



PréCiS

Summer 2021

Bringing Christian faith and science together

Issue no. 100

This special edition is celebrating the **100th** PréCiS with memories from various CiS members.

The first PréCiS was published in August 1996.

Some of the memories may be shared by you, others perhaps not, but we hope you enjoy them all. We wish to thank all those who have contributed to CiS along this journey - members, committee, Trustees and friends.

Previous PréCiS issues can be viewed on our website - www.cis.org.uk/resources



Bennet McInnes

This newsletter, with a name that looks a bit like a password containing a mixture of upper and lower case letters, first appeared in August 1996. As far as I can recall, the name 'PréCiS' was adopted because it seemed a neat way of incorporating the name of our organisation into the title of a newsletter summarising our current activities.

I had been a member of the Research Scientists' Christian Fellowship (RSCF) since about 1952, when I graduated from Edinburgh University with a BSc in Astrophysics. In 1989 when I retired, aged 60, from the Science and Engineering Research Council, I was available for voluntary work and responded to a notice inviting applications for someone to act as RSCF committee secretary. I joined the committee in 1990.

Interest in RSCF activities began to extend well beyond the community of research scientists, and eventually it was decided to recognise this fact by changing the name. The minutes of the RSCF committee meeting held on 12 October 1987 record three possibilities: (1) Scientists' Christian Fellowship; (2) Association of Christians in Science; and (3) Christians in Science. The minutes of the next committee meeting, held on 29 February 1988, note that the first of these possible names was preferred – subject to a check that the initials SCF 'were not already in use for some other purpose'. The minutes of the following meeting, held on 25 April 1988, do not give any details of the discussion but simply say that 'it was agreed that, from 25th April, 1988, the RSCF should be known as 'Christians in Science'. No one on the committee seemed to remember that CIS was

already being used by Christians in Sport!

One of the concerns in the 1980s was the lack of gender balance in the membership and on the committee. That has been rectified in recent years: I was replaced by Caroline Berry and then Diana Briggs. CiS Development Officers have been predominantly female and conference speakers are no longer always men, so things are definitely moving in the right direction.

Prof John Bryant

In 1999 I received a totally surprising invitation to become Chair of Christians in Science. It was surprising because I had not previously even been on the committee and indeed my main involvement with CiS had been attending the annual day-conference in London. However, the invitation came at a very opportune time – and those inviting me could not have known this – because of decisions I had recently made about my own career development.

When I took over the Chair, I had no doubt that CiS was doing a good job but in a rather limited sphere. The organisation provided support, encouragement and information for scientists who were Christians mainly at the more evangelical end of the churchmanship spectrum.



John speaking at a *God and the Big Bang* school event
March 2020 - Dorset

That support included the day-conference and the journal *Science and Christian Belief*, the first issue of which had been published in 1989. However, it seemed to me that CiS was a bit inward-looking, that geographically the focus was on the south of England (although including Cambridge and Oxford) and that the membership was smaller than might be hoped for.

I thus wanted CiS to be more outward looking, even to be public-facing. I wanted us to become the 'go-to' organisation when the media needed information or comment on the science-faith debate. I realised that this would mean being proactive in order to get ourselves known. My own experience had already shown me that taking the initiative in contacting both print and broadcast media could bear fruit. Alongside this I wanted to see some de-centralisation of our activities, giving a better network of support across the regions and the establishment of more local groups.

However, all this would need more resources than we had access to and thus the then secretary, Caroline Berry and I applied for and obtained a grant that enabled us to appoint a part-time Development Officer. The award of that grant was a truly pivotal moment. The person we appointed was Ruth Bancewicz whose performance in the role can only be described as outstanding.

Backed by a supportive committee, Ruth initiated and/or encouraged many of the changes that led to CiS being where it is today: she is both a do-er and an enabler. One aspect of her role was the regular production of an informal newsletter, *PréCiS*, the 100th issue of which we are now celebrating.



