

# Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in  
secular ministry

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*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.*

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***Copy deadline for next edition: 6 April.***

## *Editorial*

The language of our faith and how we use it was the theme of last year's CHRISM Conference in Birmingham, and further developed during the reflective weekend in November. Several of the items in this edition focus on language.

It has been said that Britain and the USA are two nations divided by a common language. How true! But every nation is also divided within itself by language: not just historic dialects, but how we use language in different contexts – does anyone else remember Basil Bernstein and elaborated / restricted codes?

Whilst on holiday last summer we visited friends in Mainz. Dietmar's job is similar to mine, in the German tax administration, and he has to deal with several multinational businesses. He showed me a workbook to accompany a course he was taking in business English, drawing attention to the section on 'gambits'. It was amusing looking at your own language like this! The toughest part of the course, he found, was not the words, but how they are used. German tends to be very direct, whereas the British are anything but: disagreeing often starts "that's an interesting idea, but ...."

To communicate effectively we need not just a language, but the *right* language for the people and place. I work in a department that thrives on jargon and acronyms. It seems that every workplace develops its own language and usage; a word or phrase that has an 'ordinary, everyday' meaning is vested with another, or greater, significance. The same is true to some extent in each community we belong to. (A prize to the first person to tell me what I understand by a PB!).

Christian communities too develop their own language. The words we use and the meanings we give to them are a

'marker', a sign of group belonging, to other community members and to outsiders who recognise the signs. In church circles we can tell if someone is an evangelical or catholic, Anglican or Pentecostal, from the way they use faith language. Talking to fellow faith-group members is made easier by the common language and meaning, but talking to outsiders is a different matter. What do 'redemption' or 'propitiation' mean to those outside the faith group?

MSEs are in a unique position: part of the ministry of God's church, yet familiar with a number of different language codes. MSEs should be able to express the truths of the faith we share in ways that are meaningful to those who do not have access to faith-group language codes. We reach parts of society others cannot, and interpret what is being said to the churches. That is the (relatively) easy bit! How do – should - we interpret the Gospel outside the churches?

There are a number of excellent contributions to that debate in this edition. May it become more than just a debate!

***Rob Fox***

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## ***Martin Jones***

Readers of "Ministers-at-Work" will be saddened to hear of Martin's death on 15 December. His article "No Work: No Mass", reproduced in our October edition, showed the depth of his wisdom and understanding.

Martin was a stipendiary Reader in St. Alban's Diocese, serving in Industrial Mission. He was made an Honorary Canon in recognition of his work in Industrial Mission / Workplace Ministry by Bishop Christopher Hubert on 14 December. Our prayers go out to all his family and friends. He will be remembered with great affection by many. ***Ed.***

## *Introducing: Peter Johnson*

I have been asked to write a personal profile, a task that I am finding very difficult. Probably because, contrary to the belief of many, I do not find myself that interesting a subject! Our esteemed editor, Rob, (*that's quite enough creeping, ed.*) advised me to address the tasks through three sub-headings – me, my work, my ministry. Ever the obedient one I will follow this guidance, so here goes.

### **Me**

I am currently 47 years old, a fact that changes every 11<sup>th</sup> day of June. I am married to Angela, a fact that I hope will not change. We have two girls, Rebecca, who is completing her training as a journalist and is currently looking for work – if any one is interested, and Melanie, who is qualified and working as a Childcare Assistant in a local childcare centre. Angela and I are both teachers. She claims to be a proper teacher as she works in a comprehensive school whereas I am an all-rounder as the head teacher of a primary school in west Cornwall.

I was born in north London – within the sound of Bow bells, thus making me a cockney – but with a mother who used to be a telephonist you would not believe this if you heard me! I lived in Barnet for most of my life up to the age of 21. I tested my vocation as a Friar in the Society of St. Francis in Hilfield and Notting Hill (before Hugh Grant got there). I also tested my calling tot the priesthood when I was 21 but was told to return two years later. In fact I returned 20 years later and was ordained Deacon in 2000 and Priest last year.

We have just moved house to Praa Sands on the south Cornish coast and have a house overlooking the sea that used to belong to a missionary and then a head teacher, so I feel very much at home.

## **My work**

I have been a teacher for 26 years and the head teacher at my current school for 10 years. Currently I am seconded to the local education authority for three days a week as a head teacher support officer for east Cornwall. Approximately 15% of our heads are off with stress related illness and the pilot I and a colleague from the area health authority are employed on is trying to address the problem. The project finishes next Easter and an evaluation will determine what happens after that.

My own school is small, with five classes, and set in beautiful surroundings between Hayle and Penzance. We have a childcare centre on the site offering its provision five days a week, fifty weeks a year, from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm for children aged 3 to 11. This was a national pilot project begun five years ago and has been the prompt for similar initiatives throughout the country. I am also an OFSTED inspector.

## **My ministry**

This seems to be multi-faceted and brings together all the various aspects of my life. In the same year that I was ordained Deacon I also gained my doctorate in Philosophy with particular reference to the promotion of spirituality in education. The work I did for the ten years duration of that qualification have led to a number of off-shoots in the publication of small articles, talks to interested groups and further research along related lines. I see this very much as a part of my ministry as it forms the basis of my philosophy and theology of my work – that education is to train and to draw out and spirituality is defined as the core of the person. My ministry is in many ways an attempt to train people and to draw out of them the very core of their beings so that life may be lived to its fullest extent in response to whatever they deem their core benevolent value, be it called God or some alternative. This is the very meaning of my

work as a teacher, head teacher and support officer.

