

# Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in  
secular ministry

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Number 83

October 2002

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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: 4 January.**

*(The views expressed in the various articles in this Journal are those of the writer, unless stated otherwise. If you would like to reproduce any of the articles, please contact the Editor).*

## *Editorial*

Studying Sociology was both fun and confusing. Lots of Germanic names, and the titles given to the various approaches suggested a competition for who could come up with the most tortuous (I think ethnomethodology wins that one). I found the sociology of knowledge most engaging and useful and in particular the works of Peter L Berger, an Austrian-American, notably *The Social Construction of Reality* (with Thomas Luckmann), *The Social Reality of Religion* and *A Rumour of Angels*. Berger explained how 'reality' is a social construct and is objectified in the experience of individuals. What reality is will vary according to the 'cognitive communities' to which an individual belongs. This last concept I have used ever since (see my article on MSE and ministry in the last Journal, and 'Church watch' in this).

It was a delight therefore to receive from Michael Ranken a copy of an article by two sociologists who also appreciate Berger's work and are using some of the concepts he developed in looking at spirituality in the workplace. I am grateful to Scott Taylor and Emma Bell, the writers, and to the Academy of Management (USA), for enthusiastically approving its reproduction here. It is a perceptive and challenging piece that warrants reflective reading. Feedback is most welcome.

*A Rumour of Angels* (the UK version of the title) is well worth reading but alas difficult now to obtain. It refers to how the cognitive communities of faith are keeping alive the concept of the transcendent amidst dominant world-views that deny it. The rumour persists!

The summer edition of *Faith in Business*, published by ICF and The Ridley Hall Foundation was a corker and well worth reading. Of particular interest are:

§ an article by Takashi Baino, Professor of Economics at

Osaka University entitled "*Calling*" to everyday Christianity, which is the result of long experience of and reflection on ministry in work;

- § Carol Williams piece entitled *Work – a missing sacrament?*, which points up the place of work in Christian being.

The 2002 Conference in Manchester was another terrific occasion; Stan Frost has captured it well in his item. The contributions from Christopher Mayfield, Bill Hopley, Milo Coerper and all the participants were much appreciated and we came away with a renewed sense of purpose and confidence as MSEs.

I received a pertinent letter from an Anglican Reader recently, observing that the Journal – and, by association, CHRISM - seems to be too 'clerical'. Criticism accepted! I remember the comment being made at the 1995 Conference that we are too ordained and too Anglican. I think we have tried hard to broaden, but the impression remains that in the field of MSE in the UK most of the activists seem to be Anglican and ordained. At least the balance of material I receive (and what I ferret out) reflects this. So, all you non-ordained and non-Anglican MSEs out there: I *know* you have much to contribute: experiences, insights, understandings. I await the e-mails and thuds of post arriving with eager anticipation!

**Rob**

## ***2003 Reflective Weekend***

### ***The Grain in Winter***

*Looking for the hidden activity of God in our Work and Role as MSEs*  
A Reflective Weekend based around the book by Donald Eadie

14 - 16 February 2003, at Holland House, Cropthorne, Worcestershire. CHRISM Members £100 (others £110).

Contact: Sue Gibbons (details in rear cover)

## ***20 years of the Journal!***

*Continuing the invitation to past editors to survey the last 20 years, with contributions from Stan Frost and Will Baynes.*

My time as Editor of what was then 'A Newsletter - amongst ministers at work and those concerned' seems too long ago and life moves quickly. I recall volunteering to take on the editorship at the conference in Rydal Hall Cumbria, 'Mission at Work, in 1992. There was me: a successful weekend event under my belt and 10 years post ordination experience. I felt that I had a lot to offer. Keen, energetic and with new contacts in printing and publishing I was sure that together we could make a worthy effort to take on the newsletter/magazine that had aspirations to become a 'journal'.

We experimented with formats, the ying-yang symbol and illustrative front covers. We tried to make it hang together and relate to the written themes within its covers. It was a time of naïve computerism - it predated email and the wonders of clip art were accessible only to those with the mysteries of programmes that today are commonplace. I was struggling with Wordperfect and only just beginning to explore the intricacies of Word word-processing packages. It is after all - all of ten years ago! People still were writing articles in pen and ink.

Since then there have been two other editors. I share with them the uncertainty of getting the thing out on time. We had a system where the publisher also posted the newsletter. I don't know if this cost us more than it might have been but it was certainly a saving in time. The proofs were prepared in Rochdale and the publisher proper worked from Kendal - with Martin Jayne (the then Membership Secretary) acting as a liaison. In addition to time spent in correspondence, checking and rechecking articles and sometimes re-typing

material, each edition cost me at least a half-day and 200 miles of motoring to produce. Consequently I was glad to pass on the job to someone else and it was a great relief and a privilege to pass it on to Dorrie who managed to consolidate editing, publishing and printing in the Midlands where the system continues under Rob's enthusiastic editorship from Manchester.

So four years of feverish publisher experience came and went - the next editor took over at the AGM in 1996. It was good being the centre of things and being conscious of bearing the responsibility of promoting and presenting CHRISM. It was a time of lively contact with people across the country - providing them an opportunity to share their thoughts and insights. People in a collective struggle with a form of ministry little understood or appreciated by the church or society at large.

Each edition was a step in faith and frustration that it was never as good as I would have wished it to be. So a mixture of exhilaration and disappointment combined to greet the end product, as it was unwrapped on arrival. This is what so many others would be receiving at the same time - my envelope was a sign that the system had worked! A sense of relief eased the frustration and the writings eased the disappointments I had experienced. Here was something worthwhile after all.

Since being made redundant from my day job, I realise that MSE is best interpreted as 'ministry in secular environments', a phrase which emerged at the Manchester conference (2002). Over the last 20 years the changes in employment, career paths, expectations and job security have changed dramatically. Many have had 'retirement' imposed upon them, with variable means of support - some being far better placed than others. Working in a conventional work place gives identity, role, responsibility, affinity, relationships, a wage or salary, sometimes with office equipment, life and health insurance

and a car! MSE environments will more likely be alone, detached, self-sufficient and financially struggling.

Those without a parochial license are also likely to be at odds with the Church. There being no apparent mechanisms to accommodate especially those of mature years. Will these be in place to ensure that church ministers who work at regular jobs will be recognised and supported as job patterns and lifestyles continue to change? In some Anglican dioceses the rush to Local Ordained Ministries may well need some particular future arrangements as jobs and expectations change.

Now the 'Newsletter' I knew has grown up to be a journal in its own right with an agreed house style, an ISSN number and assorted sister publications on specific themes. It has a developing credibility and a continuing role to act, as the organ of reflection and review for those continuing to promote the gospel in those places others cannot reach. MSEs are there and have been there - like war correspondents part of their role is to share their experiences and to enlighten others. Long may Ministers-at-Work prosper.

**Stan Frost**

*Will's piece is very personal and shows him to be still at the sharp end of ministry. He found the quotations we use in our literature (and on the rear of the Journal). Always modest, his contribution is – rightly – focussed on a current concern and shows a deep insight into human life.*

Thank you for your invitation to contribute as a former Editor of CHRISM. I was an Editor in name only, as I passed on the pen (actually the computer) to another before striking a key. What of course I did do was redesign the CHRISM cover and find a few apt (?) quotations - some of which are still in use.