John speaking 2017 - Leicester

I want to mention briefly four other 'features' of my time as Chair. First, we enjoyed an excellent joint meeting in Edinburgh with our American and Canadian friends in the ASA. Secondly, for a period of four years I was also Vice-President and then President of the Society for Experimental Biology which I hope indicated to others that scientist-believers bring their faith into their science and their science into their faith. Thirdly, I gave the 2002 London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity which thus provided some publicity for CiS. Fourthly, my last action as Chair, before handing over to Keith Fox, was set up CiS as a charity.

Dr Hugh Reynolds

PréCiS began in the 1990s when it was realised that CiS members needed a regular succinct newsletter. Its first editor was, I think, Bennet McInnes, who I presume is to be credited with the inspired choice of name. Subsequently, CiS's activities have grown more numerous and diverse, with more conferences and many more local groups. So *PréCiS* has grown in importance, and has now been supplemented by the monthly e-mail updates. Thanks to Covid restrictions, many events have had to be held online. I have appreciated being able to join

several local-group events being hosted many miles away.

The wider accessibility of activities has allowed participation by church members in general (and others) who would in no way consider themselves specialists. Biblical thinking about science-faith issues has made some progress among evangelical leaders (would that there was more), but arguably has made little impact on the person in the pew. It is encouraging that CiS now has a programme whereby churches can affiliate and receive encouragement and access resources. The Scientists in Congregations project, based in Durham, involves several denominations, and the Faraday Institute has Church Engagement as one of its stated activities.

So maybe this is an idea whose time has come. Responses to the pandemic have revealed the need for greater appreciation of science in some parts of the Christian community; the need is becoming much more serious as we face up to climate change.

CiS began life as the Research Scientists' Christian Fellowship (RSCF), initiated when Oliver Barclay was a research student in Cambridge in the 1940s. To end with, here's a memory from 1985, when RSCF held a residential conference in an Oxford college. Oliver Barclay was the chief host. At the end of breakfast on the final day he was giving out notices and making final remarks - which took a while - and the serving staff were lined up waiting to come and finish clearing. At the end, Oliver turned to them and said something to this effect: "While they're here, we'd like to thank the staff for their excellent service." At this, the lady at the end of the line gasped and blurted out: "No-one's ever said that before!"

Notes:

1) The Resources section of the CiS website provides links to Oliver Barclay's obituary in The Times newspaper of 4th October 2013, and to the recording of his Thanksgiving Service on 5th October. Much of the latter is devoted to his impressive ministry with IVF/UCCF; his role in RSCF/CiS is described by Sam Berry at minutes 37 to 47 of the recording.

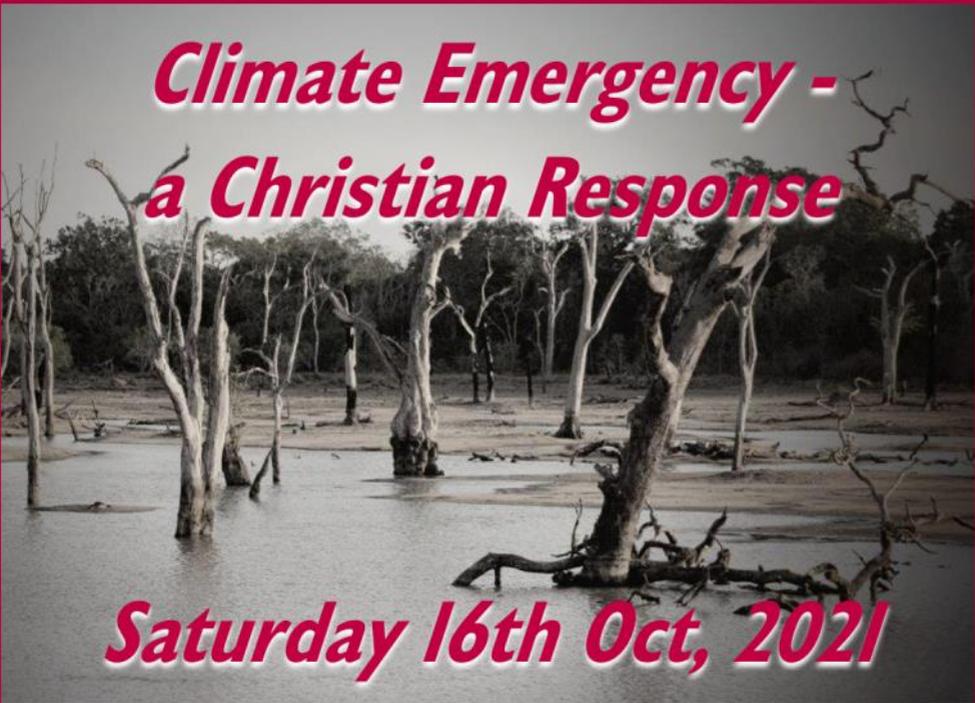
2) The history of RSCF up to the mid-80s has been excellently described by Christopher Rios in his book "After the Monkey Trial".



