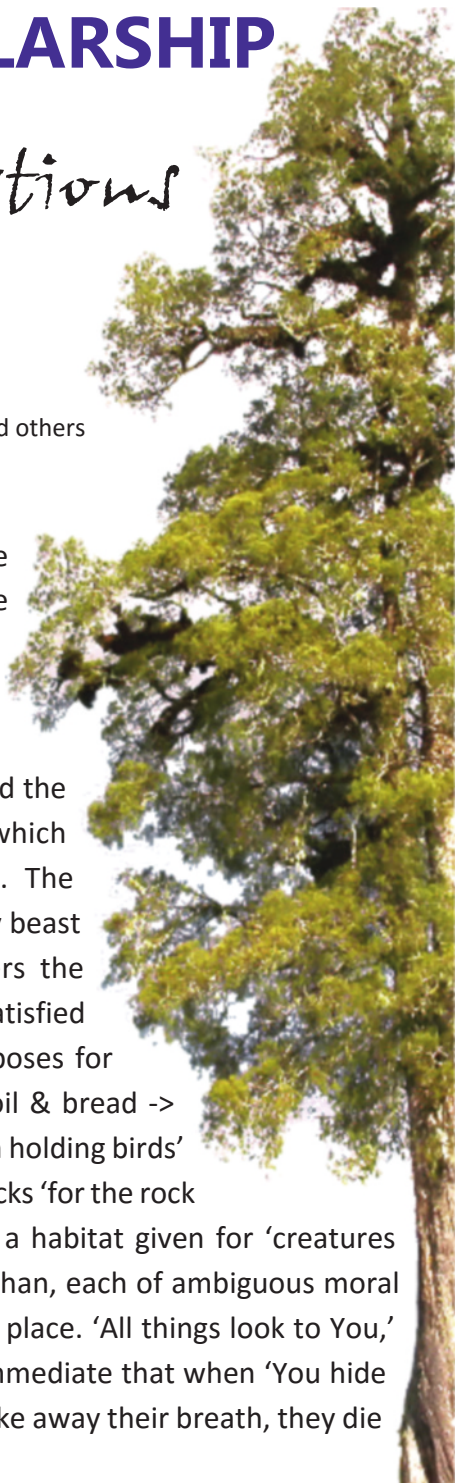
FAITH-IN-SCHOLARSHIP

Ecological reflections on Psalm 104

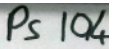
Richard Gunton, with input from George Otieno and others

This joyful psalm expresses wonder at the works of God seen throughout the earth. We might call it 'ecological' in the original sense of that word: a study of the homes of things.

A home is more than a place of shelter, and the psalmist describes diverse ways in which creatures are serviced in their habitats. The streams in their valleys 'give drink to every beast of the field', and the Lord YHWH 'waters the mountains' so that the whole earth is satisfied (v13). Chains of created things serve purposes for each other – e.g. rain -> plants -> wine, oil & bread -> humanity. We look up to cedars of Lebanon holding birds' nests, mountains 'for the wild goats' and rocks 'for the rock badgers' (v18). Then we gaze out to sea, a habitat given for 'creatures innumerable': viz. the ships and the Leviathan, each of ambiguous moral connotations yet enjoying their appointed place. 'All things look to You,' says the psalmist – with dependence so immediate that when 'You hide Your face, they are dismayed; when You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust' (v29).



FAITH-IN-SCHOLARSHIP



This psalm, then, is not just about habitats, nor food chains, nor even nutrient cycles. It's more like the contemporary concept of ecosystem services: all kinds of diverse benefits accrued from natural places. But whereas 'ecosystem services' is an anthropocentric conservation paradigm, humans are almost absent from this psalm. Here we see YHWH at the origin of a biosphere filled with activity.

The word of God goes forth to accomplish His will; His messengers are winds and tongues of fire (v4); His Spirit creates new life - and He rejoices in what He sees (vv30-31). God both serves and is served by His diverse creatures, even as they depend upon Him. His presence is known by His faithful covenant love rather than any kind of local intervention; this is sovereignty by delegation rather than control. We might call it a diverse but ultimately theocentric world picture.

Some kind of anthropocentrism is inevitable, however, in that we humans can only observe through our own eyes. Surveying the ecology of God's works elicits in the psalmist a faithful, fearful attitude to the Creator, and a longing to continue in lifelong worship, rejoicing in YHWH (v34). The sense of harmony perhaps reflects the agrarian context in which the psalms were written:

a settled rustic community, for the most part safely accommodated in its Promised Land. There is no opposition here between man and ‘nature’ or ‘creation’: humanity is simply a small part of the whole creation.

But we modern urbanites have a special place. Perhaps only we in the industrialised world can conceive of environmental impoverishment on a global scale. We can also appreciate the culpability of humans, our grasp of environmental science giving earthly explanations for what might otherwise appear simply as ‘acts of God’: droughts, storms, flooding. We have formed grand notions of planetary stewardship and global conservation, but let us not make light of our sin, and our need for God’s help. Even the pre-scientific agrarian psalmist cannot end without shaking a fist at the evil that blights this world: ‘Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more!’ Yet the psalm does not end with a description of mortality and detritus. Instead we have a yearning for God’s full rejoicing in the created order, sinners absent. And it is indeed ‘in’ the created order that such salvation must be unveiled, because the hope of God’s people has always been that YHWH would redeem them from sin and dwell with them as a man, walking together on the earth. This is a new, redeemed anthropocentrism. If we need a ‘centre’, perhaps it’s safest to see the psalm as ‘geocentric’: exhorting humans to participate in an ecology of service, knowing ourselves fully at home in God’s world.