Alas I have been much pre-occupied with: first the disappear-

ance of a friend - German, Jewish, and Gay - following our supper together in a West End (London) restaurant, and then, when his dismembered body was found in Camden, helping the police - and Andreas' many friends in the UK and Germany. He was an only son. A young man (24), a student, is to appear at the Old Bailey on a charge of murder. Initially three people were arrested.

You may have seen the reference in The Guardian, in the story headlined "Hate motive suspected in murder." That "last evening ... meal" was with me

I said the following at the Sunday Mass.

Why do some people believe the Christian faith and others don't? This question isn't new. Church people began to ask this question in the first century of our era, and we're still hung up on it today. For the community for whom the gospel of Matthew was written, the answer came in the explication of the parable we've just heard. The Parable of the Sower. From their communal reading of Holy Scripture - that is: from what we characterise as The Old Testament - our Christian forebears took the prophecy we heard this morning, literally. My word ...says the Lord, shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. [Isaiah 55: 11].

Thus they reasoned since the seed is OK, the fault must be the soil. However good the quality of seed, a rich harvest cant follow without good soil in which to plant it. Hence Matthew elaborates a whole set of possible reasons for the failure to convert everybody. What I've just said is an example of the process scholars call hermeneutics. Its seeing one text, or portion of scripture, through the eyes of another. Its interpreting one thing using an idea taken from somewhere else. And whether you and I know it or not, we do it all the time. I've a neighbour - for example - who understands



modern politics in terms of conspiracy. He spent many years working as a journalist under dictatorships where this hermeneutic probably enabled him to file lively stories to London. But still today for him every political event arises from a conspiracy against the public.

My own hermeneutic this morning arises out of the recent murder and revolting disposal in London of the body of a friend: German, Jewish, and Gay. Two young men and a teenage woman are being held in connection with these acts. What was their hermeneutic? Did they murder Andreas, and treat his body like so much rubbish, because he was German, or Jewish, or Gay? Or indeed because all three categories were operating?

Andreas was a mature student (37) at the college for rabbis in North London, and had just completed a second successful year. He was looking forward to spending the year ahead in training in Jerusalem. Had those under arrest talked to him about his German-ness they'd have found that he preferred English people. Had they talked to him about his Gay-ness, he'd have told them he'd been honest about his sexuality since university days and once upon a time had led the gay community in his deeply conservative home town. Had they asked him about his Jewish-ness, he'd have said it had been promoted by the rejection of his identity by the Christian community in which he was raised. He'd explored his family history, and having found strong Jewish roots he abandoned the religion of Christianity and was received into the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, Judaism. Yes, he found more love and understanding in liberal Judaism than in protestant Christianity. Indeed liberal Judaism was happy to train him and in a year or so to ordain him as a rabbi.

I raise these issues not to make you - or me - feel inadequate or guilty but because there are parts of Christianity, both here and overseas, which worship a narrow legalism

and a hold a biblical hermeneutic totally at odds with the God continually being revealed to us in the exuberance and variety of the created order.

This order is not what Paul calls, and keeps on calling the flesh. The flesh is life lived in rebellion against God and in disregard of God's righteousness. The flesh is a technical term meaning a human being's existence apart from God and in opposition to God. That's why: To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. [Romans 8:6].

Judaism, the First Covenant, has not been set aside by Christianity. Christianity is the Second Covenant. As the Roman Catholic Church acknowledges, the manner of life and conduct of religious Jews points to the fact that they are bearing the yoke of God for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

The Christian dispensation (as its called) is seen by us as the fulfilment of the promises of the old covenant. This fulfilment doesn't claim that we're better. It says the terms have been transformed. We walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. [Romans 8: 4b]. To be in Christ (another of S. Paul's pithy expressions) signifies a new form of society, the Church. In this holy society transformed human relationships are to be marked by faith, and hope and love. Thus our relationship isn't political or ethnic - as it was under the old covenant - our relationship with one another in Christ acquires its uniqueness from the description: how these Christians love each other.

That's the only soil there is. Let anyone with ears listen. [Matt. 13: 9].

*How is it for you?*

## *Stories about God in our work*

*The CHRISM Annual Conference, Luther King House,  
Manchester, 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> July 2002*

### *Arrivals, Welcome and Context*

We arrived from near and far on a wet Friday. The torrential rain in some parts caused flooding that disrupted journeys and extended travelling times. Peter from Cornwall arrived just in time to order and lead the evening prayers. Others arrived bedraggled and frustrated later than expected but in time for the first meal and the introductory session.

Apart from the welcome by Sue (the Presiding Moderator) there was a presentation to the Rt Rev Christopher Mayfield, the Bishop of Manchester for his support and involvement with MSE's during his time in Manchester and earlier in his work with industrial chaplaincy in Luton. A framed certificate had been prepared with a Cambridge Blue CHRISM logo and this seemed to be appreciated as much as the tee-shirt which he proceeded to wear with pride during the rest of the evening..

Christopher explained that after his retirement his only appointment for next year is to attend the Service of Thanksgiving for what the motor industry has meant to Luton and its surrounding areas. The closure of Vauxhalls marks a significant change which affects many local businesses and those who for generations have relied upon the company for employment and all that means for a buoyant local economy and vibrant community.

The Bishop's address emphasised for us the significance of the weekend - telling stories. By highlighting the changes attributable to industrial and commercial decisions he reflected some of the issues that we were to encounter during the Saturday afternoon visits. These different scenarios

emphasised particular situations in Manchester and Salford. Some of the people we were to meet on Saturday attended the Friday evening session.

### ***Police Chaplaincy***

Amongst them was the keynote speaker. Bill Hopley is the full time chaplain for the West Midlands Police. This is the second largest police force in the country, next to the Metropolitan, employing about 11,000 staff (including 3000 civilians). Bill's presentation on the Saturday morning sobered and challenged us. We received a behind the scenes story of life in 'the station' as well as at the sharp end of motorway disasters. Road 'accidents' are no longer - better and more realistically, they are designated as 'crashes' or 'collisions'.

Police officers have particular ways of working and practices governed by endemic cultural expectations. Only within the last few years has it been acknowledged that there might be a permanent role for a chaplain. Bill is appointed by the Diocese of Birmingham and is responsible to the diocesan bishop. His stipend is less than that of a newly recruited bobby's salary and this gives him an independence and credibility to work with, but independently of, the organisation.

### ***Implicit and Explicit Themes and Visits***

There was an implicit law and order theme to the weekend. The legal profession was significantly represented amongst those present. Milo Coerper and his wife Wendy were visiting from America and Milo who had been President of the National Association of Self Supporting Ministries in the States still continues as a law firm partner. After dinner on Saturday Milo outlined some of the history of the tent-making movement in the USA and reminisced about some of the significant founder members. He also dealt with some challenging questions about American society whilst remaining apolitical and open minded.

Saturday afternoon visits had earlier primed the group on is-

sues related to problems in community and employment. They dealt with issues of justice - within the legal framework and in regard to employment and relationships.

Those who survived the vicissitudes of the visits returned exhausted and challenged. Unfortunately, we had run out of debriefing opportunity by the time the groups reconvened after the visits. The feedback was a mixture of report and emotion. What might have been taken as anti-climax in reality was perhaps more a general feeling of overload.

