

Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in
secular ministry

Number 79 October 2001

To help ourselves and others to celebrate the presence of God and the holiness of life in our work, and to see and tell the Christian story there.

<u>Contents</u>	Page
<i>Editorial</i>	2
<i>New Books</i>	3
<i>No Work, No Mass: Re-integrating workplace and faithplace</i>	
<i>Martin Jones</i>	4
<i>More MSE information on the web</i>	7
<i>Work and the local church</i>	8
<i>Rod Badams</i>	
<i>To see, to judge, to act</i>	11
<i>Rt Revd Christopher Mayfield</i>	
<i>Douai Abbey</i>	
– <i>Spirituality in the Workplace</i>	16
<i>Making It Work</i>	17
<i>Margaret Joachim</i>	
<i>Prayers for the stressed – 2</i>	27
<i>Planning CHRISM Occasional Papers</i>	28
<i>Bits'n'pieces</i>	29
<i>Hugh Kay Memorial Lecture</i>	30
<i>Hymn Writing Competition</i>	31
<i>Book Review:</i>	
<i>“How God Looks If You Don’t Start In Church”, Michael Ranken</i>	32
<i>Regional Contacts</i>	36
<i>September 11th, 2001</i>	37
<i>Godfrey Rust</i>	

Copy for next edition by 6 January.

Editorial

Bereavement comes in many shapes and forms, which doesn't make it any easier to come to terms with. Loss seems to have been around more than usual of late.

In August the son of a colleague was killed in a car crash on a Gloucestershire lane. A passenger was also killed, and two more injured. Just a month before another young man from the same village died the same way. It seems that tragedy has a habit of striking those who already grieve.

To a village the scale of loss is as great as that which befell New York and Washington, but for those who suffer the fact is more important than the scale. Godfrey Rust wrote the poem "11th September" reproduced on page 37 very soon after and well captures the shock of the events. It is too easy to forget that places of work were destroyed, where communities work together to contribute to – amongst other things – the common wealth. We all suffer as a result of what happened; we all share in the ministry of re-building.

Another 'bereavement' overtook the team I work in. We recently learned that the re-structuring announced last spring would result in three of our number being 'lopped off' and moved to other work. It is a double loss: they because they are 'lost' and the remainder of us as we do not want to lose them. The experience is part of the fabric of working life, yet unacknowledged and unseen by so much of what goes on in the Church. Monday is seldom part of the Sunday experience, and vice versa. The piece by Martin Jones captures this superbly, and the implicit association of clergy with parish points up what all MSEs experience!

The contributions by Rod Badams and Christopher Mayfield

are of similar high quality, the latter being proof positive that some Bishops do read this Journal! The MSE story by Margaret Joachim is a real gem too. It has again been a pleasure to put this edition together; may you enjoy it as much.

Rob Fox

New Books

**Timothy Jones: “Workday Prayers:
On-the-job Meditations for Tending Your Soul”,**
SPCK, 2001. ISBN 0-281-05435-5 £ 8.99.

- to help you draw sustenance from your spiritual life during your workday, whatever your job;

- meaningful, modern expressions of how we feel and want to pray during our working day.

**Philip Bloy: “The Call to Mission Answered:
Ted Wickham and the Sheffield Industrial Mission,
1944-1959”,**

Disciples Press, 2000. £6, post free, from:

Daily Bread Co-operative,

Bedford Road, Northampton, NN4 7AD.

Comprehensive review of an influential episode in the growth of industrial mission by one who was deeply involved and committed from the beginning.

**John Atherton:
“Public Theology for Changing Times”,**
SPCK, 2000. ISBN 0-291-05209-3, £14.99.

John Atherton builds on the foundations of public theology laid in Manchester by William Temple, Ted Wickham and Ronald Preston. A searching critique of modern society, economics and politics from a distinctive Christian perspective.

No Work, No Mass: Re-integrating workplace and faithplace

Martin Jones, who has contributed this challenging call to Readers to live out their laity, is a Stipendiary Reader in St Albans Diocese and has been full-time Workplace Chaplain in Luton from 1989. This piece is re-produced from "The Reader", by kind permission.

The Holy Communion affirms human work

‘No work, no mass’ is a quote from Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) a Roman Catholic theologian. By it he meant that unless people do the work of baking bread and fermenting wine, there are no raw materials for the Holy Communion, and the ordained priest becomes redundant in his presidential role. This remains true, whether the work is domestic and unpaid, or carried out on an industrial scale for wages.

So, when the offertory of money, wafers, and wine is reverently processed through the nave to the altar, we should perceive these gifts (‘which earth has given and human hands have made...’) as symbolizing the blood, sweat, joys and tears of our own weekly work, paid or unpaid. And we should rejoice that God accepts and sanctifies these imperfect man-made gifts, to ‘reissue’ as sacred food to sustain us spiritually through the coming week. Why don’t we make these connections?

My Father is working still, and so am I

The words spoken by Jesus in John 5.17 undergird the biblical view of work. But David Westcott in his book ‘Work well, live well: rediscovering a biblical view of work’ (1996) writes

of the church's neglect of work, citing a survey by Mark Greene of London Bible College, who found that 75% had never been asked by their minister about their ministry in the workplace, and 50% had never heard a single sermon on work.

Scripture teaches we have a divine command to work (Genesis 1.28: 'Fill the earth and subdue it'), acting as God's stewards in partnership with him (Psalm 8.7). 'Work is part of God's plan of salvation', notes Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* of 1982. We worship a God who is himself a worker: he creates, sustains, redeems, and sanctifies. He intends our work to be prosperous and, unlike Anglican intercessors, has no favourite occupations, treating the work of dustman and nurse with equal regard.