I am also a member of the Godrevy Team Ministry – a team of five churches on the north Cornish coast. The team has been very good at recognising my ministry, as has the Diocese of Truro, and help me to respect and preserve the integrity of ministry in secular employment. I take services in one of the five churches on two Sundays a month. The other Sundays are given over to CHRISM and my family.

This balance is enormously helpful and a good discipline that helps me avoid feeling obliged to take more services in church. As a consequence it also helps me to reflect and theologise on just what my ministry is, and this I explore through written musings that I pass on to a support group set up during my ordination training. In this group we explore the meaning of theological concepts applied to this ministry.

My particular emphasis at the moment is on intercessory prayer. This is an element of our spiritual lives that I have never felt very confident in but I have been led to a book that has transformed my understanding of it (“Intercessory Prayer”, by Dutch Sheets, published by Regal) and has opened out a whole new aspect of ministry to me.

This emphasis comes at a time when I have been guided toward a Diploma in Personal Coaching that I am about to start. I feel God is moving me toward an emphasis on personal contact with people as well as issues that have wider implications, such as the application of the promotion of spirituality. It's almost as if God is saying: “You've explored the strategic, now look at the operational stuff” – very exciting!

I value highly the work of CHRISM and the support of its members. For me it is an organisation and fellowship that helps me explore with others what our ministry is about and

what message we have for the church and for our world. Taken as a part of God's revelation I firmly believe that we have an important part to play in God's kingdom and in the development of the church universal.

Well, that's my attempt at a personal profile, and on reading it back to myself it appears more interesting than if you met me in the flesh. I hope it has given our editor what was required (*certainly has, ed.*) and I look forward to meeting any readers at future CHRISM events.

*Peter was elected a Moderator of CHRISM at the 2001 AGM and will thus be Presiding Moderator for 2002-3.*

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## ***A Ministry of Mediation***

***Geoff Jaques***

*"Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it had been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters."*

**1 Corinthians 1:10-11**

The resolution of conflict is something that has interested me for many years, when asked on my ordination training course with NEOC a few years ago to pick a particular verse or phrase from the Bible, mine was "Blessed are the peacemakers ...." Having read the review of Yvonne Craig's book, "Peacemaking for Churches", in The Church Times in June 1999 (and subsequently read the book), I was clear that there was much to be done – in the world in general and churches in particular.



There are many relevant Biblical texts, including:

*"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation"*

**2 Corinthians 5:18**

*"Be careful that no one is deprived of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness should begin to grow and make trouble."*

**Hebrews 12:15**

I believe we all have gifts which enable each of us to be peacemakers. We can all build bridges, whether in our places of work, our homes, or our churches. Everyday we are faced with choices – we can add fuel to the fires of dispute or we can work to help people resolve their differences.

About 4 years ago, a colleague of mine first suggested mediation as an area for me to pursue. At the time it sounded like one of those bright ideas friends have that don't really make sense to the recipient. On reflection it was a bit like a suggestion from a fellow churchgoer about 15 years ago that I should consider ordination! Well that one took about 10 years to sink in; I'm pleased to say that the idea of training to become a mediator matured rather quicker – maybe I'd learned something along the way.

There are many ways of dispute resolution – arbitration, litigation and many more. Each have their place. In this article, I will focus on Mediation.

Mediation is a process which uses a neutral third party to assist the disputing parties to reach their own settlement. It's a voluntary process in which the mediator seeks to explore the true feelings, aspirations, hopes and fears of the parties in an impartial, independent, confidential way. Unlike Arbiters and Judges, Mediators don't make any decisions, nor do they need expertise in the subject under discussion.

The key skills and behaviours for a mediator include: listening; being impartial, open, trustworthy; awareness of feelings of self and others and an ability to manage those appropriately; and an understanding of people and situations.

Mediation is now being used in a wide variety of areas:

**Commercial:** following the Wolf Report, many judges now refer cases to mediation to see if the parties can resolve the situation before taking them in court.

**Community:** many organisations, using volunteer mediators have grown up around the country over the last 10 years.

**Family:** helping couples who have decided to separate to sort out financial, property and child contact matters.

**Medical, Schools (Peer & Specific Educational Needs), Victim / Offender, and Workplace** are just some of the other areas where mediation is being used to help people resolve their disagreements.

What about within the church? We are called to reconcile ourselves with our brothers and sisters and yet there are so many disputes which fester and grow within churches. Disputes can be based on different views about a whole host of things – faith, beliefs, music, theology, ecclesiology - as well as all the differences found amongst people in the secular world.

‘Grace and Peace’ a phrase to be found at the beginning of most of St Paul’s letters. Most churches spell out the importance of Grace, few place similar emphasis on Peace.

I will continue to practice my Ministry of Mediation in a wide variety of secular fields – Commercial, Community and Fam-

ily – whilst seeking to develop it within the church. I would be keen to hear from others who are either already involved in this form of ministry or are interested in exploring it further.

*(Geoff's contact details can be found on the inside rear cover)*

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## ***Spirituality – is it something you do or something you have?***

***Phil Aspinall***

*(Phil Aspinall and Stan Frost attended the 2001 Annual Conference of the Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (APT). This is the story of their trip).*

After a weekend with APT and the Episcopal Self Supporting Ministers (NASSAM), this seems to be the question which is left unresolved.