### ***Manchester Prison***

David and Heather Martin are official visitors to Forest Bank - a prison in Salford. They led the group but were strangers to Manchester Prison (Strangeways) which is run by the Home Office as a top security establishment. The objective was to meet with Beryl Pipes and other chaplains.

People in the group had had to commit to going some time before the visit. Personal details had been required and sanctioned by the authorities. Even so individuals needed to take with them personal ID and were subject to body searches. Those who attended Manchester Prison had felt that they had been trespassing on other people's space. The security procedures had been intimidating and the total exposure seemed to have been depressive. The topics that might have been discussed with those they met seemed tactless and were ignored.

### ***The Pankhurst Centre***

The Pankhurst Centre is in the house which Emmeline Pankhurst and her family occupied for 10 years up to 1907. It is within walking distance of Luther King House. Marika Thompson who works there as a volunteer joined us for lunch and then went with a small group to show them the Centre and to talk about what happens there. This is predominantly 'women only' space. There is a bookshop with a

significant lesbian orientation and a culture of feminine mutual support. The exclusive areas in this nineteenth century building are protected for counselling of those who are intimidated or violated.

### *On the Buses*

First Buses operate largely in North Manchester. John and Elaine Small joined us for the Friday evening but because of work commitments they were prevented from being with us for Saturday lunch. John works shifts on the buses and during the week before the conference he had been reallocated to 'earlies'. This meant that we had to meet him in Bury to join his bus to Bolton. We bought day tickets on the first bus that stopped outside Luther King House. We ventured to and through Piccadilly Gardens with excited groups of youngsters running between the new fountains (this was just a few days before the start of the Commonwealth Games). The bus to Bury (the 135) is one that bends in the middle and it was full. The 417 to Bolton was also busy and we had first hand observation of a driver coping with dealing with passenger enquiries, selling tickets, checking passes and steering through the traffic. In Bolton there was time for a short breather and John took time to show us his "God is Peace" card. He keeps this near the ticket machine. Passengers occasionally comment and John uses the message to calm himself during the times when he is making up to 7 journeys during a shift both ways along the same route.

We finished the shift with John who took us to the depot in Bury to unload his ticket cash into a counting machine. The depot is home to nearly 200 buses. There are about 220 drivers with inspectors, maintenance staff and managers. About 5% of the drivers are women. We met a couple of the ladies who really enjoyed working on the buses - 'who wouldn't with 200 men!'.

There was a positive, friendly supportive community atmos-

phere there despite day to day frustrations, breakdowns and occasional difficulties with the electronic money counting. However, underlying all this lurks the history of the company and the pay differentials which are seemingly irreconcilable. The original staff retained when the business changed hands are paid at rates they had previously - newer recruits it seems are never likely to be paid the same.

### ***The Broughton Trust***

Joan Williams is the manager of the Broughton Trust. A group visited the Trust offices and spent time walking the local streets. The shocked reactions to the situation prompted questions about the validity of investing yet more money into such neglected communities. The burden of maintenance taken on by community volunteers who look after the Zebra Street play ground is surely unsustainable.

The group seemed to have been challenged by what they saw and in recognising the frustrations shared by those who administer government funding designated to regenerate. The physical features are relatively easily renovated but the people need nurturing, support and skills to participate to enhance the community spirit. In Broughton - for some this is too late, for others they have so many other priorities. Many maybe may not even see the point of bothering.

### ***Visits Summary***

The group visits seem to have achieved an objective of sharing some local life experiences. Influences which govern what we can and cannot do are inevitably restrictive and they vary from situation to situation. By visiting these secular environments we have been privileged to share for a short while the frustrations and constraints of others.

### ***The Worship***

Devised by Peter Johnson - who was elected Presiding Moderator at the AGM on the Saturday - it followed and dissected

the CHRISM mission statement:

*'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'*

We were led through the theme which culminated with the Eucharist on Sunday morning which included the Liturgy of the Lamp-stand. Participants were asked to share in conversation with their neighbour and then light a candle and describe one commitment their colleague was prepared to make to enhance the spirit at work in their life or to make their ministry more explicit.

### ***Conclusions***

The communion was the appropriate finale to the series of services and the conference. It was another challenging experience we shared within the weekend and provided an inspiring point on which to depart.

It was good to know that amongst our group was someone taking taped notes of the discussions which occurred in 5 different places. Margaret Whipp from Durham will be producing a document which might well form the basis of a more detailed article at some time in the future.

***Stan Frost***

### ***A Bishop's farewell***

*It was a pleasure to be joined by Christopher Mayfield, Bishop of Manchester, for the opening sessions of CHRISM's conference in July. Christopher retired on 15 September, but before doing so wrote this letter to Stan Frost. It bears publishing to the readership!*

Dear Stan,

I am not sure whether I should be writing to you or Rob, Sue or Phil, to thank you for the lovely gifts that you gave me on Friday night when we were together at the CHRISM Confer-



ence. They came as a complete surprise and were therefore all the more welcome. I shall keep the message beside me in Worcester (*a framed message of thanks from CHRISM for Christopher's advocacy of MSE since his days in St. Alban's Diocese*). And from time to time I will don the T-shirt! In retrospect I feel I have done little for you all (*a lot more than you think! See the last three editions of "Ministers-at-Work" to start with*); so the gifts while unmerited were all the more surprising!

I hope that you had a good weekend. From my limited acquaintance with those who were there I felt there was good deal of experience among the conference members. And it was clear from the group session I was involved in on Friday evening that people were facing not only several opportunities for being Christian at Work but also many different difficulties and threats.

I said to my group that I hope they would consider doing two things. First they would invite their own "vicar" to come to their place of work for a day sometime during the next twelve months in order to find out what work is really all about, perhaps to do some, but also to observe and listen. Secondly, I think that those who are involved in issues that are currently in the frontiers of debate such as the farming industry, uncertainty in business, the Health Service, education etc., might consider briefing their bishops (*and presumably counterparts in non-episcopal churches*), particularly those who have bishops serving in the House of Lords. Such bishops still have unique opportunities to share with those who make legislation the reality of life on the ground in the farming industry, the Health Service, education etc. MSEs, who are where they are to serve the public good, are well placed to make comment that does not reflect merely self interest with regard to conditions at work and so on.

Perhaps I will meet some MSEs when we finally move down

to Worcester. I told Sue that I would be willing so to do!  
*(Especially as she knows where all the good pubs are?)*

With my prayers and good wishes,

Christopher

***Postscript***

*Two other friends of MSE are retiring before the end of 2002. Barry Rogerson steps down as Bishop of Bristol and a patron of CHRISM, George Carey, from tenure of a see somewhere in the south east!*

*CHRISM has been asked if we wish to invite Rowan Williams to be a patron. We taking this up.*

*If you know of others in positions of responsibility within the Churches whom we can approach as champions of MSE, let us know.*

***MARCHING WITH A DIFFERENT DRUMMER  
TENTMAKING: ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF MINISTRY  
November 1 - 3, 2002. Orange, California***

*"Like warriors they charge, Each keeps to its own course, they do not swerve from their paths." - Joel 2:7 nrvs*

**Further details can be obtained from:**

Phil Aspinall (CHRISM Secretary), or

Darrell D. Lynn  
1311 Windemere Lane  
Tustin, CA 92780-5727

**Co-sponsored by:**

The Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers *and*  
The National Association for the Self-Supporting Active Ministry (NASSAM), Episcopal Tentmakers

## *Annual General Meeting 2002*

The CHRISM AGM took place during the residential conference in Manchester. Phil Aspinall summarises some of the highlights:

- Sue Gibbons (out-going Presiding Moderator) reported that during the year we had worked on our two objectives of prioritising our tasks and improving communications. Our profile within the Church has been increased with a response to the report on Anglican Training and a meeting is planned with John Gladwin, the Chair of the Ministry Committee of the House of Bishops.