2014 - Attending joint ASA / CSCA / CiS conference in Ontario, Canada

Left to right, Alasdair Coles, David Wilkinson, Christina Biggs, Colin Humphreys, Lesley and Hugh Reynolds, Tim Middleton, KT van Santen, Bethany Sollereder, Peter Bussey, Daniel Button, and Mike Clifford (Published in PreCiS 73)

Climate Emergency - a Christian Response



Saturday 16th Oct, 2021

We hope to hold a live conference in Croydon, London plus stream live online, but this can only be confirmed closer to the date.

Speakers:-

- Euan Nisbet: *Climate Change*
- Ruth Valerio: *Climate Justice*
- Hannah Malcolm: *Climate Action*
- Meric Srokosz: *Climate Hacking*
- Mirjam Schilling: *2021 Oliver Barclay Lecture*

Dr Ruth Banciewicz,

Reaching the Next Generations - Some time before the summer of 2004 the CiS committee looked at our membership profile and realised they had to do something fairly radical in order to continue as an organisation. As far as I know, they decided to spend a good deal of what was left in the bank in order to hire CiS's first ever staff member.

The Development Officer's role was not fundraising but to expand the CiS membership, particularly in the younger generations. I saw the job advert in July 2004, and in October found myself on my first day at work, at the annual conference in St Paul's Robert Adam Street, London.

Under the wise oversight of John Bryant, Caroline Berry and others on the committee I waded into the activities of CiS, working through things that might need to change in order to attract members. We created a new website, invented free student membership, and got a logo and leaflets designed. In the meantime John and Caroline were working hard getting CiS registered as a charity. John and others recruited so many new committee members in their 20's that someone commented it was beginning to feel like a youth group!

I am still struck by the gracious attitude of the committee over those years. Much of what I was doing was putting into practice ideas they must have been thinking about for years. But I also did things that some found a bit harder to take. I remember the comments on the design of a new leaflet - our first adventure in hiring a professional graphic designer. At least one person said something along the lines of, 'I don't like it, but it's for the young people so let's go for it.' I think similar comments were made about the new website — 'if that's what's needed then we'll do it'.

Since then, of course, many other developments have followed and we are well and truly in the twenty first century. What next, I wonder? The scientific world is always changing, and the church and education have been turned upside down by the current pandemic. I am looking forward to seeing what the next generation in CiS will do, and I hope I can be as gracious as that committee when things change!

Dr Denis Alexander

I returned from 15 years in the Middle East in 1986 and was soon sucked into CiS activities. By 1989 I was on the CiS Committee. And then I discovered how those years of living in the



Ruth, third from right - Student and Graduate Conference (Published in PréCiS 39)

Middle East could be of some help when it came to engaging with such a wonderful community of Christians with strong opinions. For living in a completely different culture to one's own is a good way to become sensitized to the myriad ways in which different cultural backgrounds shape our varied approaches to the issues of the day.