Complementary mission and ministry - lay Christians and Industrial Chaplains

Despite a lack of church encouragement, some Christians do prayerfully try to discern God's presence and activity in their workplaces. The Industrial Christian Fellowship is a helpful national agency, as is the exciting journal *Faith in Business Quarterly*. Ruth Etchells, the former Principal of St John's College, Durham, comments on the calling to lay ministry as follows: 'To be called to lay service is to be called to live fully in the secular world, to be at ease in it, to know its idiom and assumptions, to engage in its arguments and affairs, because one's centre is there. It is not to sally out from one's "real" centre, the parish church, ... for sorties into industry or whatever. It is to live in ... and to earn one's income from them; and there, in that place where one's energies are committed, to engage quite consciously in mission and ministry. It is to see oneself as committed for work outside the "club" of the church in its parishes and diocesan structures, with no responsibility whatever for main-

taining them.' (Quoted in 'Work and Worship', edited C Butland, 1985).

By contrast, the mission and ministry of industrial chaplains is different from and complementary to, this ministry of lay Christians. The chaplain is not employed by the institution. He or she mediates a representative Christian presence in places of work, available to all employees of whatever faith or status. An Industrial chaplain takes an informed interest in the company and the issues it faces and brings these workplace concerns into the worshipping church, enjoying the immense privilege of unsupervised access round the site, as well as being independent of power groups within it.

Reader Ministry: Reconciling faithplace to workplace

There are, I believe, some 10,000 Readers active in the Church of England. All have been trained to lead public worship and to preach. All have done, or are still doing, 'secular' work, either paid or unpaid. All have been trained, in theory, to think theologically about the world and society. But since I was licensed in 1986, few Readers in my experience actually want to make the spiritual and theological connections between parish life and working life! Few of us seem to have the spiritual appetite and self-discipline for this venture. In today's church, to take the secular workplace seriously is to be unfashionable, bizarre, irrelevant, and faintly disloyal. It is more cosy, affirming, and popular, to become a lay clone of the incumbent and PCC, comfortably imitating their hierarchy of priorities!

But in doing so, Readers deprive their clergy and congregations of the greatest potential gift that God has placed in their hands: the gift of reconciling sacred and secular - of bringing together what centuries of sloppy spirituality and church culture have

falsely separated. 'We are failing to make the connections', says the Bishop of Liverpool in a recent address to the Baptist Assembly, 'with the real material world that God loves, sustains, and is redeeming.... We have reduced [Jesus] and his resurrection, and his church and his mission to a subjective, individualistic and private experience', (*Church of England Newspaper*, 11/5/01).

The Vocation of Reader is neither superior nor inferior to that of ordained priest: it is different. Its glorious *difference* lies in its daily rootedness both in the explicitly sacred, and the explicitly secular, and in our duty to join them together. In this sense, we Readers are God's prophetic gift to the Church, twenty-first century Celts, to help it remake these connections. By our obedient love, we can use our training and worldly experience to weld together what human sin and laziness have allowed to grow apart.

More MSE information on the web ...

Your intrepid surfing Editor has beached on a number of topical [sic] paradises recently. Check these out:

www.worknetpartnership.org.uk Run by Geoff Shattock. Useful training and support information. Linked to Metaskills.

www.nextreformation.com Features Solomon's Portico Marketplace Ministry and has links to YWAM. Puts the case for Marketplace Ministry strongly.

www.suite101.com Bivocational Ministry, Rob Ross, a Canadian Southern Baptist waving the flag for MSE. Several very good articles.

www.reality.org.nz Publish Reality Magazine, billed as 'New Zealand's Christian Bi-monthly'. Good article entitled "God's Co-Workers", by Wayne Kirkland.

Work and the local church

*This is the second part of the article by **Rod Badams** that appeared in the April edition and is reproduced from net.working (the newsletter of Christians@work) by kind permission. There is minor editing to the original.*

Can the church do anything to enhance the effective testimony of the lives of its members in the world outside the church? If eight members spent two hours discussing this, the list created would be about five times as long as any of them could have imagined. Here are just a few ideas.

1. Provide preaching and instruction that addresses the challenges they face at work.

There are many Bible passages that bear directly on how the Christian life is to be lived in the world, and yet some preachers seem to prefer to concentrate on theological and doctrinal matters. Important though these are, nothing could be more encouraging to a Christian than to find that the word of God was equipping them to face another week of demanding pressure in the world of work. The preacher does not have to know enough to apply every last detail of what is involved in the working life of the members. But to deal with general principles that each can apply to his or her own circumstances would enrich the quality of their Christian example and usefulness at work.

One of the reasons why some pastors shrink from preaching on such themes is because it is so long since some of them were involved in a secular workplace. They know that life at work is tougher and more stressful than it was 20 years ago. They fear that they may be out of date with some of their percep-

tions. There is no need for this concern however; the biblical principles are clear. A look in the newspapers reveals examples, issues, incidents and facts about everyday working life. Better still is to talk to the working church members. Find out what the issues, challenges and opportunities really are.

2. Make prayer for people at work a central part of the church's prayer.

This can be done when the church gather together for prayer or by encouraging individual prayer. Very few church prayer meetings ever pray about people's workplaces.

Many churches circulate lists of topics and people to pray for. I have never seen any list of this type that mentions the members workplace or occupation. There may be useful and appropriate ways to include this information.

Ask one of the members to write briefly in the church magazine or newsletter about some aspect of their working life. This would not only encourage prayer for that person in his or her work circumstances but would also have the effect of raising the profile of working life generally.

3. Talk to fellow members about working life.

Today there seems to be an unwritten convention that working life is one of those subjects not talked about in church. Perhaps it is thought that to talk about work on a Sunday after worship, or after the weeknight prayer meeting, is somehow bringing the secular into the sacred. But if we are not to talk about it, why does God have so much to say on the subject? Is it not better to encourage one another to have a spiritual view of involvement in the world of work? Conversation between Christians

gives just that opportunity. What could be more useful than asking another church member what matters for prayer had arisen at work during the past week? Is there a colleague in need? A situation that needs resolving? A need for a difficult action in the coming week? Even the question “how are things at work?” will be a great encouragement. It shows that someone is interested.