The November weekend gave us time to think about priorities but also had a wonderfully creative air as we considered the use of words – “The Kingdom of Heaven is like.....”

We have continued to develop and support our local networks, and in the larger international networks – and grown as a collaborative organisation giving acceptance and affirmation.

- Keith Holt (Treasurer) reported that an £1100 deficit in 2000 has been turned to £1800 surplus in 2001, due to influences such as reduced costs and increased income from direct contact with our institutional members.

Keith is looking to retire at the next AGM, so a successor is needed urgently.

- Elections to the committee
  - New Moderator           Jean Skinner
  - Journal Editor           Rob Fox
  - Committee Members   Stan Frost  
                                  Felicity Smith  
                                  Peter King
  - Rep to CHRISSET       Stan Frost

- Peter Johnson (new Presiding Moderator) highlighted the seven key themes that had come out of the Sutton Courtenay weekend. The task for the coming year is to work with these to develop a clear way forward – and he encouraged all members to

participate in this process.

He suggested there are three broad areas where CHRISM gives support and resources: for members as individuals, for members in their home, work and church, and for members as they interact with their work place and church institutions.

## *The Language of Prayer*

*Peter Johnson  
Presiding Moderator*

"I'm having trouble with my prayer life at the moment."

This comment came from one of my head teacher colleagues as a complete surprise to me the other day because first I did not know he was a Christian and second because I could not imagine what he thought I could do about it. He went on to describe how he had recently adopted a simple morning liturgy as a spiritual rule. He had bought a book that gave a short daily reading, a portion of psalm, a time for reflection and a commitment for the day. "The trouble is" he said "I find that I can't concentrate during the reflection on the passage and my mind just keeps going over the previous day at work and what I shall be doing the coming day." It seemed quite a revelation to him when I suggested that God might actually be interested in his thoughts about what was happening at work and might also be trying to focus his mind and faith on what was happening in his work place so that he might commit it to God and thus be even more effective. Rather than trying to discipline his mind during the silence I suggested he keep a journal for three weeks to see what God might be saying about his work.

This incident reminded me of a passage from a book I re-read during my holiday this year – *Prayer in the Secular City* by Douglas Rhymes.

"The language with which God speaks to man and man to God

is not the language of formal words but rather the language of daily events." (Rhymes p.48)

As you can tell by the language of the passage itself this book comes from a generation ago – 35 years to be exact- yet it retains a freshness of vision and understanding about the language of faith, church and God.

My own prayer life is undergoing change at the moment and in trying to find a direction I have been struck by the difficulty in trying to form a discipline in prayer without it seeming a prison. One of the books I am currently reading talks of the effects of our personality on our prayer life. "Pray as you can-don't try to pray as you can't," says the author Ruth Fowke. Sometimes we feel almost duty bound to follow what is promoted as the preferred model of private prayer which usually reflects the monastic patterns.

I am sharing the offices on two occasions a week with clergy colleagues using the Church of England Common Worship format. Yet beautiful though this can be it does not answer everything my soul seems to be crying out for. I have adopted our CHRISM vision as a simple office and try daily to spot God at least once a day in work and celebrate, to sanctify a relationship at least once a day and celebrate, and to tell someone at least once a week of God in the workplace (as promised at Manchester). I also pray daily for members of CHRISM and colleagues from work. In this way I feel I am making sense of the language God gives me from the community of faith – the church and CHRISM – and the language I live in my workplace.

"Prayer will be the 'cutting edge' of Christ worked out in the daily work ('the daily bread'), daily relationships ('forgive as forgiven'), daily resistance to destructive pressures ('lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil')." (Rhymes, p.48)

It may also be that in living our vocation and struggling with what it means to be Ministers in Secular Employment we are able to offer the church an insight into what worship is in the workplace and the language of involvement and prayer God uses there. This was shown in Manchester when Bill, our main speaker, told us of the liturgy he had devised as chaplain to the police force for the blessing of a new helicopter. Better the liturgy comes from someone in the context than solely from a liturgical committee that has no intimate understanding of the setting where it is to be used.

“After all it is managers, social workers, housewives, teachers, who can best speak to one another and wrestle out what it means to be a Christian within the sphere of occupation. This is not something a clergyman can do for them, nor can they find sufficient experience to be able to do it personally without some sharing with those of similar experience.” (Rhymes, p.81)

I commend the prayer list of CHRISM members to you and if you wish for your name to be added please get in touch and we can include it in the next Journal.

Rhymes D (1967) *Prayer in the Secular City*. Lutterworth.  
Fowke R (1997) *Personality and Prayer*. Eagle.

### ***CHRISM Members prayer list***

Keith Thomas	Teacher in EBD School	Lancashire
Paul Romano	Solicitor	Glasgow
Margaret Joachim	IT Services Manager	London
Keith Holt	Civil Servant (retired)	South London
Margaret Whipp	Theological Educator, Doctor	Durham
Felicity Smith	Doctor in Reproductive Health	Warwick
Gill Johnson	Personnel Adviser Civil Service	Cannock
Rob Fox	Customs and Excise	Cheshire
Jim Cummins	Farmer	Powys

Jean Skinner	Deputy Project Manager NCH	Newcastle
Hugh Lee	City Rector for workers / Energy Economist	Oxford
John Mantle	Adviser in Bishops' Ministry	London
Peter Johnson	Headteacher / LEA Support Officer	Cornwall
Phil Aspinall	Risk Management Consultant	Coventry
Sammie Armstrong	Education Facilitator	Basingstoke
Michael Ranken	Subversive (retired)	Hythe
Roger Nelson	Solicitor (retired) /	
	Mental Health Act Advocate	Holme
Sue Gibbons	Teacher	Pershore

### ***Work prayer***

*(when you are customer)*

Give us eyes, O God, to see the worker in the work.  
 Not just the title or the salary scale.  
 Not just the output and the product.  
 Let us really see *you* when you serve us lunch in the diner,  
 when you give us insurance forms to complete, when you  
 take our money at the tollbooth.  
 Let us see you in one another. Amen.

Donna Schaper, in *Celebrate Labor Day*,  
 Liguori Publications, 1997. [www.liguori.org](http://www.liguori.org).

### ***Beatitudes—by text***

Hpy RU por; da kngdm is yrs! Hpy RU hngry; U wl Bfild!  
 Hpy RU sad; u wl lol! Hpy RU whn ppl h8 U Bcos of da Lrd!  
 B gld&dnce 4jy Bcos a gt prz is kpt 4U in hvn.

For my like this, log on to [www.ship-of-fools.com](http://www.ship-of-fools.com).