I well remember Oliver Barclay at our CiS committee meetings in the 1990s, still active in the CiS which he had himself started in the late 1940s (albeit with a different name). On the committee he listened quietly but carefully to the discussions with a mildly quizzical smile, but then eventually contributed a concise but wise comment which usually settled the question.

The person who chaired the CiS for many years over this period, historian Prof. Colin Russell, had a very different leadership style - up-front, decisive and, for some, not always sufficiently diplomatic in approach. But if you wanted to get things done, Prof. Russell was your man. And I well remember the day when Colin, looking very pleased, brought along his latest recruit to the committee - Bob White FRS, Professor of Geophysics at Cambridge. To recruit an FRS on to our humble committee was indeed a bit of a coup, but we soon found that Bob was happy enough to adjust to our rather informal way of doing things.

I'd been on the committee less than a year when Colin Russell broached the idea of taking over from Oliver Barclay as the Articles Editor of the newly founded journal *Science and Christian Belief*. A 3-page follow-up letter soon came from Oliver formalizing the invitation - I have it in front of me now. It is a classic of Oliver's nuanced approach. One of the Editor's

responsibilities, Oliver made clear, was to seek revision of material that was not good enough "both theologically and academically". As an example, he mentioned how Arthur Peacocke had "responded like a lamb" to his suggestions. Given that Arthur had been my Oxford tutor for four years, and not much of a lamb from what I remembered, this set the bar very high for an editor's diplomatic skills in seeking revision of submissions.

Another vivid memory is being suddenly plunged into organisation of the CiS-ASA joint conference at Churchill College, Cambridge, August 1998, just two weeks before it started.

Plenary speaker Francis Collins walked into the empty room that represented my office and wanted an adaptor for an urgent telephone line internet conversation — right now! Forget broadband — this was the old days! Then directing the Human Genome project, Francis gave a superb lecture which I still remember. There were 32 speakers altogether over three days! And the titles haven't changed much over the years — so there's still much to do.



Denis and students - 1990's

Dr Caroline Berry

In August 2007 CiS and our American counterpart, the ASA, shared a joint four day conference 'New Frontiers in Science and Faith'. It was held in Edinburgh and organized by John Bryant, Ruth Banciewicz and I. Ruth had been resident in Edinburgh when planning started, then moved to Cambridge but Paul Wraight was a valiant local helper.

Pollock Halls of Edinburgh University provided an excellent venue with everything including the commonwealth games swimming pool on site. We catered for 300 each day and had 270 beds booked. Each had to be allocated to actual people who were booking with CiS in the UK and with ASA in the US so there was a flood of email exchange between the two organisers.

We started on the afternoon of arrival with Field Trips to Arthur's Seat (geology), the Falkirk Wheel (engineering), The Scottish Seabird Centre (biology), The Royal Museum of Scotland (culture) and the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh, all good venues today.

Then the brain work: 18 plenary sessions with well established invited speakers covering Planet Care, Genetics and Evolution, Cosmology, Bio Ethics and Neuroscience. There were 37 parallel sessions more seminar in style, plus posters in different rooms. Each day started with 20 minutes worship and on the Sunday there was an hour with a preacher from an Edinburgh church. On the social side there was a cash bar open regularly and a Celidh till 11.30 on Saturday evening.

All seemed to go well but it makes me tired just to think about it now. The next Residential Conference was in 2012 and Diana Briggs and committee sensibly opted to use professional conference organizers!

Prof Bob White

Precis scores a Century - What has changed over the time I have been part of Christians in Science (CiS) since the 1980s? The answer is both everything and nothing much.