4. Understand, sympathise with, and be positive about the pressures upon people involved in the world of work.

The degree of pressure and stress faced by people is not the same in every case. People also vary in their capacity to tolerate stress and not all jobs have the same level of demand. Some employers are also better than others at taking care of their staff. All these variables affect the level of stress actually experienced. However there are cases where a Christian’s work responsibilities are so great and demanding that they have little mental and physical energy left for spare time activities in the life of the church. This could be because of extensive travel, long working hours or the level of responsibility borne. Whatever the cause the understanding of the church is paramount. Rather than being dismissively critical, find out more about the actual circumstances and put the extent of their commitment in a positive light. Support the member in the responsibilities they have to exercise in work. Much spiritual good can come from an individual working life when the church sees it as part of the church’s witness. This is the church in action through the week.

Although some of the suggestions in the article may seem a little unexpected they are all simple and uncontroversial. Adopting them will not necessarily change the church ... but the consequences may well change the world.

To see, to judge, to act
The Rt. Revd. Christopher Mayfield,
Bishop of Manchester

This is the first of three articles based on the three elements of presentations given by Bishop Christopher to a gathering of Manchester NSMs on 15 September 2001. The series will continue in the next two editions.

“Seeing” God the creator in the workplace.

How times change. Most of Jesus' early followers were, by our standards, ministers in secular employment. Think of Simon the Zealot, a freedom fighter, alongside Matthew, a tax collector for the forces of occupation. Paul claims it a virtue that he supports his ministry by making tents.

In different way, their secular employment contributes towards their mission to bear witness to the Kingdom of God that was beginning to be seen breaking into daily life and work. Although Jesus at one point calls them away from their nets, it is while they are fishing that Peter, Andrew and James meet the Risen Christ.

The people who really had to justify their existence were those who claimed to be earning their pay by preaching the gospel.

Nowadays the roles are reversed. It is ministers in secular employment who feel that they have to justify themselves. But the minister in secular employment has more in common with the working life of the apostles than today's stipendiary clergy. Archbishop Michael Ramsey, in his classic work “The Christian Priest Today”, says that ministers in secular employment belong

most truly to the apostolic foundation. He writes: "We may learn from them of the inward meaning of priesthood" (SPCK, 1972, p.4). Instead of 'being the vicar' in your place of work, you may have insights for the whole people of God in 'being the priest' for whichever community we serve.

The question I ask is this: "In what ways does ordination help you seek the kingdom of God within your workplace?"

A minister in secular employment has a unique and special role. Within a place of employment you live out your ordination vows within an environment that may neither recognise them nor understand why someone should seek to follow them. Within the church, you are seen as a minister upon whom demands are by employers who may not see themselves as part of any community of faith. Which ever way you turn, whether towards church or towards work, it is as though someone else is always looking over your shoulder.

This may give you a feeling which some call "liminality" a sense of being on the edge... on the edge of the workplace, on the edge of the Church fellowship. That might be a very positive place to stand. Your vision is unique and it will help others. This dilemma is faced by many Christians as they seek to live out their faith in the workplace. And most feel that the church simply fails to address it. Hear this comment from a report that I received last week: "I spend an hour a week teaching in Sunday School and they haul me up to the front of the church to pray for me. The rest of the week I'm a full-time teacher and the church has never prayed for me. That says it all."

A survey of 400 working Christians, published in 1993, revealed that most thought that Church life and work life failed

to connect. Sunday didn't help Monday. Yet 92% of the Christians surveyed saw their work, at least in part, as a vocation. 89% saw it as integral to the mission of the church.

A minister in secular employment has a unique opportunity to make these connections. And there are some theological disciplines that can help. So let us look at some of the resources that are available - and work together in exploring a theology of ministry in the workplace. I believe that the presence of an ordained minister within a workplace will make a difference to it.

I propose that we use a traditional model of theological reflection – **to see, to judge, to act.**

To see - that is, how do we discern the hand of God the creator within the world of work?

To judge - that is, how do we relate God incarnate to the limitations within which we work?

To act - that is, how do we relate the redeeming nature of God's rule to the range of actions open to us within the workplace?

To See - Discerning God the Creator

There is an important sentence missing in the Church of England's new Baptism service. We used to say, "God is the creator of all things, and by the birth of children he gives parents a share in the work and joy of creation."

In the Hebrew tradition, God relates to the created order through the metaphor of Work; many trades and crafts provide an image of theism:

the refiner's fire (Malachi 3.2), the metal worker's forge (Isaiah 1.25 & 54.16), irrigation (Isaiah 43.19, Psalm 104.10-11),

bleaching (Malachi 3.2), building (Psalm 127.1, Isaiah 5.2, Amos 7.8-9), pottery (Jeremiah 18.6), forestry (Isaiah 10.33-34), threshing (Isaiah 28.23-29). This marks Judaism out from the other religions of the ancient world.

God the creator is God the worker. The origins of this insight lie deep within the dawn of human religious consciousness. Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness: and let them have dominion..." (Genesis 1.26). "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (2.15). Yes, a curse follows the Fall: "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread." (3.19). And we live each day within the tension of creation and fall.

But our account of Creation says that it is the privilege, dignity and responsibility of every human being to develop the world under God - what we might call "creative management". Humankind is made in the image of God the Creator, God the refiner, God the potter, God the metalworker. How do we react to the idea of God the sales rep., God the tax inspector [*sounds good to me! Ed.*], God the librarian, God the dentist, God the schoolteacher?

Michael Ranken has been a food technologist for many years. He has also exercised a very distinguished ordained ministry in his secular employment. He says that to affirm God the creator is to affirm a wide range of interdependent activity about which it is difficult to wax lyrical! He says: "The farmer tending crops or animals shares in the work and joy of creation. So does the canner or freezer of his produce, the supermarket assistant, the manufacturer of tyres for the tractor, the scientists testing fertilizers and the bank manager organising finance for them all. The creation they share is concrete; among other things it is part of the creation of you and I. Take the creative

activity of any one of them away and we shall die, literally. I cannot say these words and you cannot hear them unless our muscles have been nourished with the food which they each worked to give us.”

To depend on God is, in part, to depend upon these people and their work. The goodness of God is in what they do.

We believe it in our heads. It's easy to say that we believe in the creator, the Father, the giver of all. But we miss the incarnation itself, that God is known through the flesh and blood, the nuts and bolts, of this world: mediated through the work of human beings. These are not simply symbols, but reality. Think how your workplace, however imperfectly, reflects some aspect of God's creative activity.