## *Priesthood in a Priestly Community*

*Brother James Koester SSJE*

I made up my mind quite early on what I wanted to be. Even as a youngster I remember wearing my dark blue wool dressing gown backwards and announcing to my mother that I wanted to be like Mr. Pasterfield when I grew up. Mr. Pasterfield of course was our rector. Now over thirty years later Mr. Pasterfield and I still communicate each year at Christmas. By the time I was in high school it was clear to most of my friends that I would end up as a priest. It was about that time I began joking with those same friends that I wanted to become a monk. The shock value alone on people's faces was worth it.

Now, forty years after playing dress up priest in my dressing gown and thirty years after shocking friends and teachers with the announcement that I was going to become a monk Today, I am both a priest and a member of a religious community. If I am honest, I must confess I am aware that I still enjoy the dress up aspect of the one and the shock value of the other! But I am also aware that now one tends to mediate and moderate the other.

Before joining the Society of Saint John the Evangelist in 1989, I served for five years in two small parishes on the Pacific coast of Canada. In one, a four-point parish I was the assistant curate. In the other, a three-point parish, I was the rector, and while I had the occasional help of retired clergy and an able corps of lay people, I was pretty much on my own. Like any parish priest I spent my time presiding at the sacraments of the church and providing pastoral care to my parishioners. Since I lived in small towns, the locals soon came to know me, even if they were neither Christians nor churchgoers.

In many ways my life was much as I had imagined it when I



was preparing for ordination. I was able to maintain the structure of praying the Office daily and also institute frequent celebrations of the Eucharist. We kept many of the major holy days with an evening Eucharist and potluck supper. Those events always attracted a good size congregation with all sorts of fabulous food to sample. In addition to the liturgical life which we were able to build up, parishioners took responsibility for Bible study groups, prayer groups, hospital visiting and an assortment of other pastoral functions. While I was the parish priest, there was a sense that we were all part of a team.

Even in a parish that came to value many of the things that I valued, I remained attracted to the idea of the religious life. I wanted to live in a context that took prayer seriously and which was willing to challenge me in my life as a Christian. At the same time I was looking for a community that could support me and take seriously my struggles as an individual and as a Christian.

What I experienced when I came into the religious life was not what I expected. After five years in parish ministry, I thought I knew what it meant to be a priest. Suddenly, however I was no longer the priest on a team of able lay ministers but rather one priest among many priests and a handful of able laymen. I went from presiding at the Eucharist several times a week to presiding twice during the six-month period of my postulancy. I went from managing a congregation of nearly 150 households, to being assigned a variety of fairly routine household tasks. The greatest task during my postulancy was not learning the intricacies of the community's Office Book, but learning what it meant to be a priest without doing the usual things which we think a priest does: celebrating the church's sacraments, pastoral counselling, running a parish. In those six months as a postulant, I was taken out of the familiar and safe routine of priestly ministry and for the first time I came to see what it meant to be a priest.

When I was ordained, the bishop prayed over me: "we

When I was ordained, the bishop prayed over me: "We praise and glorify you, almighty Father, because you have formed throughout the world a holy people for your own possession, a royal priesthood, a universal church." Week by week at Morning Prayer we sing "And yours by right, O Lamb that was slain, for with your blood you have redeemed for God, from every family, language, people and nation, a kingdom of priests to serve our God." We pray and sing about a royal priesthood, which is that mystical body made up of "the blessed company of all faithful people". It was only as a postulant stripped of a sacramental ministry that I began to discover that this was the priesthood to which I had been ordained. I was first a priest, not because the bishop had laid hands on me, but because I was a member of that royal priesthood which is the church. I was then a priest because the church through the bishop had sacramentalized that royal priesthood in me, making me an outward and visible sign of what the church already is: a priestly people.

Being a priest in a religious community has helped me identify the source of my priesthood, not in myself but in that wider priestly community to which I belong. I stand, as a priest, not over and above the other members of my community, or even the church, but alongside those men and women, both lay and ordained, who exercise their priestly ministries of prayer and service and love following the example of our great high priest who ever lives to make intercession for us. (Hebrews 7:25)

As a parish priest my concept of priesthood was limited to function. I knew what priests did because I spent my week doing those very things. Today as a member of a religious community I have come to know who I am as a priest. No longer is my priesthood shaped by what I do but rather by my identity as a member of that royal priesthood given to me in the waters of baptism.

The gift that the religious life has given to me in the past

eleven years is a radically altered understanding of what it means to be a priest. No longer do I experience my priesthood only when I exercise a sacramental ministry. Now, as I stand in prayer within the context of a priestly community, made up of others who have also been baptized into that royal priesthood, do I know myself to be truly a priest after the model of our great high priest, Jesus Christ himself.

*Brother James Koester SSJE is a priest of the Diocese of British Columbia of the Anglican Church of Canada and a member of the North American Congregation of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist. He was ordained in 1984 and served in parish ministry for five years before joining SSJE at the monastery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He continues to exercise a ministry as a member of SSJE in the Canadian Church as a spiritual director, preacher and retreat leader. Presently he lives at SSJE branch house, Emery House, in West Newbury, Massachusetts where he is the senior brother.*

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## **HUGH KAY MEMORIAL LECTURE**

The Christian Association of Business Executives invites you to the Lecture by

*The Rt Reverend Timothy Wright OSB, Abbott of Ampleforth*  
**“WHERE FAITH LEADS BUSINESS – A BENEDICTINE ABBOT’S PERSPECTIVE”**

*On Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2002, 6.30 for 7 pm.*

at St Botolph’s Church, Aldgate High Street, London EC3,  
followed by a reception in the Great Hall of  
Sir John Cass’s Foundation Primary School, Dukes Place, EC3  
**Contact: Stanley Kiaer**

**CABE, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1BE**

*Nearest underground station: Aldgate*

# **'A RUMOR OF ANGELS': RESEARCHING SPIRITUALITY AND WORK ORGANIZATIONS**

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*This short paper is based on a longer presentation to the American Academy of Management meeting in Washington DC, August 2001. We would like to thank the members of the Management, Spirituality and Religion Special Interest Group there both for the opportunity to present our work, and the valuable discussion throughout the conference. The title of the paper reflects our debt to the work of Peter Berger.*

## **Summary**

This brief paper contains an aspect of analysis from an ongoing research project focusing on the workplace spirituality movement in the UK. The data analyzed come from our participant observation on two 'workshop retreats' in a Benedictine monastery. Those attending explored spiritual values and practices relating to work and the workplace. The paper draws on sociological literature to enhance our understanding of workplace spirituality, focusing especially on the relationship between the individual and the collective.

## **Introduction**

Spirituality is increasingly described as one of the most significant issues currently faced by work organizations. Several factors contribute to this recent management and academic interest, which we would suggest is a reflection of broader societal concerns. First, it is argued that as organizations seek increased commitment from their employees, these intense demands cannot be met without also caring for the entire person. Second, it is suggested that changes in the global economy have left workers demoralized as a consequence of downsizing; people have become more alienated and less able

to cope with the compartmentalized nature of their work and non-work lives. Third, the traditional community structures that formerly provided employees with a source of meaning are seen by some as less relevant (Mitroff and Denton, 1999; Renesch, 1992). In this paper, we briefly explore these issues through considering what we mean by spirituality in a workplace context, and to consider the relevance of spirituality to organizational management.