APT met this year at Mo Ranch – an amazingly extensive collection of residential, recreational and religious resources in the limestone hill country above San Antonio, Texas, on the banks of the Guadeloupe River. The huge site – the gift of a former Conoco Oil executive - belongs to the local church synod and is used by many and varied groups.

The theme for the weekend was “Spirituality”. And APT had brought together a wide range of speakers to demonstrate a diversity of approaches – from Celtic earthedness to the worship of Taize, from the discipline of Benedictine Rule to anointing with oils. We learned that there are Diploma courses before you can become a Spiritual Director, that meal times can become a “Sacred Space”, that trapeze artists have to let go of one bar before they fly though the air to the next.

There was a lot – too much – to take in, and all crammed into

rather too short a time frame, restricted by travelling times (and the fact that a Texan “just outside San Antonio” means a 2 hour drive). But the kaleidoscope of possibilities led to a very spiritually stimulating weekend. Here are some high spots for me:

- The Celtic sense of connectedness with creation engendered by this beautiful location (and by sitting in the river in the whirlpools created by the rapids)
- The thought that while our minds may distort our recollection of the events of a day, the record of what our hands have touched or handled is always true
- The creative energy released when, in a post-lunch slump, we were asked to make an image of our spiritual journeys
- An anointing with fragrant oils

But, as always, the key joy comes in meeting with so many friends, old and new, and learning of the things that have been happening in their lives, their work and their churches. And especially at this time of crisis: to understand their fears and to learn something of the strong reaction against the current course of war.

This was not a large meeting – perhaps reflecting the anxieties about travelling at this time. But it also highlighted the concern in both APT and NASSAM about the hard core of regulars who attend all the meetings, and the need to grow their active membership. (Now doesn't that sound familiar!). It was also interesting to learn of NASSAM's plan to mail all Episcopalian non-stipendiary clergy to ask them to explore their secular vocation with NASSAM.

May I encourage you to book the date in your diary now for next year – you will be assured of a warm welcome. The conference is 1 – 3 November, 2002 in Orange, California – just the time of year to grab a little Californian sunshine !

**POSTSCRIPT:**

*What Phil omits to mention is that he was presented at the Conference with the Dietrich Award for distinguished service in the cause of MSE with CHRISM, notably for his international work! Our warm congratulations go to Phil, and our thanks to our cousins across the pond for their continued support and fellowship.*



*Phil being presented with the Dietrich Award by Fred Bunning, APT Moderator for 2001-2.*

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***New post for Hugh***

Hugh Lee, past Moderator of CHRISM, is to take up the post of Priest in Charge, St. Michael at the North Gate, Oxford, including a city centre ministry. We wish Hugh every blessing in this new challenge.

## *To Judge*

*How do we relate God incarnate to the limitations within which we work?*

*This is the second article in a series of three by Christopher Mayfield, Bishop of Manchester, entitled 'To See, To Judge, To Act', examining Ministry in Secular Employment. It was delivered as a talk to a gathering of MSEs, NSMs and OLMs in the Manchester Diocese, September 2001.*

To look for God's creative activity within the workplace reveals some uncomfortable questions:

- § They may be to do with management. The aims of an organisation might be laudable - but what about the betrayals of trust and double-dealing some feel necessary to keep the show on the road?
  
- § They may be to do with the product. Some have a conscience about selling tobacco, alcohol or arms, but also have a living to make to support their family.
  
- § They may be to do with the ethical dilemmas within a job. A maternity nurse may be asked to help save life at one end of the ward and terminate it at the other.

I here's an old story of a person who was lost. He came to a village, and asked for directions from the local post office. The shopkeeper hesitated. "Well if I was you I wouldn't start from here!" That, in a nutshell, expresses the dilemma we have in seeing a God of moral absolutes, of pure goodness, in a world that falls short of ideal.

To speak of God incarnate is to speak of God sharing his/her very nature within the compromises, hurts and entrap-

ments of the world as it is.

Peter Hall, formerly Bishop of Woolwich, in 1993 said this:  
"Religious people are peculiarly unwilling to recognise that most choices are between greater or lesser evils. Because we believe in goodness and love as absolute values, we imagine we can make choices in which such absolutes are open to us. They rarely are. They never worked for Jesus, who was born into a world to live out fully God's love for humankind. Even by being born, it led to other children in Bethlehem being slaughtered. His mission hurt his own family. For his mother it was like a 'sharp sword'. If our Lord found that whatever course he chose was going to hurt somebody, how can we, his followers, expect to be free from such consequences? But people with whom we need to share our faith certainly know they cannot avoid it. They feel condemned by a faith that suggests they cannot make choices untinged by evil. They know their hands are dirty, and will go on being so. They need a Gospel that unflinchingly recognizes that."

Our starting-point is well expressed in St. Paul's letter to the Philippians:

*"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness"*  
(Chapter 2).

God accepted the *limitations* of human existence in order to redeem them. God didn't avoid them.

A senior Industrial Missioner, addressing managers in Glasgow some years ago, said that many Christians see compromise as a dirty word. And so it is if it means simply putting up with a bad job. But he went on to say that Christians could accept compromise while continuing to analyse and act on the various factors surrounding the problem. "Compromise is ethically

static. Compromise plus questioning is ethically dynamic.”

One possibility is to opt out of a compromising decision or situation - that is, to resign. Sometimes an individual's conscience, before the Word of God, will demand nothing less. But many of the decisions we make are not that absolute. Michael Ranken, whom I quoted earlier, reflects upon the way we can feel trapped.