Let me introduce you to a resource for theological reflection and engagement. The group CHRISM - the National Association of Christians in secular Ministry - publish a quarterly journal, “Ministers-at-Work”. Here are three stories of how contributors relate their work to God the Creator.

Graham Cornish is a priest from Ripon and Leeds Diocese. He has been President of the Library Association for the year 2000. He says: "I firmly believe that libraries and librarians are an intrinsic part to the revelation of God's creation of the world. An essential part of this creation is the use of the creativity of the human mind. It is the role of the library to reveal this to whoever needs it in whatever place and in whatever format. Librarians have always done this without fear or favour either for the creator or for the person needing access to the creativity."

Richard Syms is a priest who is a professional actor. He says of his profession: "There are things here which can nourish the spiritual health of a nation, which, if we allow to wither, will send our culture spiralling downwards into a valueless and shallow abyss."

At a recent conference of ministers in secular employment a person talked of how the shop-counter could become an altar when the interchange across it became holy.

Over to you! How do you see God the creator at work within your workplace and how do you relate this to the work?

Douai Abbey – Spirituality in the Workplace

Douai Abbey, near Reading, is running a series of weekends, led by Fr Dermot Tredget:

16-18 November:	The Tools of the Workplace
25-27 January:	Relationships in the Workplace
22-24 March:	Taking responsibility for ourselves and for others
10-12 May:	Coping with success and failure
12-14 July:	Developing a Spiritual Practice

Each weekend costs £100.

Further details from:

The Programme Director, Douai Abbey,
Upper Woolhampton, Reading, Berks., RG7 5TQ.
E-mail: douaiabbey@aol.com

Website: www.douaiabbey.org.uk.

Making It Work

*The following is the text of a talk given by **Margaret Joachim** to London WATCH (Women And The Church) at its AGM, 10th May 2001, as one of a series of talks by women in different patterns of ministry, all with the same title. It is an MSE story par excellence – as amusing as it is enlightening. I had great difficulty in resisting the temptation to sprinkle the text liberally with ‘observations’; one will suffice! Ed.*

Well – who am I?

You would be quite justified in wondering why I have been asked to come and talk on “Making It Work”. After all, I’m simply the Willesden WATCH rep – nothing special. However, how I make things work has quite a lot to do with who I am and what I do. First of all, I’ve been a lot of former things, all of which have made a contribution to what happens now.

First, I have been a schoolgirl and student at a school and a college where it was absolutely believed that you could do anything that you wanted to do. I went to college and only vaguely wondered why I was the only female geologist in my year. Which brings me to the first of several “full circle” experiences. Last Sunday I was the first ordained senior member of the college to preach in chapel – something that has been quite ordinary in the men’s colleges for centuries, but which, had I thought about it thirty years ago when I was an undergraduate, would clearly have been quite impossible.

When I came to the end of my degree that I found that not everyone shared my own view of my employability. Back then in 1970 I could not get the job I wanted, as a field geologist. I

could have worked in a lab, analysing someone else's specimens, but I wanted to be out in the wilds, discovering things. (I applied to go to Antarctica, but couldn't – there were apparently no ladies' loos on the boat that took you there.) Had I become a geologist, there would have been no material for the rest of this article. Instead, I trained as a teacher, and thus made my first big mistake. I taught science in a girls' grammar school, and hated it. The school was quite different from the one I'd been to, where the staff were involved in all sorts of extra-curricular activities with the girls. Instead, when the bell rang at 4pm, everyone went home like a shot. And I didn't like teaching children who didn't mind much whether they learned anything or not. (It wasn't that I didn't like teaching – later I had some splendid university extramural classes – I just didn't like children enough.) But that experience taught me something very important – if you make a mistake, stop as soon as you can!

By great good fortune the father of one of my pupils was a geology lecturer, and he took me on as a postgraduate student to do a PhD and three years' post-doctoral research. It was a fascinating time. I found that I am not a natural academic – the environment is too detached from real life. My doctorate is in Pleistocene Entomology – we used fossil beetles to determine the extent and speed of climatic change during the latter part of the last Ice Age. This has not been of enormous subsequent use to me – although one thing about geology is that it gives you an understanding of how long it takes for anything to happen.

Although I changed tack after six years' research (because, despite the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act, by 1979 when I was again looking for a job the North Sea oil exploration boom had just ended and there was a glut of unemployed ge-

ologists) I retain a great interest in geology and the natural world. It is fundamental to my understanding and experience of God. There is something wonderful about cracking open a rock, finding a fossil, and thinking that this is a part of creation and it is the first time it has seen the light of day for a hundred million years.

I am also a former Parliamentary candidate. In the seventies and eighties I fought three general elections – the middle one in Finchley just after the Falklands war. Margaret Thatcher went round the country saying “There is no alternative”, and I went round Finchley saying “Oh yes there is!” I maintain a strong interest and involvement in various aspects of public affairs – though now I am ordained I can’t stand for Parliament any more. But, as with business, politics is where policy is decided and important decisions are made, so it is somewhere where Christians should be. The messier and more difficult the activity, the more Christians need to be involved!

That brings me to the second “full circle” experience. Every time there is an election I am reminded of the choice I made between politics and ordination, and wonder whether I would have been an MP by now. Last time and this time it has been a serious query, as the party I belong to has finally started to win and hold on to seats predictably.

Who am I now?

I am a long-time campaigner for equality between the sexes. I’ve been a member of the Fawcett Society for twenty years, am an ex-chair and now a Trustee. I was a founder of Women Into Public Life, chaired the steering committee which set up the European Women’s Lobby in Brussels, and am involved with a number of other equality organisations.

I'm also a wife and a parent. My marriage has somehow survived for over 30 years (possibly because my husband and I reckon that we're so busy that we've only seen each other for about three years in total during that time.) Our daughter has also survived, graduated in Electronic and Electrical Engineering and now has her dream job as a graduate apprentice engineer with London Underground. She got married two years ago and seems thoroughly happy. I'm tremendously proud of her.