### *Defining spirituality*

A problem arises, however, from the difficulty encountered in defining what we mean by spirituality. Does it represent a shifting emphasis toward experience and away from objectivity, an escape from the exclusive boundaries of religion, or is it just an empty and misleading slogan (King, 1996)? Despite the ambiguity, it is however clear that notions of spirituality provide a means of connecting with ideas of wholeness, creativity and interdependence, stimulated by cross-cultural inter-penetration of multiple religious traditions. The term also encompasses holistic concerns, for example of ecology and psychotherapy, not necessarily related to a notion of the divine. It is evident that spirituality is prone to diverse usage, its ambiguous nature enabling it to be used flexibly in situations where greater clarity or explicit reference to religion would bring social awkwardness.

From within this broad frame of reference, attempts have been made to define the notion of workplace spirituality as based on three main components (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000). First, it is argued that it relies on the recognition of employees' inner lives, related to the soul and accessed through practices such as meditation, self-reflection and prayer. Second, there is an underpinning assumption that employees need to find work meaningful; third, it is claimed that a spiritually informed company provides the context or community within which spiritual growth can

take place. This final element is perhaps the most significant. Writers on workplace spirituality often portray the organization as a communal center, in which individuals are able to explore the meaning of work as a source of spiritual growth, and as means of connection to a larger purpose. This suggests that work organizations are our most significant community, replacing institutions such as the church that have declined in importance. The emphasis on work organizations as sources of community structure can also be related to the increasing amount of time and energy that we spend there.

There is a divide, however, between those who are of the opinion that workplace spirituality can be deliberately introduced into an organization to enhance employee commitment and improve performance (Milliman et al, 1999), and those who regard spirituality as a cultural phenomenon, which has the potential to enhance human understanding and quality of life (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). Some have argued that workplace spirituality will not be successful if it is practiced instrumentally, as a tool to improve corporate results. However, even though the majority of current literature emphasizes that workplace spirituality cannot be manipulated, popularization of the topic may, as with other management fashions, encourage instrumental application of its principles.

Another aspect of the difficulty of definition is the relation to religion. Despite spirituality not necessarily being bounded by formal religious practice, it is our view that spirituality cannot be defined without reference to religion. By focusing on the 'spirit', we acknowledge it as a sacred power that can be arrived at only through the employment of rituals and languages drawn from religions. For this reason, we would further propose that our understanding of workplace spirituality is enhanced by being located in relation to the sociology of religion.

According to Durkheim (1915), religion as a universal social phenomenon can be explained only through understanding

beliefs and practices; the latter giving an indication of the importance that is attached to specific events. Similarly, for Weber (1920), a belief in the supernatural is seen as an inherent aspect of being human that leads to the construction of religious systems through ritual and ceremony. In addition, Weber saw capitalism as enabling the transfer of religion, particularly Protestantism, into a secular context, eventually leading to the development of a rational economic society. Most importantly Weber argued that religion, rather than being a stabilizing influence, was actually a source of social change, a perspective that contrasts sharply with Durkheim's view that religion constrained the actions of individuals.

A further, more recent, analytical distinction is made between religions as being either Western or Eastern. Western, Judaeo-Christian belief systems perceive each individual as separate from all others, and are concerned with legitimating the dignity of the individual through worship which concentrates on the salvation of the isolated soul. In contrast, Eastern religious systems tend either to negate the self, or to place the self at the center of a network of relationships (Ito, 1998). Western belief systems are thus based on a 'fission' of the individual from society whereas Eastern belief systems encourage a 'fusion' of the individual with the social. This distinction has been related to the success of Japanese work organizations, where employees' spiritual and organizational identities may be less rigidly separated. It is argued that this more integrated philosophy enables Japanese firms to take a religiously pluralist spiritual position without fear of being seen as insincere or superficial (Pascale and Athos, 1982).

### ***Methods of research: Participant observation***

Because contemporary spirituality is practiced in less established, more informal ways than traditional religion (Sutcliffe and Bowman, 2000), its study demands a more qualitative, participative methodology than is conventional, either in the

study of religion or management. Therefore, in seeking to understand workplace spirituality as an aspect of this broader societal phenomenon, a research design that incorporates both direct personal experience and other actors' interpretations is desirable. In this research we adopted a phenomenological approach (Schutz, 1967) to studying the individual and collective practices which constitute workplace spirituality. Data collection relies on the method of participant observation (Spradley, 1980), as a strategy for remaining both subjectively involved in, whilst analytically distanced from, the subject of study. The research process thus combined active participation in the retreat workshops with observation and reflection. Participant observation also provided a means through which we could gain access to situations, contexts and experiences which might not otherwise have been available, enabling us to explore a subject which is highly sensitive. This method was crucial if we were to understand the language and practices of contemporary spirituality.

### *The Retreat Workshops*

We attended two weekend-long retreat workshops held in a Benedictine monastery in the south of England. The workshops were the first in a series of six run by one of the resident monks that explored 'Spirituality in the Workplace'. At each workshop were around fifteen participants, from private and public sector organizations. Participants included managers, professionals, academics, members of the clergy, management consultants and other non-managerial employees. The workshop series focused on topics including leadership, ethical decision-making, stress management, and the development of spiritual workplace practice, including prayer. While a religiously pluralist definition of the spiritual as 'something in all of us' was the ideal of the course, it also utilized the Rule of St Benedict, a digest of early Christian spiritual wisdom which has provided a framework for monastic life in the Benedictine order since the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The Rule was presented in the workshops as a template through which individuals could com-



bine work and spirituality more effectively.

### *Themes*

The first weekend retreat focused on the meaning of spirituality, its connection to working life, and what types of organization and management style were most likely to nurture spirituality. The second explored the potentially spiritual aspects of organizational leadership. Our analysis of data collected over the two workshops led to the identification of three main themes. The first outlines the language and values that surround workplace spirituality, the second draws attention to the rituals and practices with which it is associated, and the third explores the tension between the individual and the community in the development of spiritual work practice.

### *Language and values*

The aim of the first workshop retreat was to clarify whether we were 'making a life or making a living' through work. Participants worked towards a definition of workplace spirituality which would enable them to make their organizations more 'soul friendly', in which discussion focused on the Christian notions of service and vocation. A number of terms were used repeatedly by participants during both workshops to describe spirituality: these included belief, journey, unity, higher power and personal fulfillment. On the basis of group discussion, spirituality was defined as tripartite. First, as something that goes beyond explanatory, scientific frameworks and prioritizes experience, second, as a means of incorporating death as a positive part of life, and third, as a journey to be experienced rather than a thing to be described.

### *Rituals and Practices*

In addition to formal workshop discussions, participants were given the opportunity to participate in the rituals and practices of the monastic community. For the duration of the retreat, participants were invited to worship in the Abbey church with the monks, eat meals as a group, and, for male participants,

to sleep within the monastic enclosure. Each of the group sessions during the workshops was introduced by a reading from a sacred text, followed by an invitation to reflect verbally and silently. The presence of an open bible, a vase of flowers, and a lit candle helped to define these events as spiritual. The presence of these artifacts also provided inspiration for participants to think about bringing sacred, religious objects or personally meaningful items into their own workplace, to enable their individual spiritual expression.