“A man with a gun robs a bank. He sinned, we say. But a psychologist asks, ‘Did this man sin or his father? Or the society which raised him?’

“At the time the bank is being robbed, a large sum of money is being transferred from the (contributory) pension fund of a local business to an investment trust whose portfolio includes companies in Brazil and Taiwan with excellent profits, prospects, repressive employment policies and aggressive sales pitches, which are undermining jobs in manufacturing industries here. The clerk who makes the computer entry knows much of this and is aware that he is simultaneously doing good to some of his immediate neighbours and probably evil to many unknown people in several countries. He does his work well, and he commits no identifiable sin, but still he shares in the sin of the world and he shares its guilt. He suffers and is unable to do anything about it. To resign, to refuse his task, to push it on to someone else, will solve nothing; he cannot come down from his cross.”

St. Paul continues his letter to the Philippians by quoting a popular hymn:

*“And being found in human form, Christ Jesus humbled himself*

*And became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.” (2:7,8).*



God incarnate embraces voluntarily the bank clerk trapped in his work, and the individuals whose livelihoods are threatened by the decisions he puts into practice. He lives within the humiliation of being trapped, and somehow makes the limitations, which define his life on earth, work for him in advancing, through the cross, the Kingdom of God.

I wonder if you have examples of how you have experienced similar tensions in your work? A self-conscious choice that means someone is bound to get hurt no matter what we decide? A knowledge that we are part of a bigger pattern of social or economic organisation which we believe to be fundamentally unfair?

How do we cope when our contract of employment requires us to do things which, from a Christian perspective, we disapprove of: such as disciplining people whose predicament we understand? Or making people redundant through no fault of their own?

Are there ways in which we experience God within the circumstances? Could we make the limitations of our situation work for our understanding of ministry? Do we have a story that remains unresolved, untidy, a source of frustration?

*Do you have such a story? If so, why not share it with others? There does not have to be an ending, a resolution, simply a story of ministry in secular employment that draws out the tensions of the situation at work and God's presence in the midst of it. YOUR contribution is important! Write in and share it with other readers of "Ministers-at-Work".* Ed.

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## *The Gospel in Plain Language ...*

*... was the theme of the July 2001 CHRISM Conference. This article is put together from the flipcharts produced by the four groups we worked in between the input sessions. Never has so much been produced by so few in so short a time!*

**Group 1** looked at the Gospel from the point of view of telling stories from experience. Our language comes from day-to-day experience: the merging of two health authorities, the ending of a department and so on.

In practice, three different languages may be needed:  
for self / other MSEs,  
for work colleagues,  
for Church / institution.

The question is posed: **are we trying too hard to find language that the church understands when we have one that works already ?**

*Parables are story, and new parables grow from our own experience – we tell stories so that others might learn. The “objective” is implicit – it seldom needs to be spoken (but we might hold differing views on the “objective” message).*

Another questions arises: how far should we engage in the “political”? Does this flow from “being with”?

**Group 3** concentrated on communicating “The Gospel”:  
Listening, Attentiveness, Resonating, Being present.  
It is important NOT to use:

clichés; Churchy, Middle class, language.

The importance of ideology and involvement are recognised,

together with openness to those outside.

Within our society there are many languages and cultures – dependent on many factors. Our task is dismantling suspicion, even where the suspicion may be pinned on us. Communication is most effective where we learn other languages - especially of the poor. We need honesty about power and exploitation, creating trust

A fundamental distinction becomes important: Do we have a message to take? Or are we teasing out the message that is there ?

*Groups 2 and 4 looked at 'management language for the Church'. It is common to apply Churchy words and concepts to circumstances we find in the secular world, yet where secular language is applied to the Church it is often dismissed as inappropriate. If the language of the situation fits best, why not use it?*

**Group 2** recognised that there is a difference between the words we use and the ideas we are trying to express. Communication involves the speaker and the hearers – and different hearers may have different perceptions.

This group also identified the need for three different languages:

with clergy,  
in the liturgy,  
in workplaces.

Church use of language throws up some questions: why are clergy “trained” before ordination and “educated” after?

Words can be drawn from management experiences – some good, some bad:

## *Positives*

Patient Centred  
Holistic Approach  
Whole systems  
Changing people's attitudes  
– Metanoia  
Winning hearts and minds  
Life-long learning  
Mission Statement

## *Negatives*

League tables  
Traffic light system  
Naming & Shaming  
Performance Criteria  
Measurement  
Accreditation  
Training  
Targets  
Rationalisation  
Manipulation

**Group 4** set about drawing words from our worlds of work: Managers, resources, leaders, people, leadership at all levels, relationships, Jesus Christ – C.E.O.- servant – leader – encourages team work, total consistency, business plan, review / appraisal, strengths / weaknesses, effectiveness / excellence, assessment / audit, tools and training.

Appropriate use of skills is important (does the Church de-skill?). Is the language of the skilled heard or denied ?

Can we be a manager **and** a friend? Does a manager - "walk alongside", Emmaus - or give orders, or both?

Some other words from our experience of work that describe what the Church does and is:

Marketing - product, target market, market share, competitors, niche market, collateral  
USP - unique selling proposition, service levels (!), repeat business  
USP Product = being  
Essential product – is always the same  
Product - not manufacturers but sales and distribution, badge engineering, are we a

- brand ? (are all soap powders equal ?)
- What is the "Christian product"?
- What is the "MSE Product"?