CiS Student Essay Competition 2021

1st Prize - £500

2nd Prize - £250

3rd Prize - £100

Submit no more than 1000 words to secretary@cis.org.uk by midnight on 30th August 2021

Find out more at www.cis.org.uk



CHRISTIANS · IN · SCIENCE



In part everything, because the scientific and technological issues society faces now were in their infancy 40 years ago, or not even present. The world wide web was still a decade away; the social media that dominates so much of the current narrative hadn't arrived; the low-level Artificial Intelligence that pervades our life was still science fiction; gene editing was only just

being thought about, with the power of CRISPR not arriving till 2009; the existential problem of climate change was the worry of just a few scientists rather than the world at large; computers that fit into a wrist watch and phones that you can hold in your hand to see people on the other side of the world were barely imaginable; and so on. The rate of scientific and

Job Vacancy - CiS General Secretary

We urgently need a person for this position. Our current General Secretary, Dr Diana Briggs will retire at the end of this year. Could this be you, or someone you know?

We would like to have the new appointee start as soon as possible but particularly by Oct/Nov 2021 to enable a smooth handover on 1st January 2022.

This is senior administrative role, working alongside the Chair of the CiS Executive Committee and the CiS Trustees to provide support and oversight of CiS activities.

This voluntary role is part-time, requiring approximately 1½ days per week. A background in science is essential and basic administrative, HR and networking skills are desirable. He or she will work closely with the committee and be involved in all aspects of the running of CiS, including HR and line management.

Please see the details on our website - <https://www.cis.org.uk/gensec/> or contact Dr Diana Briggs (secretary@cis.org.uk) for a job description or any questions about the post. Please send your application to Diana by 31st August 2021.

technological change seems to accelerate year on year at a sometimes bewildering speed.

But there are aspects that have not changed at all. Human nature seems unchanged, not just over those four decades, but ever since the activities of people were recorded, warts and all, in the Old Testament scriptures. If there was ever a time for Christians who are scientists to speak into our culture about the future use of scientific advances, surely this is that time. All of these issues demand thought and leadership from Christians. And they should be grounded in a scriptural understanding that humans are made in God's image and that he has given us a responsibility to rule over and to use his creation wisely and in a way that pleases him.

From a personal perspective, I am thrilled to see the way that Christians in Science is seeking to engage people young and old, and encouraging scientists to have a holistic view that recognises both their faith and their scientific work as aspects of their worship of God.

A seminal book for me, as for many others at the time was John Stott's *"Issues facing Christians Today"*. I still have my copy from 1984. Here was a renowned evangelical bible teacher encouraging us to take social and scientific issues seriously. As he wrote in his Introduction,

'one of the most notable features of the worldwide evangelical movement during the last ten to fifteen years has been the recovery of our temporarily mislaid social conscience'. I think the church at large is still behind the curve on many scientific issues, but CiS is a huge force for moving us forward.

The other huge encouragement in my Christian life were the scientific leaders such as Donald Mackay, Colin Russell, John Houghton, John Polkinghorne and many others who acted as mentors to us young scientists. They wrote the books that shaped our thinking, spoke at the annual CiS conferences that brought us together, and modelled how to live a scientific career as a believing Christian. At a time when there was no internet, no Google searches, no YouTube lectures, their clear thinking and speaking was of immense importance. And the launching of the journal *Science and Christian Belief* in 1989 created a repository of thoughtful papers that has had, and continues to have a huge influence.

Although today the science-faith landscape is filled with a burgeoning range of organisations, speakers and even university courses, CiS continues to play a central role in speaking up for engaging with integrity both orthodox Christian faith and accepted science. It is needed more than ever.



2012 Faraday Reception - John Polkinghorne and Bob White

Revd Angela Lynas

Can it be 25 years ago since the first edition of *Precis*? It is wonderful to see the current colourful version with all the interesting articles and insights into the lives of Christians from different spheres of science.

Thinking back over the years, I first took an interest in *Research Scientists' Christian*



Angela 1980's

Fellowship (as it was then) now Christians in Science, as a young graduate trying to find fellowship with other scientists and discuss challenging scientific topics. There was no-one in my church circle to think through issues and I felt rather isolated when I started my first job in a relatively new scientific area. (where I enjoyed a lot of time looking down the microscope at human chromosomes).