In the various bits of spare time I can scrounge, I am a traction engine, steam railway, old car and general industrial archaeology enthusiast who gardens and makes jam.

All of this gets paid for by my job as Client Delivery Manager in EDS, a huge international information technology services company. I am responsible for delivering the company's services to a large, global (and very difficult) customer. I have a budget of about \$20m this year, a team of 120, and too much travel.

Alongside everything else, I am a priest, specifically a Minister in Secular Employment – an MSE. I'm not telling you all this because it makes me sound important. In fact, listening to it all makes me feel tired! But it is the context in which I am trying to Make It Work.

I frequently get asked two questions

The clergy ask me: "Why do you need to be ordained if you're going to work as well?" All sorts of people ask me: "How do you find time to be a priest as well as working?"

My answers are not what the questioners expect!

To the first question I reply: This is what God wanted – I de-

bated it with him a lot to begin with and I didn't win the argument. *[I bet that was a first! – Ed.]*

The second question is the wrong question. It asks about combining two separate things. If they were separate, it would be very difficult, but they are not – they are simply different aspects of one life. Everywhere, all the time, is an inextricable combination of work, life and priesthood.

I've always felt strongly – long before I had anything that could have been described as “adult” faith, and before I could have articulated it – that if faith and relationship with God were worth anything, they could not be confined to Sundays, to church or to church-related activity.

My aim in life has always been simple!

As far back as I can remember, I've essentially tried to do the same things:

- Make good use of whatever gifts, skills and experience I had
- Promote fairness and equality where I might have some influence
- Enjoy myself – learn, grow and delight in life
- (More recently) – keep in touch with God

If you start from there, Making It Work takes on a rather different aspect.

I have always been – will always be – a campaigner.

It started at school debates, and moved on to politics and various campaign groups. It was this campaigning streak that dragged me into the priesthood! About fifteen years ago, when the campaign for the ordination of women was really getting up a head of steam, I decided that I should join MOW. By that stage I had “come back to church” again after a

twenty-year gap and was an undistinguished member of an ordinary congregation. I had been struck by the way in which the arguments used against ordaining women were almost identical to those which had been used, a century before, against giving them the vote. And I felt that MOW needed some strong campaigners to work and speak for it, who were not themselves wanting ordination and so could speak objectively. So I joined, full of what I could do for the movement, and discovered that God has a truly wicked sense of humour. I only ever made one speech for MOW. Within two months I realised that I should offer for ordination, and I spent five years working through the selection and training process instead.

These days the campaigning mostly breaks into two categories:

- Representative activities, which may be formal or informal. For example, a formal one is being an elected member of the company's European Works Council. Informal ones involve raising problems and speaking up for people when opportunities occur. The other day I bumped into someone who'd come to look for me without knowing who I was. She asked for me; when I enquired what she wanted she said that her boss had sent her down to investigate an issue I'd raised, because "Margaret never makes a fuss without a good reason."
- Pulpit-based attempts to persuade the congregation to take an informed and responsible role in secular activities as part of their service to God

In "ministry-formation-speak" this is known as a prophetic role. It sounds very pompous, and it can be very dangerous. But having strong beliefs can give you the freedom to say and do things that other people might find too risky. Sometimes we are given the words, too. I certainly discovered this during the five years I spent on Y2K work, when I had first to persuade a lot of sceptical people that there was a real problem, and then

get them to do something about it. I ended up with company-wide Y2K responsibility across Europe – a big risk. And it must have been God who prompted me to begin my description to the Board of how we'd succeeded in avoiding the risks by talking about Jonah and how silly he felt when the disaster he had prophesied didn't happen!

I have always been – will always be – a leader

This sounds truly arrogant – but I do have to be careful. If I join something I will be on the committee or chairing it within a year. There are probably two reasons for this. I'm not frightened of taking initiatives and risks, speaking out and driving the action. I also find it very hard to let others take the lead, take a back seat myself and be humble. People give me the role – and I like it! This is not something that it was very appropriate to admit during ordination training, when the emphasis was all about service and “enabling”. But there is no point trying to turn myself into something I'm not.

Being a leader is risky. If you lead, you are visible. If you are an “official” Christian, then you will constantly be looked at by others and silently assessed. Do your deeds match your words (or your observer's assumptions about Christians)?

This is a constant challenge and is the hardest part of what I do. It is all too easy to slip when you are tired, harassed or under the weather. Of course I try to be clean ethically – not to lie, cheat, steal or do anything else which is obviously wrong. But it goes much further than that. Managing a big team involves lots of decisions which come under public scrutiny. How you behave when you are under pressure gives strong clues to your real values. For example:

- How do I manage a big budget cut?
- How do I prioritise conflicting activities?

- How can I deal with an impossible customer, when my management expects one thing but the pressure on staff requires something quite different?
- How can I manage difficult staff fairly (from all points of view)?
- How do I handle endless interruptions (a priest always has time for people!)

I have always been – will always be – too busy!

The real challenge in Making it Work is to find a workable balance. One of my MSE colleagues likes to talk about: “God in the Mass on Sunday; God in the mess on Monday.” The mess, wherever you find it, is as much part of God’s world as the Mass is. The “vision statement” of CHRISM is:

“To help ourselves and others to celebrate the presence of God and the holiness of life in our work, and to see and tell the Christian story there.”

Another MSE colleague thinks of it as: “Finding God at work at work.” (No – that is not a proof-reading error.) The thrust of all this is that one can serve God just as truly in the muddle of everyday life, as one can in the crystalline order of formal worship. And God knows this too!

The company doesn’t pay me to be a priest. I have to do my job as well, or better, than anyone else. Being ordained provides no excuses. There is no way that I can expect to be respected as a priest unless I am first respected as a good person to have on the team. I don’t do many officially priestly things at work. I certainly don’t run prayer groups at lunchtime. But people know who I am and what I do, and other things happen:

- Conversations – lots. My presence also somehow encourages others to talk about “real stuff”. I have an amazing number of serious conversations over lunch.