### *Individual and Community*

Simply being able to speak about personal and workplace spirituality appeared to provide satisfaction for many participants. Many expressed a sense of belonging within the workshop group, which was contrasted with the spiritual isolation that was experienced in the workplace. It was emphasized that the transfer of spiritual practice to the workplace relied on the individual finding a 'spiritual space', either literally or through activities such as controlled breathing and silent prayer. However, some participants suggested that the need for solitary or spiritual space was not acknowledged within their busy and crowded work environments.

In contrast, the monastery was proposed as a model spiritual community in which work was a means through which individuals experienced wisdom and enlightenment. Workshop discussions emphasized the fact that all work had a potential spiritual meaning. Participants were encouraged to explore the meaning of their own work as a creative, social activity. Emphasis was placed primarily on the individual to find or create this meaning, even in the most mundane tasks, rather than on the organization to make work meaningful. The monastery was also presented as an example of a religious organization that had confronted and coped with economic and social change in order to ensure its survival. Finally, participants explored the way that spirituality could help them to make sense of organizational change and how they, as individuals, could

change their own work organizations. Spirituality was seen as a journey that involved continuous growth, even if this could be a painful experience.

### *Discussion and conclusions*

The preceding analysis is founded on the contention that, although definitions of spirituality can be arrived at through analysis of the use of language (King, 1996), the meaning of workplace spirituality emerges through language and action. From this cultural anthropological perspective, religion is seen as a historically transmitted pattern of meanings, embodied in sacred symbols, that creates a cultural, social order (Geertz, 1973). From this perspective, our analysis indicates that the means by which spirituality is communicated within a culture, through rites and rituals, causes it to overlap with ideas and definitions of religion. This implies that conceptual attempts to distinguish between spirituality and religion are both analytically and empirically unsustainable, rendering problematic attempts that have been made to clearly differentiate and distance workplace spirituality from religion.

From our analysis we would further suggest that a tension arises through the development of individual spirituality in collective organizational contexts. Workplace spirituality primarily emphasizes the role of the individual, based on themes such as leadership and the personalized meaning of work, yet simultaneously draws attention to the collective nature of work as a community. The ideas and practices of contemporary spirituality, based on the primacy of the self, do not encourage the development of social systems. Ultimately, this tension may encourage a more Westernized interpretation of workplace spirituality as reliant on changes in the behavior of individuals, rather than encouraging a shared responsibility for each other.

Our analysis finally leads us to conclude that workplace spirituality provides evidence to support the notion that religious

symbols and ideas are increasingly able to 'float free' from their former points of institutional anchorage (Beckford, 1992). Utilization of spirituality as the basis for management development courses suggests it is being 'adopted and adapted by different agencies' (ibid. 18) to suit their own purposes. In other words, the 'rumor of angels' (Berger, 1969) in commercial corporations reflects the incorporation of spiritual values in situations that are quite different from religious, institutional contexts.

Herein lies a difficulty, however, for in combining religious faith with the aim of increased production, greater economic freedom, and happiness based on consumption, workplace spirituality represents an attempt to reconcile potentially opposing influences. Workplace spirituality may have the potential to become a meaning system based on an organization 'having', or possessing, a particular philosophy, instead of 'being', or acting according to, a set of deeply held values (Fromm, 1978). Finally, we would suggest that it is important for any future research agenda to explore the cultural beliefs and practices associated with workplace spirituality through individual and collective experiences, if the nature of this organizational phenomenon is to be better understood.

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## ***Spirituality in the Workplace***

Douai Abbey's 2002-3 programme has already started but it is not too late for weekends 2 to 6:

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 5-7 December:       | The tools of the workplace                        |
| 17-19 January 2003: | Relationships in the workplace                    |
| 14-16 March 2003:   | Taking responsibility for ourselves<br>and others |
| 25-27 April 2003:   | Coping with success and failure                   |
| 13-15 June 2003:    | Developing a spiritual practice                   |

Douai Abbey, Upper Woolhampton, Reading, Berks., RG7 5TQ. E-mail: [douaiabby@aol.com](mailto:douaiabby@aol.com).

## *Church watch*

The United Reformed Church passed an interesting resolution at its General Assembly this year. It notes the difficulties some of its Non-Stipendiary Ministers are experiencing with getting 'time off' for Church activities. *(Do any MSEs out there experience the opposite: time off from Church activities for work?)*

"General Assembly calls upon Her Majesty's Government to encourage employers to allow their employees working for faith communities in a voluntary capacity to be permitted paid leave on those occasions when these responsibilities fall within working time."

This resolution came from a church where a review of their NSM was being undertaken. A member of the eldership had recently lost their son in a car accident and the Minister had conducted the funeral. Afterwards the elders were shocked to discover that the Minister had taken a days' annual leave for the occasion. *(Not a surprise to most MSEs, I suspect – Ed.)*

In 1997 the Ministries Committee commissioned a review into Non Stipendiary ministry which was presented to General Assembly in 2000. It indicated such developments as local church leaders and church related community workers, but left unresolved many issues. A Working Party was set up to address these, including looking at the nature of ministry itself.

There is a thoughtful and detailed report available on the URC website, [www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk), at Appendix 6 to the 2002 Assembly Report, well worth reading. The following extract about communities to which people belong is perceptive:

*Each member of the church belongs to a number of distinct communities in which the common currency is that of personal relationships. These include home and family, neighbourhood, civic,*

*employment, recreation and, of course, the church itself.*

*home and family: arena for that most searching test of our characters*

*neighbourhood: filled with many people just like us and with needs just like ours, and some who aren't*

*civic: in which not every need can be met by a grand scheme or programme, but even where it can the contribution and attitude of individuals can make a world of difference*

*employment: often where the competition is the greatest and the everyday can seem like a fight for survival but hopefully where stress is creative and there is real satisfaction in a job done honourably and well*

*recreation: not to be thought of as an 'off-duty' time but sometimes the opportunity for a deeper witness as relaxation opens the way to a more intimate sharing*

*church: which does require leadership and care to be provided by some but should never be the exclusive area in which the ministry of church members is exercised.*

There is clearly a real concern with the ministry of the whole church and every member, and with ensuring that the 'learning' about Christian life equips members to live in the world as it is today. What is still largely missing is an understanding of how those who are ministering in secular employment can add to this.

### ***Pond watch***

I am indebted to David Damon for drawing my attention to some words of wisdom from our US cousins. These extracts sum up the points made.

Firstly, James Hudnut-Beumler, Dean of Vanderbilt University Divinity School:

*"Ministry is nothing more than service, and we need a shared and renewed theological sense of ministry in our churches. Helping create that sense in the communities and*

congregations where we serve is the first task in ministry. Contemporary Christian churches and their pastors tend to break in one of two directions when they enlarge their definition of ministry beyond what ministers do: the liberals interpret ministry as service to others while conservatives interpret ministry as bringing people to a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

We need a definition of ministry for all time that is non-clerical, dynamic, and theological. Let me suggest one such definition of ministry. It comes from two of the great theologians of the last century, Daniel Day Williams and H. Richard Niebuhr. They defined ministry as the *‘increase of the love of God and love toward the neighbor.’* It may sound familiar. It should. It’s taken from Jesus’ summation of the Law. .... We could do worse in our churches and we have.’