I first found out about RSCF at a student event when I met Oliver Barclay and I joined in the 1980's. My early experience was trying to understand some of the discussions at the Annual Conference.

A vacancy arose on the committee and Oliver Barclay asked if I would join. As a young person I was keen to contribute and was most grateful for his encouragement, along with so many others over the years. (When I moved home Oliver helpfully suggested local churches where he grew up and I was welcomed by his family).

On the CiS committee I was keen to support a student day event which CiS hosted in 1989 and 1993 and an event for scientists in industry in 1989 when CiS teamed up with the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity.

During the mid 1980's we had a small local discussion group in London, with people from all ages and backgrounds, interested in discussing faith and science issues.



Angela 2020's

My prayer for CiS was for young, talented Christians and communicators to become involved at the science/faith interface to grapple with some of the topics which seemed to get missed or badly promoted by popular media. Another prayer was for a part time or full-time person able to give CiS a wider reach.

I was delighted to see the work Ruth Bancewicz took on. It is wonderful when prayer is answered along the way.

I left the CiS Committee just after PréCiS started when I became a local churchwarden (tends to swallow up your time!). It is wonderful to see CiS continuing to develop in so many different ways and use technology such as YouTube to great advantage. After 31 years in the pharmaceutical industry I started studying theology, took early retirement and am now a Self-Supporting Minister (Non-Stipendiary) in the Anglican Church.

God has a call on all our lives in different ways. I wonder what God is asking of you?

I may have little time to contribute these days, but I watch with prayerful interest and am delighted to read news from great communicators of faith and science!

Keep up the good work and a big thank you!

LOCAL GROUP NEWS

BRISTOL

For more information please contact Andrew Halestrap - ahalestrap@hotmail.com

DUNDEE

For more details on Dundee events please contact christiansinsciencedundee@gmail.com

EDINBURGH

For more information please email cisedinburgh3@gmail.com

HARROW

For details of future events in Harrow please contact Revd Lyndon North - revlnorth@aol.com

IPSWICH

For more information about future events please contact Dr John Ling - jjling@btopenworld.com

IRELAND

For details please contact Dr Neville Cobbe - neville.cobbe@yahoo.co.uk for more information.

MANCHESTER

Please contact sec.cismanchester@yahoo.co.uk for more details

NORWICH

Please contact sfnorfolk@gmail.com for more details.

OXFORD

For more information, please contact Diana Briggs at diana.briggs@wolfson.oxon.org

READING

Please email Dave Law to discuss restarting this group at dave@readingatwork.org

SHEFFIELD

For more information please email rhoda.hawkins@sheffield.ac.uk

SOUTH WEST

For more information on events please email cissouthwest@gmail.com

*Details of all events
are available
at [www.cis.org.uk/
events](http://www.cis.org.uk/events).*

**If you wish to
start a Local
Group in your
area, please get
in touch with
Stephanie, our
Development
Officer, at
do@cis.org.uk**



SOUTHAMPTON

For information about the group please email Peter May (southampton@cis.org.uk)

ST ANDREWS

For information about the undergraduate group, please contact Dr Andrew Torrance (abt3@st-andrews.ac.uk).

For information about the postgraduate group, please contact Dr Rebecca Goss (rjmg@st-andrews.ac.uk).

SURREY HEATH

For more details please contact John Russell at chynoweth.jw@gmail.com

TYNESIDE & NORTHUMBERLAND

For information on Newcastle events, please contact Bill Clegg at bill.clegg@ncl.ac.uk

WEST MIDLANDS

For more information please contact Godfrey Armitage on g.n.armitage@warwick.ac.uk

WORCESTER

For more information please contact Jim Smith on jgsmith29@aol.com

YORK

For more information please email christiansinsciencyork788@gmail.com