Managing customer perceptions

- research
- focus groups
- customer satisfaction

Define customer

Segmenting market (Parishes? The local church?)

The meeting posed a final question:

**How would the Church need to behave if it looked at what it is doing in this way ?**

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## ***Christians at Work - Conference 2002***

Saturday, 18 May, on the theme of coping with change from a Christian perspective.

Further information from:

Christians at Work, PO Box 1746, Rugby, CV21 3ZS.

E-mail: [office@christiansatwork.org.uk](mailto:office@christiansatwork.org.uk).

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## ***The dangers of Church life - 1***

It is alleged that the following bill was recently received by a choir from a dry cleaner:

"Invoice for cleaning 3 cossacks"!!!!!!

For the computer literate, try running "paraclete" through your spell-checker. (And I always thought the Spirit was in the form of a dove!).

## *Mind your language!*

*Dorrie Johnson*

"Oh, Christ!"

... and with a more or less shamefaced grin and a muttered apology, the swearer acknowledges the presence of the Christian but also expects a fairly predictable response. The Christian usually obliges, possibly as much to save her or his own embarrassment as that of the swearer. "That's OK" or "I'm merely his messenger" or "I call on him, too" or less magnanimously, "you've heard of him, then", or whatever.

It may be the only way the presence of God in the workplace is acknowledged. There are other ways in which the presence of God may be experienced but many of them remain neither recognised nor identified, even by faithful Christians. I do not refer to examples of moral or ethical behaviour. Nor do I refer to the lunchtime meetings of Christians, the faith and work groups, as honest and Christian as they may be. Neither do I refer to evangelising nor actions aimed at winning people for Christ. The aspect I want to consider is the understanding of the presence of God inherent in the work or working itself – to discuss how we might discern the signs of God in the workplace.

*I go to church to find God* I think that these must be some of the saddest words in the world. This is not because I disagree that God might be found there, but because the words imply that the person has not been able to find God anywhere else. That is a tragedy.

Has no-one, no-one ever, been able to point to God's presence in the ordinary, everyday activities of life? Has it not been possible, ever, for that person to find evidence of God's spirit in the day-to-day working environment? What have we done to hide God so well? How can we - as minis-

ters in secular employment - help Christians to make the links between what we learn of God on Sunday and the experience of God's creative, sustaining love and energising spirit Monday to Saturday?

There are many contexts in which work takes place – paid employment, itself many-faceted from the doing to the done-onto, home work, voluntary work, scholars' activities and of course work takes place even in the contexts of unemployment, retirement and leisure. I shall focus, for this exercise, on the Christian in paid employment. What *are* the experiences that Christians have of God at work? How do we help people to recognise and articulate those experiences as 'of God'? Do we use the right language?

Christians are nurtured in a faith described in religious language. This uses words such as redemption, grace, revelation or mercy. By and large, we know what they mean and the context in which we use them – the church. I don't think it is helpful to use them in the working world. Many believe, as I do, that God is incarnate in the world, active, responsive, loving, energising and reconciling. This is often recognised, and spoken of, in terms of such kingdom values as joy, compassion, justice, peace and so on. However, Sunday by Sunday we use words such as salvation, resurrection, holiness, redemption, grace. These words lie at the heart of our faith yet much more rarely can people identify the presence of God in the work place in these terms. And quite rightly – the language is not the language of the work place. However, the truths that these words convey are also there in the work place even though we so often do not seem to consider it possible or relevant. Can we not recognise it because we do not have the language to describe it?

The understanding which we so often gain of God is restricted, limited, hidebound, curtailed and made safe by the language

we use to describe our experience. We inherit religious language which the church has used over centuries (and the meanings of some of them have changed too, over that time). Instead of giving us the freedom and exhilaration and effervescent enthusiasm to describe our experience of God, our religious language wraps it up in words which we only usually use in the location (generally solemn) of church or religious meetings. These words, I venture to suggest, stifle our understanding of the dynamic power of love uniquely present in all of creation – in *all* of creation. This power of love is present in us, in our activities, all of our activities, significant and insignificant, holy and 'secular'.

There is a very useful reflection in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigation 1* and, for some of us, even more usefully reproduced in *The Wittgenstein Reader*, edited by Anthony Kenny. [ *Philosophical Investigations*], 243-314; Lecture on Private Experience, (ed. R Rhees, *Philosophical Review*, LXXVII, 1968) pp.278-81, 284-5, 288-91, 295-7, 316-18; *The Wittgenstein Reader* Ed Anthony Kenny London:Blackwell 1994]

In the chapter *Private Language and Private Experience*, Wittgenstein turns his attention to words used to refer to sensations. He poses the questions: how is the connexion between the name and the thing being named set up and how does a human being learn the names of sensations? He suggests a possible explanation – a child hurts himself and he cries. Then adults talk to him and teach him explanations and later, sentences.

He uses an example, the giving of a name to outward signs of pain, when describing how a child might be taught the use of the word toothache – not merely that the child might name his own pain but to share the understanding of 'toothache'. Wittgenstein makes another not dissimilar reflection on, for example, the comment 'how blue the sky is'. The speaker makes the assumption that the hearer has the



same understanding of the word 'blue'. Both have learnt the word and the sensation described.