- Questions – from “Why won’t the vicar christen my brother’s baby?” to “How can you spend a whole week of your holiday shut up in a convent in silence?”
- Opportunities to recognise creativity, goodness, repentance, forgiveness – all of which help God’s work – all in the secular environment and in firmly secular language. My colleagues use football analogies; I sometimes use “kingdom” ones – but always in straightforward, ordinary words.
- Pastoral opportunities. These can be easily missed. They normally crop up as “Have you time for a drink after work?” or as interruptions a few minutes before an unmissable deadline. I spot some of them, but I often wonder how many I miss.

This life is hectic and I have to trust God a lot. There is no time to pray about everything, and sometimes no time to pray about anything. The prayer I regularly make is for God to support and direct me in whatever turns up. It would be easy to slip into thinking that whatever I decide in a situation is right, but along with the freedom and responsibility goes accountability. I regularly check out what I’m doing with a wise old spiritual director, a wise old nun, a wise old MSE, and a wise God.

I am attached to a parish and I do a bit there. There is an early morning Eucharist once a week, a sermon once a month, a study group occasionally, and I preside at the main Sunday service once a month. Recently we had an interregnum – it was depressing to see how many people thought that I would automatically take over as vicar. I must have failed completely to get through to them about what I’m really up to. The interregnum was tough and tiring, but it had a very positive side. Sometimes MSEs wonder whether they are fully

committed to what they are doing, or whether they have simply taken the cushy option and are not really giving up anything to serve God. I discovered that I could do the parish job, but the experience absolutely confirmed my MSE vocation! Now I have an understanding new incumbent who is learning about what you can do with an MSE.

The parish gives me roots in a worshipping community. It is a safe haven, providing rest and refreshment. Having a supportive community behind me helps me to get back out where it's all happening. I take much more from them than I give.

This can be hard for the average member of a congregation to grasp, but they seem to like my down-to-earth sermons. They like me being as tired as they are at the PCC after a day's slog, they like having someone around who has similar experience of downsizing, restructuring, office politics, people manipulation, redundancy, overwork and sheer business nastiness.

So how does it work?

Some of the stipendiary clergy can be very suspicious. They have lots of criticisms of MSEs in general, and probably me in particular.

- Clearly I'm an amateur.
- Clearly I don't understand the real pressures of clerical life.
- Clearly I must want to bring secular management techniques into church.
- Clearly I don't get alongside people in crisis as parish priests can do.
- Clearly I want to dress up on Sundays but don't share the grind during the week.
- In a cash-strapped church, clearly I'm a threat if I do all this stuff for free.

This may all be true, but I am not trying to be like them. Other things are true, too:

- God called me to this, the church recognised and authorised the calling, and the opportunities to exercise it keep coming.
- As an NSM / MSE I have no career prospects of any sort in the church. This is a wonderful freedom!
- Life is incredibly full, tremendously exciting, and very enjoyable.
- Most colleagues appreciate what I'm trying to do.

A month or so ago I was talking to our European HR director over a late-night whisky or three. The conversation meandered around, and suddenly he said; "Rosemary" (his No. 2) "and I talk about you sometimes. We don't know how you manage everything you do – and you're so bloody normal!"

I don't know whether I'm making it work or not. (What are the measures of success - will "bloody normal" do?) But it is wonderful to be able to try.

* * * *

Prayers for the stressed – 2

Lord, help me always to give 100% at work:
12% on Monday,
23% on Tuesday,
40% on Wednesday,
20% on Thursday,
and 5% on Friday.

Planning CHRISM Occasional Papers

The Committee has been turning thoughts to the CHRISM Papers. These are intended as a resource for members, allowing space to go into a topic in more detail than could normally be accommodated in an article in the Journal. They also provide a free standing document, which can be used in specific circumstances with a particular groups of people.

Over past years we have averaged about one a year so we agreed that we should plan to provide one paper each year, as a service to members. The recent paper on “MSEs and Retirement” has given us a good model for creating them. This began with discussion by a small group of people interested in the topic that someone then wrote up. This text was then refined by the contributors and prepared for production. We also recognise that a paper is not, necessarily, an end in itself, but is intended to generate further discussion.

We suggested some possible subjects:

Language - we agreed to prepare this for 2002, based on the July and November meetings

MSE as the conscience of the organisation “in residence”
(from St George’s House meetings)

Redundancy and Job change

MSE and the local church

Job descriptions for MSE

Globalisation (benefits and problems)

Discerning vocations – called by whom? To where?

But this list is just a beginning. We would welcome further suggestions for topics from you. We would also ask for volun-

teers to lead the discussion group on a particular topic that fired them up - and for people who would like to join these discussions. Please write in and let me know – my contact details are at the back of this Journal.

Phil Aspinall

Editor's Note:

CHRISM has to date published 6 Occasional Papers:

- C1 (setting out CHRISM's aims)*
- C2 Care – the kinds of care MSEs are called to exercise*
- C3 Spirituality for Work*
- C4 The Spirit of Sacrifice at Work*
- C5 MSE and Retirement (sent out with last edition)*
- C6 Training for MSE*

These are available on the CHRISM website to download. If you do not have Internet but would like a copy, please contact the Editor or Secretary.

Bits'n'pieces

Pictures of YOU!

CHRISM has been asked to help put together a training pack on MSE for new Bishops on MSE. We are looking for photographs of MSEs at work that might be included. If you have a good quality photo – b&w or colour – of yourself on the job, please forward it to Margaret Joachim (details on rear inside cover) or the Editor. Please put your name and occupation on the back.

CHRISM Reflective weekend

There is still (just!) time to book on this event, at Sutton Cour-

tenay, Oxfordshire, 9 – 11 November. If you would like to join us please contact Phil Aspinall (details on rear inside cover).

***Distinctive Diaconate and
Distinctive news of Women in Ministry***

... are two newsletters edited by the Revd. Sister Teresa, CSA, and contain useful news and network information in the areas they cover.

For further information contact:

sister.teresa@london.anglican.org

St. Andrews House, 2 Tavistock Road, Westbourne Park,
London, W11 1BA.

MSE Job Descriptions

Examples have started to come in – and very interesting some are too! If you have a written job description please send a copy to the Editor. The more we know of the better able CHRISM will be to offer support and advice on these.