Next, Garret Keizer, writer of the novel *God of Beer*, published by Harper Collins. (*Sounds good to me! Ed. I recall conversations similar to this one*):

‘Some years ago, after I’d given a talk at a university many hundred’s of miles from home, a man in the audience raised his hand and asked about my status as a minister. “Now you’re what we used to call a ‘worker priest’. You don’t earn your living from the church, right?”

“That’s right. I’m not a professional priest. Nor was I educated in seminary. By training I’m a high school English teacher, which is how I earn my living. Essentially, I’ve been ordained to serve a small parish that cannot afford its own ‘regular’ clergy.”

“Well, I think what you are doing is admirable.” .....

‘Where I live, in the remotest corner of Vermont, many small churches are simply unable to afford full-time clergy.



Increasingly one hears references to “team ministry”, “total ministry”, “common ministry” – all discussed in the context of “empowering” the smaller congregation and emancipating it from the burden of supporting professional clergy. The search for a different model ... can be an exciting process. It can lead people to reflect more deeply on their own gifts, on their solidarity with one another, and on the essential requirements of the Gospel. ...

Still, I get nervous whenever I hear someone disparage the so-called old model, especially if he holds up my own flimsy ministry as an example of the alternatives.

‘Perhaps the greatest advantage of the old model of church structure is the encouragement it gives to lay ministry. Conventional wisdom holds the opposite view: lay ministry tends to be stunted by the exercise of clergy professionalism. Of course, the difference turns on one’s definition of lay ministry. In spite of all protestations to the contrary, we doggedly continue to think of lay ministry as lay people filling the traditional roles of clergy in the church rather than as lay people fulfilling their callings in the world.’

### ***My Two Minutes of Fame (well almost!)***

*Judy Craig*

It all began whilst I was minding my own business, sorting out the day’s e-mails, when the Diocesan Communications Officer, rang. Various things raced through my mind. What had I said to whom, and when, that could have been misconstrued?!

He was ringing to ask me if I would agree to Look East BBC regional news spending a day with me, so they could use it as a “close up” feature in their news programme. Stories told by friends who have been victim of press manipulation of facts, and of scandal being implied and difficult to refute, came to

mind. I found my instinct was to say “not on your Nellie”. But vague recollections from college of being advised to try and use opportunities of media exposure to highlight the good side of the church, also featured.

I agreed to ask the practice, where I have been a GP for 16 years, and the churchwardens in the parish where I am serving my title, where we are a year into interregnum, if they minded being filmed. They all responded positively.

I was left with four days notice to arrange things. The helpful lady at the BBC who was my contact had asked for patients and churchwardens to be available for interview. The BBC was keen that our new assistant bishop should feature, and thankfully he was available. Both the Archdeacon and the Bishop were helpful, gave good advice, but also dire warnings about editing, the press's agenda etc. I talked through with them what they thought the hidden agendas might be, and how to try and avoid them. Both reiterated what we had been told in media training at college, that you must be clear in your own mind what the message is that you want to get across, and try and incorporate that into everything you say.

Preparing for something like this was a mixture of trying to sort out the practical details in such a short time, and of being glad there wasn't more time in which to get nervous. My main concern was to ensure that the patients were not put to any trouble. I spent some time thinking of two people who would not be too fazed by such an experience, who were articulate and would not have an axe to grind. Neither of the two I asked have any religious connection at all, and nor did they know I was a priest. They were both delighted to help and everyone came up trumps.

The day started in church for Morning Prayer at 7.30am. It

was then off to the practice, 5 miles away, driving in convoy - a challenge in the morning traffic! At the practice I had arranged to continue my normal morning surgery using a partner's room. The camera team set up in my consulting room, for us to do mock up consultations. We had done a handout for everyone who attended the surgery that morning, explaining that the BBC were there, giving them the option to sit somewhere else other than the waiting room if they didn't want the risk of being caught on camera. No one took us up on that option! They also interviewed the patients and me. The cameraman was very direct and helpful in his instructions as to what he wanted, and was relaxed and humorous, managing to put us all at our ease.

We met the Bishop at the church in the afternoon for a mock-up service, and more interviews. A lot of time was spent trying to explain what Non-Stipendiary Ministry meant. I think they found it all rather confusing, and certainly couldn't get a handle on what a curate was.

They then rushed off to edit it all to be transmitted that evening. Having spent 3½ hours with us it went out for just about 2 minutes. The end product came over as positive and up beat.

The most astonishing thing for me has been the fall out from it all. I think the lack of news in August had something to do with it. The next day the local paper asked to come and interview me, and did a full page article on Bank Holiday Monday. The British Medical Journal saw it too, and spent an evening with me for a feature to be published in October. I have found it all rather bemusing. The patients and congregation have loved it, and folk keep saying positive things to me. I can only think it makes them feel special to know someone who has been in the media.

I found it less daunting than I had feared. I decided in my mind that they had approached me; I didn't have anything to prove or to hide. The advice and support from the Diocesan structures was excellent, and it was a good opportunity to build up positive contacts in the media. You never know when you might be glad of those in the future. My 2 minutes of fame has passed and life continues as ever!

### ***Books and Resources***

David Kellett, ***Champions for God at Work***, Terra Nova Publications 2002, £8.99, 250pp. ISBN 1-90 194-915-X. The importance of work in our calling to serve God. The author is Chartered Occupations Psychologist and works in human resource management.

Mark Greene, ***Christian Life & Work: because work matters to God***, a resource for small groups. Published by London Bible College.

Christian Wolmar, ***Broken Rails: How privatisation wrecked Britain's Railways***, Aurum Press 2001, £14.99, 284pp. ISBN 1 85410 857 3. Comprehensive exposition of how the working lives of millions are blighted in an industry where care for customers and employees should be paramount.

Andrew Davey, ***Urban Christianity and global order***, SPCK 2001, £9.99, 160pp. ISBN 0281053510.

Laura Nash & Scotty McLennan, ***Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of fusing Christian values with business life***, Jossey-Bass 2002, ISBN 0-7879-5698-8. From the USA and probably best obtained through [amazon.com/christianleadership](http://amazon.com/christianleadership).

## ***An engineer dies and reports to hell...***

... Pretty soon, the engineer becomes dissatisfied with the level of comfort in hell, and starts designing and building improvements. After a while, they've got air conditioning, flush toilets and escalators. The engineer is of course a pretty popular guy!

One day God calls up Satan on the telephone for their annual chat and asks, with a superior air, "Now then, Old Nick, 'ow's it going down there in hell?"

[Note: as is common knowledge, God is from the North of England].

Satan replies: "Hey, things are going great. We've got air conditioning and flush toilets and escalators, and there's no telling what this engineer is going to come up with next."

God replies: "What??? You've got an engineer! That's a mistake – he should never have been put down there; send him up here at once."

Satan says: "No way. I like having an engineer on the staff, and I'm keeping him."

Bristling, God retorts: "Send him back up here or I'll sue."

Satan laughs uproariously and answers: "Yeah, right. And just where are you going to find a lawyer in heaven?"

## ***And finally ...***

... at a recent memorial service in Canada for bodies and organs used in medical research, the hymns included 'Take my life and let it be ...'. It of course invites God to take our hands ...feet ...lips ...heart. Oooops!

# CHRISM

CHRistians In Secular Ministry

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ISSN 1460-8693

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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