Of course his argument is far longer, more complex and interesting than as I have expressed it in the examples I have given. I use them to illustrate the void we risk introducing when we describe our faith in terms which people without such familiarity will not understand. We do not often go out of our way to find a common understanding of a sensation through which to communicate our faith experience. (I sometimes wonder whether faithful people in our churches or those listening to broadcast services understand some of the more obscure words we hear used). The use of religious words, because they are so often narrowly applied, also encourages other Christians to link them only with Sunday, with 'religion', with the dogma of faith but not with experience of God.

We need to find words which help other people to recognise their 'of God' experiences. If we claim to be ministers in secular employment I believe we have a responsibility to help people realise that they do have these experiences in their ordinary working every-day lives and to find the words to express them. These experiences can then be linked with those knowingly related to their faith gained through their Sunday experiences. This could enable them to see their experience at work as of God, to realise their incarnational faith. So what are these words?

I do not particularly want to ditch all religious words although at times I find their use of limited value. Rather I want to find other words to describe experience so that people may recognise the experience and then appreciate it as being 'of God' even when it is not in church, even when it is in secular employment. I have struggled with this for a while and have suggested a number of alternative ways in which we might describe similar experiences, alternative ways in which the ex-

perience suggested by religious words might be expressed. I offer two examples - consider the words redemption and mercy. [ Word parallels: an exercise for use in groups when considering the use of religious and secular language. This was introduced to CHRISM Conference November 2001. Further information from the author. ]

God's redemption (a religious word) is being worked out all the time. It is there whenever someone is freed from stereotyping or from despair. It is there in demonstrations of acceptance, of toleration or of forgiveness. It is there when one person acknowledges another and gives her or him a sense of real value. It is there when attempts are made to make up for wrongdoing and hurt.

How can we point up these experiences so that people can recognise God in their lives? How can we give expression to these experiences so that they can be *seen* as 'redemption' being accomplished day by day? How can we make the experience described by religious words used on Sunday, recognisable in the experience of people's lives from Monday to Saturday? Each of us works in a different context and the activities in your workplace will be different from mine. Each of us needs to be aware, to watch for the signs, to recognise where and when they arise. If we can help other Christians to do this same discerning for themselves, that is a blessing. If it is an exercise that we have to undertake in isolation because the opportunities to share are not there, at least we can give thanks for it. If we can go further and see where opportunities might be made for these activities to be made possible and the signs to be made evident, that too, is something to be thankful for.

Each week, Sunday by Sunday, we ask for God's mercy on us. We hear of God's mercy, preached from the pulpit. Mercy is not an everyday word. How can the experience of mercy be realised, recognised and articulated in our every

day lives? It is there in the encounter with compassion at work. It is there in the acts of clemency within friendships and relationships of humanity, in the care for those worse off or in trouble. It is there in the leniency of disputes resolved, in understanding which leads to forgiveness. Mercy is a Sunday word. The experience of mercy under other names is found in secular employment as it is in the church. How can we show this to be true? We have to 'see' the activities which demonstrate it and find the words to describe it.

If we want people to recognise the presence of God in their lives in their ordinary working environments we have to find words which enable those experiences to be recognised and named. I believe very strongly in the dynamic, energising, provoking, encouraging, demanding, caring, loving power, sustaining presence of God in all of life. I do not only experience this on Sunday. We so readily dismiss our own experiences as being human, not Godly – yet we also claim that God is incarnate, in creation, in us. We believe that we are in relationship with God, that God's spirit is vibrant and present with us. We might be in danger of trying to shut it up in church buildings.

Finding language to describe sensations is not easy, especially when we have 'learned' that these experiences are religious and therefore to do with 'holy' or 'special' times. This will not be an easy exercise. One of the first things to do is to educate ourselves. We are conditioned as much as anyone else. We, too, are brought up to use religious words to describe our experience of God. We, also, have to learn a new language. How do we find the words to help people to make these links? We have to find words for ourselves first, ordinary secular words which describe our experience so that we can share that with other people.

We have to find ways of seeking evidence of those experi-

ences in the day-to-day world. How can we recognise the working out of confession and repentance, of mission, of resurrection, of eschatology perhaps or prophecy or revelation – in *our* working lives and describe it using not church words but ordinary every day language? We have to look for examples – but they are there before us all the time. We have to train ourselves to recognise them in a language which is that used in our working environment. Only then, I think, will we be able to help other people to recognise their experiences in their work, at work, as of God.

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## *A Striking Reminder*

*Phil Aspinall*

I finally got around to reading John Mantle's "Britain's first worker priests" in the space afforded to me by a 13 hour air flight – on a business trip in my vocation as a "worker priest". I am struck by the comments about those who were called and trained as NSMs but who have found their way into simply being supports for an ailing parochial systems – extra pairs of hands to maintain an inwards looking life of the parish church (apologies for the Anglican terminology). The courage of those first worker priests was to follow the French model and take a stand for living and working with others as a **distinctive** ministry.

There seem to me to be two challenges that John Mantle throws out to us. The first is to those of us in CHRISM who have trained as NSM to be true to the original vision of Mervyn Stockwood in the Southwark Ordination Course – to be priests in our daily working lives and to be true to our vocation to ministry in the secular world. There is often (even in CHRISM circles) talk about balancing this with our parochial roles. But if we move too far in this direction we have, surely, missed the point that MSEs are called to minister in

secular employment, not to shore up the parochial system (and I confess to having been guilty of falling into this trap in the past). John Mantle's book reminds us that if we start talking about maintaining the balance we are missing the distinctiveness of what we are for, and I agree strongly with John. However, his second challenge is that we are all in middle class jobs and that we are therefore no longer *worker* priests. I have frequently said at the meetings in Frankfurt –that we in the UK are not “Arbeiterpriester”, but “Werwanlungspriester” – and it always raises a laugh. But if we as MSEs are to be part of this world of industry, business and commerce, this actually means that we have to be caught up in it at all levels.