Originally published on the The John Ray Initiative blog on 20th October 2015.

Richard Gunton and George Otieno are members of the Faith-in-Scholarship Working Group on Ecosystem Services (FiSWES) which draws together twelve Christian thinkers to explore new perspectives on conservation ethics. It seeks to bring insights to real-world challenges that will be appreciated by non-Christians as well as believers. The piece presented here was the first, and most theological, output from the group’s meetings; subsequent outputs are to include articles in ecological journals, educational workshops and, it is hoped, tools for policy-makers.

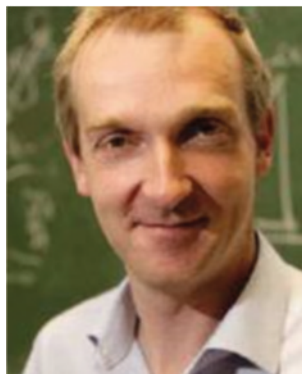


LIFEMATTERS *looking back*

The last year has seen a number of stimulating and faith-building events.

Faith and wisdom in science

In June we welcomed Tom McLeish to share some of his thinking and questioning around the Bible and science: unpacking (or debunking) the 'science versus religion' debate, investigating scientific questioning in the Bible and proposing a theology of science. You can hear recordings of Tom's talks on our website at thinkfaith.net/events/science15, and we're also planning to run our *Science for Christians* course later in the year - look out for details in our email newsletter.



the
transforming
vision

The Transforming Vision

In the Autumn, our Transforming Vision course ran again with 25 more people enjoying David Hanson's excellent exploration of 'the restoration of all things' over fine cheese and wine.

We're running this course again in 2017 - if you haven't experienced it, it's an opportunity to get an in-depth introduction to the reformational tradition and an understanding of the Bible's 'big story' that lies at the heart of our vision.

It's unashamedly an intellectually challenging course - but if that's not your thing then, new for this year, we're running a simpler basic introduction exploring the Bible in Six Acts - check out our calendar of events for details.

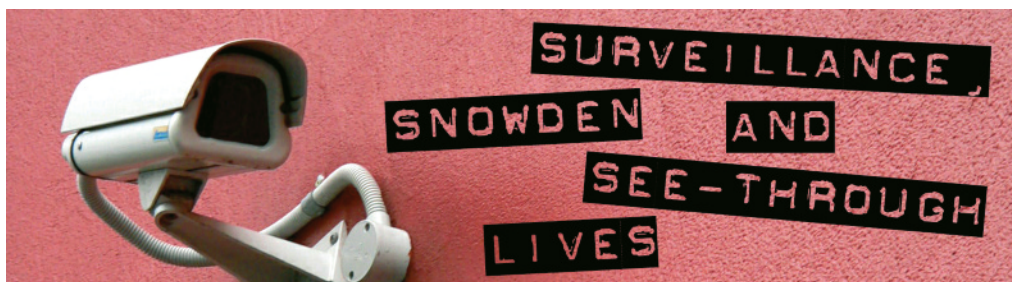
Support us

All that we do is only possible thanks to the generous support of individuals like you. If you'd be interested in supporting Thinking Faith financially, please do complete the enclosed response form, or get in touch on office@thinkfaith.net.



In December we were transfixed by the music of Dave Brons and John Biglands as they performed music from their albums, as well as sharing the stories behind some of the tracks and how their faith, music and daily life interact.

If you missed out on their stunning performances then you've got another opportunity to hear them in June - again, see the calendar of events for details.



And in January, we welcomed WYSOCS co-founder David Lyon for a visit to discuss surveillance after the revelations of Edward Snowden: How pervasive is surveillance? Should we be concerned about the government watching our every move? What is a Christian response? Two points give a taste of the answers. First, Western governments subcontract most of their surveillance to private companies: when the NSA was set up in America, they didn't turn to the FBI or CIA to learn how to profile people, they went to loyalty card firms. Second, as Christians we should be less concerned about ourselves (which may not be a revelation...), but more concerned about the polarising effect that surveillance has on society, and how we can campaign and lobby to negate that: from targeted loyalty card discounts, to being denied access to a country based on a few personal characteristics rather than anything specific to you.

We've got a growing programme of events, but we're always keen to hear from you about other topics you'd be interested in exploring - do get in touch on ben@thinkfaith.net or chat to any of the team at one of our events this year.

ThinkingFaithNetwork

Faith in all of life

Thinking Faith explores how imaginative Christian thinking can transform and enrich every area of life. We do this in three strands:

LIFEMATTERS

Exploring Christian faith in daily life.

REALiTyBiTES

Innovative communication of the Christian story.

FAITH-IN-SCHOLARSHIP

Dynamic Christian thinking about the ideas that shape our world.

Get in touch



thinkfaith.net



office@thinkfaith.net



0113 314 1986



thinkfaith



Thinking Faith Network
thinklifematters, thinkrealitybites, faithinscholarship



@thinkfaithdo, @PostgradFisch



Thinking Faith Network



2 Dale Villas, Horsforth, Leeds, LS18 4JN

Our team

Gareth Jones

Director

gareth@thinkfaith.net

Mark Roques

Director of RealityBites

mark@realitybites.org.uk

Richard Gunton

Faith-in-Scholarship Coordinator

richard@faithinscholarship.org.uk

Ben Clymo

Communication and Events

LifeMatters Coordinator

ben@thinkfaith.net

Heather Jones

Finance

accounts@thinkfaith.net

Our trustees

Cal Bailey (Chair)

cal@thinkfaith.net

Cat Thatcher

David Hanson

Ruth Hanson

Anne Burghgraef

Steve Bishop

John Satherley



ThinkingFaithNetwork
Faith in all of life