***Hugh Kay Memorial Lecture
“Ethics and Globalization”
The Most Reverend Rowan Williams***

Organised by the Christian Association of Business Executives, at St. Botolph’s Church, Aldgate, London. Lecture at 7pm, followed by a reception in the Great Hall of Sir John Cass’s Foundation Primary School, Dukes Place, EC3.

Further details from:

Stanley Kiaer, CABE,
24 Greencoat Place, London, SW1P 1BE.

Hymn Writing Competition
In aid of Alan Christmas Bursary Fund.

£200 prize for the best hymn relating our daily work to our faith.

Alan Christmas was the first Industrial Chaplain in the Diocese of Oxford. He started in Slough in 1966 and was Diocesan Industrial Missioner for fifteen years before his premature death in 1987. The Trustees of the Alan Christmas Bursary Fund are offering a £200 prize to the author of the best new hymn submitted that reflects on the relationship between some aspect(s) of modern daily work and the life of faith. At this stage only the words of the hymn are needed: there is no need to set it to music.

The competition is open to anyone. Two £200 prizes may be awarded: the first for the best hymn by an author aged 21 or over, and the second for the best hymn by any author aged under 21. The Trustees reserve the right not to grant a prize if no hymn of a suitable standard is submitted.

The text of the hymn, together with your name, address, telephone and date of birth (if under 21), must be submitted **by Tuesday 11th December 2001** to:

Mrs Jo Saunders,
Alan Christmas Bursary Fund Hymn Competition,
Diocesan Church House,
North Hinksey,
Oxford OX2 0NB

Book Review:
“How God Looks If You Don’t Start In Church”,
Michael Ranken

My first meeting with Michael Ranken was over a weekend at a house in Birmingham back in 1987. I kept asking loads of questions about MSE, how to do it, and how to justify it to others. All Michael did was tell stories, anecdotes, and deliver deeply enigmatic statements about the life and work of God in his working life. Over the intervening years, I have come to value Michael’s method and to realise we can only tell stories to answer the ever-present question: “but what do you **do**?”

In this book Michael explains why telling stories matters, and is the effective way to give a glimpse of understanding of inexplicable hidden inner meanings and truths. But, in a way I had not experienced with him before, he sets out in detail the context and background for his stories, his understanding of the Faith in which he lives. With the rigorous logic of a scientist he attempts to lead us through his own thought processes.

Firstly, he clarifies how his mind works – how he learns whether something is true by testing it against other things he knows to be true, and how belief encompasses the things held to be true. This is where the stories come in – the truth contained in the inner meaning which may not always be recognised. A story, he says, can always be taken to be true if the inner meaning is true – conversely the surface meaning of a story does not have to be believable. So for example the Creeds of the Church and Bible stories contain inner truths, even if the surface meanings can no longer be true.

He then examines how things found to be true in the world of science and technology are also found to be true in the religious domain. He arrives at three Principles of Existence, derived from science, but held to be equally true when applied to the themes of religious faith. I am never quite sure whether the rules of story can be applied to these – are they the surface meanings or do they themselves contain inner meanings?

It is when Michael moves beyond science that I felt a discontinuity – “there exist realities which science cannever (*my italics*) comprehend or discover”. This seems to cut against the connected theory espoused up to this point, and suggests a greater separation of faith and worldly activity than runs through most of the book. But, he says, it is also a fundamental principle, that nobody can know or do everything!

The second part begins with a sudden shift to a justification for the existence of spirit, separate from body and mind. It is this spirit that enables us to discover scientific truths, which were true before we discovered them. The same spirit underlies and is involved in every activity in the universe, including all the activities of science and technology. Opening one’s own spirit to this spirit is described as the process of prayer; morning prayer, he suggests, can be a contemplation of the day’s “to do” list.

The image of God as creator follows from this – of God as a creative force. “God exists but God’s existence is not like anything we can describe as ‘real’”. Michael is careful to distinguish what God does and what God is like – and analyses the use of stories (again) to suggest the former in order to explain the latter. But he suggests the image of the Trinity, while reflecting the three-ness of things found everywhere, needs to be

replaced with modern meanings. A picture of Jesus follows: as the man who believed the truth about God and lived his whole life as if it were true. Jesus who shows us The Way of true acceptance, sacrifice and reconciliation. He reveals the God-ness of all creation and humanity, expressed ultimately in Resurrection.

The book is peppered with insights from the world of Michael's work as a food technologist. There are masterful examples of the application of food technology in demonstrating the cycle of confession, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation, and in the concept of sacrifice underpinning the cost of life in the universe. The presence of God in the food industry does come through strongly: I was particularly struck by the application of the three principles to food technology (pages 26–27). Everyone should be encouraged to examine their own field of work using this model.

At several points, Michael turns the flow of thought processes on their head. In his preface, he claims his struggle has not been to reconcile the ways of the world to a relatively confident faith. The working world is filled with things which are found trustworthy and true: "it is the things of religion which are obscure and puzzling". He sets out the principles he observes in his work and his technology, and uses these to test the validity of the assumptions of faith. He insists that we should begin with God as Spirit (the essence of what God is) before moving on to God as Creator, which describes only those aspects of God we can encounter in the created world. I was reminded of the professor in the Tom Stoppard play "Jumpers" whose life's work was based on the question "Is God ?", on the grounds that to use more words to describe the question, prejudices the answer.

Part 2 ends with a true call to ‘conversion’, though this is not a term Michael uses, to make the choice of new birth from immediate, self-centred inclinations to The Way of true sacrifice. This leads to a final section drawing out the implications. Michael describes his understanding of the true God, consistent with the stories he has already told. He recognises that a belief in No God is less of a threat than the False God of enterprise for profit to be kept by the individual or the Inadequate God of people who cling to a God who represents the comfort and security of childhood. The True God is greater than either our science or our religion - and we are called to live life as if all that is said about the true God is true.