Incarnational ministry is not just about relating to other shop floor workers – in this I disagree profoundly with John Mantle. It is also about being engaged at the managerial level with those who have to make (often hard) managerial decisions – and yet still be true to our calling as the servant of Others in the model of Jesus, the servant of all.

I write this as a reminder to CHRISM to be true to our calling, maintaining the radical agenda of the first worker priests of exploring a distinctive ministry - of “being with”, the people we find ourselves with in our daily work.

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***Book Review – Rob Fox***  
***“Ministry issues: mapping the trends for the***  
***Church of England”,***  
***Gordon W Kuhrt, Church House Publishing, 2001.***

Yes, this book is somewhat parochial (in both senses) but the issues and trends it identifies apply in some degree to every denomination in Britain. As Gordon Kuhrt is Director of Ministry for the Church of England it will be widely read and influ-

ential, because of its accessibility and scholarship as much as its authority, and it deserves to be.

The book falls into three broad sections. Part 1, Ministry and Strategy, is a concise but comprehensive and excellently summarised survey of the main developments in the Church of England's understanding, resourcing and deployment for ministry over the past 40 years. Each key report and paper is summarised, with succinct quotation, and placed in historical and ecumenical context.

This part of the book is the author's own work and displays a wide range of research and clear grasp of the major issues he identifies. An impressive list of consultations is given, including CHRISM, and every aspect of recognised ministry receives some attention. Not surprisingly, although the growing understanding of ministry as belonging to the whole people of God is emphasised, the dominant concern is with the stipendiary clergy. In this it is fair to say that the content is only following the material and reflects the facts. An analysis of why conditions of employment, numbers, and financing of stipendiary clergy have so dominated the understanding of ministry would have been an interesting inclusion but in one sense this is not the place: controversy is studiously avoided.

Part 2, Mapping the areas of ministry, is a compendium of short chapters on particular aspects of ministry, each written by specialists in that field. Topics include: vocation, selection, training (several chapters on different kinds), various aspects of (stipendiary) clergy conditions of service, lay ministry (several aspects), local and ordained local ministry, Chaplaincy. MSE does get a mention: in the chapter on Non-Stipendiary Ministry penned by Mark Hodge and John Mantle. All too brief, this is nevertheless a thoughtful and affirming contribution by two well-informed and sympathetic

friends of MSE.

The final section of the book, and an important one, consists of the 12 Appendices. These give extended excerpts from key documents and up to date information on numbers and deployment of authorised and licensed ministers, even venturing a figure for MSEs. The information here is an important resource for understanding the current structure of formal ministry in the Church of England.

For those looking for support to MSE this book will in many ways be a disappointment. Compared with other identified distinctive ministry, such as Readers, Chaplains, Church Army and ministry to the Deaf, MSE appears marginal at best. On the other hand it gives the opportunity to place MSE within the context of the Church of England's ministry as a whole (and similarly for other churches). To take one example: on page 52 the author draws out the six themes he identifies from the key statements on ministry from 1978, the third of which is "national *parochial* ministry and mission". The parish is repeatedly seen as the basic unit for mission; read the book for the theological justifications for this. In practice many parishes have a non-resident working population, workplace communities which seldom have any contact with the local church. Stipendiary parish clergy rarely either receive appropriate training to exercise ministry in these communities or make any contact with them. In this sense no-go areas for a Church of England determined to maintain a comprehensive parochial coverage already exist. The new housing estate may be seen as a place of ministry by the local church, the new industrial estate seldom is; but the MSE is already there.

Reading this book and using its resources also provides an opportunity for Anglican MSEs to position themselves locate within the church's ministry: for themselves and for others. The contribution of many other expressions of ministry is al-

ready well known and understood, that of MSE much less so. An important task is to change that: *“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”.*

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### ***“The meaning is the waiting”***

*(from a poem by R. S. Thomas, read at evening worship, CHRISM Reflective Weekend, Sutton Courtenay, November, 2001)*

*K Ruth Stables, Health Service Manager*

How difficult! Imagine saying that to an outpatient whose experience may be of waiting and more waiting:

- § For an appointment to see the GP;
- § For the tests at the hospital that the GP wants to organise;
- § For the appointment to see the Consultant (not over 26 weeks, after 1 April 2002 – but 6 months is still a long wait if you are worried and anxious!);
- § For the appointment in the clinic – sitting waiting with the others – all waiting.

### **“The meaning is in the waiting”.**

Imagine saying that to a patient on a long inpatient or day case waiting list (not over 15 months after 1 April 2002 – but still a long time):

- § If you are waiting at home for the letter to drop through the door, hobbling around the house, struggling to do the shopping, hardly able to see the TV or the instructions on a packet of food;
- § Waiting once you get to the hospital to see if there is a bed or last night’s emergency will mean you have to go home to wait again for another ‘phone call,



another letter.....

**"The meaning is in the waiting".**

Imagine saying that to an elderly person in an acute hospital bed waiting for a place to come up in a Nursing Home, who says to their carer: "Am I a nuisance? Doesn't anyone want me any longer? Can I afford it? What about my home?" .....

