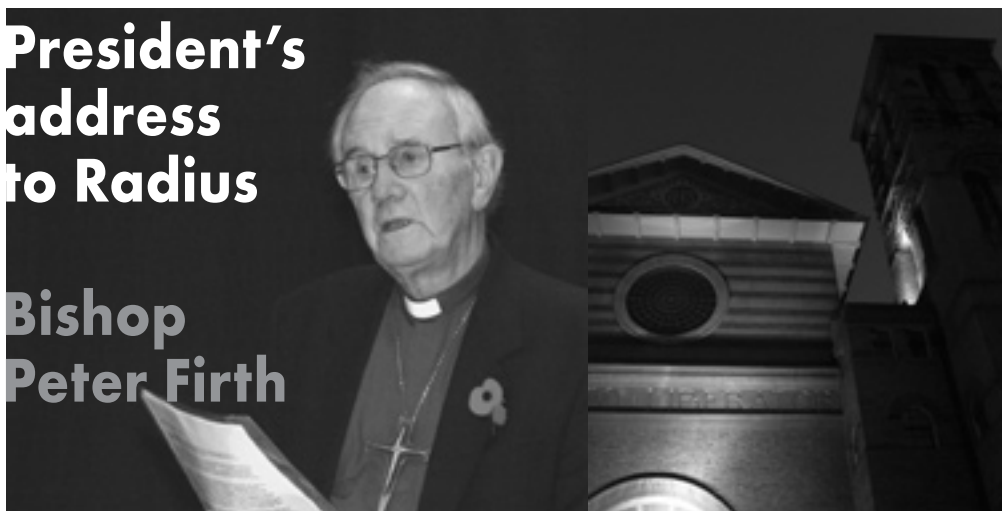


President's address to Radius

Bishop
Peter Firth



I'm delighted to be with you all again this year. Last year at this time I was attending a conference in Istanbul, and I have to say the Turkish Delight you can buy in England is better than anything I tasted in Istanbul.

Looking through the minutes I have received and the editions of *Radius Performing* that I have read, it seems that, with one hand tied behind its back, the society seems to have held its own in the struggle to do its work. The deprived hand, of course, being held back by lack of finance. Nevertheless, I do congratulate you on continuing the important work of representing in dramatic form the spirituality essential to being a human being, and Christian spirituality in particular.

The Council of Radius has been responsible for much of this effort. Our thanks are particularly due to Dilys Stone for her work as Membership Secretary, and Derek Davidson and Nickie Cox, who look after publications. And then there's Guy Torrance

and the IT Committee, and Anne Giles who has looked after Training and the staffing of the office. And our thanks to all those people who have helped to man the office and the library. The magazine and archive have been wonderfully nurtured by Margaret Hunt. And, of course, there's our Treasurer Kathleen Hall, who has so carefully managed our accounts over so many years.

Our thanks to you all, from all of us, and to the many others - on or off the Council - who have worked so hard to maintain the high standards of the society. And at this point I'd like to offer our special thanks to Elsie Peace, who's just retired from Chair of Training, and to John Ablett, who's retired as Chair of IT.

As I said, due to financial constraints and other pressures, it's been a year of mixed fortunes. The Radius Youth Section event planned for August had to be cancelled. Our computer was stolen during the year, but it's been replaced. A lot of you will miss

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Radius summer school. We've held one every year since 1949 and it is sad to lose such a tradition. But there's plenty going on where it matters - in the chapels and churches and village halls. There's an intent to extend local networks and week-end workshops, and we're looking forward to receiving parties of American visitors next year and the year after, who I'm sure will have ideas which can benefit us.

There have been a number of stimulating articles in *Radius Performing*. The debate on censorship and blasphemy was precipitated by Jerry Springer's *the Opera* and *Behzti* and there was a good variety of responses in the April edition. I'm not going to enter this debate today, except to say that it concerns the question 'What is Holy?' Are there certain matters which must never, under any circumstances, be criticised, mocked or derided? If we think there are, does this suggest that we are narrow-minded or afraid? If we think there aren't, does this suggest that we are weak, flabby and without any firm beliefs? The dividing line always seems to be moving, from one generation to another - think of the change in standards between Cromwell's Commonwealth and Charles II's Restoration drama.

There was a review of a kind of 'Son et Lumiere' on the life of Hildegard of Bingen, with substantial musical backing - your critic experienced it as more forward than back. But this was not the kind of thing that St Earwig's Church Dramatic Society could put on. There was an interesting article on

the use of dance - liturgical dance, in fact. Personally, I am not a fan in this department. But I think there must be something missing in me, because I am a believer in the fact that it is usually better to try to do something than to do nothing at all. And this is bound to apply to liturgical dancing as well as religious drama.

Neville Boundy's play *Father & Son* was reviewed. I have seen it a couple of times as Neville was a priest in Bristol for 40 years. I recently saw the first performance of his new play *Five Sides of a Circle* - which takes the form of a fictional meeting between Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It's really more of a 'talk' piece than a drama, but the different approaches of the four Evangelists are clearly stated, the arguments between them are lively and there are a couple of 'everyman' characters who ask questions the audience might ask. (For forthcoming performance details see page 5)

Barry Dunnage contributed two fascinating articles, on Arthur Miller and on the diminishing boundaries of censorship in both theatre and film (April and October 2005). And there was a splendid article by Rex Walford on *Ten Ways of Using Drama in Church* (January 2005). This really is an excellent compilation of ways in which the spoken word can become flesh and rouse a congregation from its occasional stupor. I hope some of you have already tried out some of his approaches.

And finally, a few words about the future. There's a lot of good religious drama

around. Edmund Banyard's plays are still in print. We know that good religious drama can inspire congregations or audiences. So why are we not getting this across - and to who?

I think that the Council has got to consider, even more than it has done, the ways in which ministers and other influential figures can be influenced. The message is not getting for example to Anglican Deanery Synods, Diocesan Synods even. When I worked with the BBC I used to relish the opportunity to talk about the importance of religious broadcasting at Synods in different parts of the country. Religious drama seems to have the same standing as religious broadcasting in the minds of ordinary parishioners and clergy. They feel they have enough on their plate. Some clergy are either shy or ignorant or wary of having a drama group in their church or chapel. Some regard it as frivolous. Somehow we've got to convince them that the heart is as important as the head in spiritual matters. It is important to involve the emotions alongside the brain. Emotion without brain is chaos. But brain without emotion is sterile. The word needed to become flesh in order to become real.

So engage your clergy in that thought. The Crucifixion is a drama without parallel. Drama is the way in which people get involved in things. At ground level. That's where it has to happen. That is the missing link between what you are trying to do and what people need to stir the soul into belief and action.



Council Chair Romilly Janes reviews the year at Radius



Magazine Editor Margaret Hunt enjoys the discussion on censorship



Training Committee Chair Anne Giles outlines workshop plans