

Newsletter Report to SOFiA AGM 2021

Hopefully, each issue of the newsletter provides something new of value, but a report to the AGM is in danger of being same-old, same-old. I will therefore not repeat the detailed comments I made for the 2019 AGM on the newsletter's layout and structure.

We currently produce 70 printed copies of each newsletter, which is published bimonthly. This number has reduced, partly because of a trend to receive the newsletter as a PDF file via email, rather than in print.

The importance of the newsletter has perhaps increased during COVID lockdowns as the usual means of communicating with one another become difficult or impossible. Of course, that importance is proportional to the amount that people use it to communicate with one another.

Each time I receive an issue of The Listener or open Facebook, I am reminded of what a vanishingly small contribution the newsletter makes to the sum total of what is published today and of the contrast between the Newsletter's one volunteer editor and the Listener's 22 or so paid staff. Even so, most news media have struggled to adapt to the modern world, oriented as it is around the Internet and social media.

My aim in the newsletter is to provide some constructive thoughts about religion, or "Values, Meaning and Spirituality", if you prefer. It is very easy to be dismissive of religious ideas, skeptical about God, the virgin birth and so on but not so easy to be well-thought out and critical and yet constructive. I would like to provide some helpful building blocks that people can incorporate into their worldview and to give food for thought that there is more to our traditions than meets the eye. I am also alert to the danger of "experience-less talk about foreign experiences" (Drewermann).

My thanks go to the team of proof-readers (Shirley Dixon, Maria Cash, Yvonne Curtis and Jocelyn Kirkwood), who pick up many small errors and a few big ones. Also to Peter Cowley who distributes the newsletter and puts it up on our website. I also thank all the contributors, who go to increase the diversity of content and interest in the newsletter.

Some simple requests:

1. A brief summary of a recent meeting of your group.
2. A review of a SOFiA-related book you read recently.
3. A letter to the editor!

Laurie Chisholm

12 October 2021