**"The meaning is in the waiting".**

Imagine saying that to someone watching a close relative or friend slip away mentally and physically – slowly, almost imperceptibly – "the mind's cession of its kingdom".

**"The meaning ...." God, what meaning?**

And the answer is silence.

What meaning? What meaning? What meaning? What meaning in the suffering, the pain, the heartbreak, the anguish?

And it is difficult – there is no easy answer. But in the silence comes the still, small voice .....

§ Know that you are loved and held;

§ I am with you;

§ Trust me.

And slowly, almost imperceptibly, the light begins to dawn ....

**"The meaning is in the waiting".**

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## *The Lord's Prayer*

*One of the language activities at the recent CHRISM Reflective Weekend was to look at different versions of the Lord's Prayer and to write our own if we felt so moved. Below is the offering of Jim Cummins, which deeply touched all of us. Jim's reply to my e-mail about including it sets the context admirably.*

Rob. Thanks for the e-mail. It is only after some considerable hesitation that I send you this copy of the prayer you ask for. It was so much a thing of the moment, as I believe prayers should be. And I don't think it reads as well at all.

Since then I can thank God that in part at least the prayer has been answered and we have managed to get a licence and take off two loads of bullocks. So now, although we are still over-stocked, we can now accommodate all that are left. Of course, our farm is only one very small part of a very large and complex system of food production. But isn't it ridiculous that the produce of the hungry world is being flown to this country and to other places like it to satisfy our greed while so much of our own production has to be destroyed.

It's enough to make you weep!

Yours, with all good wishes,

Jim.

*Dear Dad,  
You're in heaven? - and I'm talking to you?  
So this must be heaven!  
Greetings! It's good to be in touch.*

*Please can you make this more recognisable as Heaven? – It is, but we don't always see it.*

*You give us more food than we can eat – Thank you for that.*

*But so many of your people are hungry...*

*“Go, feed them”, do I hear you say?*

*But look, Dad, I spend my life producing food*

*And I'm not allowed to move it; even to offer it.*

*I can't give it away, no matter how much people want it.*

*That's what makes it feel like hell.*

*“It is”? You mean heaven and hell are the same place?*

*I've come to that conclusion before*

*and yet I still don't really get it.*

*Oh! The Cross. The Cross – Good Heavens – oh Hell!*

*Sorry Dad. So, so sorry.*

*I blamed the French;*

*I blamed the Jews, the Arabs, the terrorists...*

*And I am to LOVE them – all? I do, really – just a bit!*

*O.K. So – I love the Frogs and the Wogs, the kids and the Yids, the yobs and the nobs*

*And the Yanks? No Thanks! – oops, Sorry Dad.*

*If only they'd stop, I'd forgive.*

*I'd love to forgive – and be forgiven.*

*Don't tempt me Dad – I flip too easy*

*But when I flip – o.k. if I flip -*

*Pull me back again Dad -*

*Please.*

*You can do it.*

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## **Surfing.....**

A website worth a visit is [www.christian-thinktank.com](http://www.christian-thinktank.com). This is a Christian site aimed at examining the hard questions of

Christian faith, with a comprehensive index and the opportunity to contribute.

**The Coalition for Ministry in Daily Life** is a US-based umbrella for the following organisations:

The Avodah Institute – aims at helping leaders to integrate their daily life and faith.

Forum for Faith in the Workplace – “helping people everywhere discover the presence and will of God in their places of work.”

InterVarsity Ministry.

The Faith in Life Forum – “provides opportunities for people to engage in study and discussion on issues of concern in their lives within a framework that includes ethical and theological perspectives”.

Ministry in Daily Life – Evangelical Church of America (Lutheran).

The main website is at [www.ministry-in-daily-life.org](http://www.ministry-in-daily-life.org), and there is a hyper link to the sites of the member organisations.

[www.faihatwork.com](http://www.faihatwork.com) is the site of Faith @ Work, also US based, who publish a magazine of that name. The site includes a bookstore and a range of resources.

For Christian satire, try [www.thedoormagazine.com](http://www.thedoormagazine.com). Recent offerings include the “Bible bar” a chocolate coated snack said to use a recipe from Deuteronomy 8:8 --“A land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive and honey”. Does it have laxative properties????

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*It's true that hard work never killed anyone,  
but why take the chance?*

**Ronald Reagan**

***“The Kingdom of Heaven is like .....*”**

An exercise carried out at the recent CHRISM Reflective weekend was to write a parable starting as above from our own workplace experience – and very interesting they were too! We are now planning a CHRISM Paper with a collection – so if you have, or feel you can write, such a parable from your own experience, please send it in to the Editor.

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***CHRISM Weekend Conference and  
AGM,  
19 – 21 July, 2002***

This year CHRISM revisits Luther King House, Manchester, home of several ministry training courses. Situated two miles south of the city centre in a leafy inner suburb just down the road from the famous curry mile, Luther King House is a pleasant and comfortable venue. The facilities can be viewed on its website: [www.lkh.org.uk](http://www.lkh.org.uk).

Full details of the Conference can be found on the enclosed flyer and booking form. If you would like any other local details please contact Rob Fox or Stan Frost (details on inside rear cover).

# CHRISM

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*Our faith imposes on us a right and a duty to throw ourselves  
into the things of the earth*

Teilhard de Chardin