The question (as so often seems to be the case when we try to explain things from our MSE perspective) is: what others will make of it? One could guess that many committed church people would find its words and ideas rather threatening – not least in the picture painted of those who follow “the Inadequate God” and are looking for certainty and security. On the other hand, I suspect that many of those who find themselves on the fringes of the church, or stand outside it looking in, bemused, will find in this book something that will resonate, so that they could say: “yes, I can believe that”.

It is a rewarding read, which will, I believe, open the ways of an MSE to those who are not already on the wavelength, and, indeed, may open up new visions of the God who is.

Phil Aspinall

“How God Looks If You Don’t Start in Church” is published by and available from Cairns Publications, PO Box 609, Sheffield, S6 2XT at £ 8.00.

E-mail: office@cottercairns.co.uk

Regional Contacts

Can you be a CHRISM Regional contact? CHRISM is thicker on the ground in some parts of the country than others. If you could act as a contact in your area, please get in touch with any member of the Committee (details in rear cover).

What would it entail? Firstly being someone existing or prospective MSEs could speak to and be put in touch with others, then to positively influence those in the churches and key secular organisations, about MSE. Beyond that: whatever you feel is appropriate. Possible activities are:

- 1 Co-ordinate members and other activities in the region.
- 2 Establish and develop contacts with Training Establishments.
- 3 Build up membership within the region.
- 4 Identify and work with key influencers in the various churches.
- 5 Offer assistance with Post Ordination Training on Ministry in the Secular Environment.
- 6 Offer MSE and other relevant Training to all Training Establishments in the region.
- 7 Organise local meetings / discussion groups for those interested in MSE.
- 8 Identify needs of people in the region relating to MSE.
- 9 Build up data relating to MSE in the region.
- 10 Provide updated information on the region to the

CHRISM central database.

- 11 Assist in the establishment of appropriate contracts for MSEs.

September 11th, 2001

A reflection on the events of that date, penned by Godfrey Rust, a published poet, but also a businessman who spends every other week in New York. Reproduced by permission.

What kind of story is this?

Is it the Tower of Babel?

Men said *Come, let us build a city,
with a tower reaching to the heavens,
and make a name for ourselves.*

From all nations they came to build the city
thinking nothing was impossible.

*Today, they said, we will go into this or that market,
carry on business and make money.*

Oh? said James, You do not know what will happen today.

What is your life? You are a mist

that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

Is that it?

Or is it the beginning of Judgment?

Four aircraft of the Apocalypse
coming like thieves in the night,
the henchmen of some AntiChrist
making a few practice runs
to raze the new Jerusalem to dust.
And all of this permitted by the Lord,
for he has said

I brought you into a fertile land

but you defiled it.

You have as many gods as you have cities.

So flee for safety now without delay!

*I am bringing disaster from the north,
even terrible destruction.*

Where then are the gods you made for yourselves?

Let them come if they can save you.

Was it a slaughter of innocents?

Which of us is innocent? Eighteen people died
when a tower fell in Siloam, and Jesus asked
*What, do you think they were greater sinners
than anyone in Jerusalem?*

*No, but I tell you, unless you repent
you will all likewise perish.*

Is that it? Or is it the story of Job?
An honest man trying his best
when all of his hard-won security
is brought down in a sudden calamity
the hour a building fell on all his family.
His servants break the news to him by email.
Job watches, disbelieving, on TV
his life unravelling in front of him.
Weeping in the ruins of his city,
distraught, bewildered, desolate, enraged.
We rush to comfort Job, and so
we should be careful of our feelings,
not to confuse sympathy with
the substance of the lasting grief
of those who will be living from now on
on the legacy of an unthinkable change.
Of course it summons up
the ghosts of our own grievings, whether real
or from our worst imagining; but this
is suffering by proxy: it will have
no answers when God asks his dreadful questions
out of the whirlwind of Job's despair.

Is that it?
Or is it Nehemiah,
who would not be defeated
while everyone else sat in their living rooms
watching the TV pundits play *I told you so*
and prove that nothing could be done?
Nehemiah went out to rebuild the walls

with courage and shrewd management,
armed guards on every corner
keeping watch against a new attack –
and out of so much ruin and despair
he forged a new community
stronger and wiser than it ever was before.

Is that it ?

It is all of these stories, and something more.
For after the accounting of the dead,
when the insurance claims are settled,
and the markets are back to their normal jittery selves,
we have all seen what Hell looks like. In future
we will avoid tall buildings, slowly move away
from cities, fly less often, view
our fellow passengers with circumspection,
seek refuge in more virtual reality and trade
within the safer evils of the Internet.
We listen doubtfully to our leaders' words
as they struggle to fill their own shoes.

Four planes just flew out of Pandora's box:
and when men armed just with razor blades can bring
the whole wide world up to a juddering halt
we know too much and care too little
to believe that this will be the last time.

The big game of Monopoly is over.
The losers' tantrums have become too dangerous.

Even before our anger cools we see
the moral high ground is just
a pile of smoking rubble. Jesus kneels
and writes with his index finger in
the white dust of Manhattan:

Let him who is without sin

launch the first missile.

Who is our enemy
and what can we fight him with?
Where are our allies? Where was God
on September the Eleventh?

He was begging

in old clothes in the subway beneath the World Trade Centre.
He was homeless in Gaza,
imprisoned in Afghanistan,
running the gauntlet to her school in the Ardoyne,
starving in Somalia,
dying of Aids in an Angolan slum,
suffering everywhere in this fast-shrinking world;
and boarding a plane unwittingly in Boston,
heading for an appointment on the 100th floor.

When the time came he stretched out his arms once more to take
the dreadful impact that would pierce his side.

His last message on his fading cell phone
once more to ask forgiveness for them all, before
his body fell under the weight of so much evil.

We bring our cameras to his massive tomb
for any chance of resurrection, now we know
the kind of story that it really is –
united by this common enemy,
sin's terrorism, that we never dreamed
could bring such devastation. This is war.
We line our weapons up: faith, hope, obedience,
prayer, forgiveness, mercy; the explosive power of love.

© Godfrey Rust 2001

May be freely reproduced for non-commercial purposes.

godfrey@wordsout.co.uk

Tailpiece:

Work is love made visible.

Kahlil Gibran