

# Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in  
secular ministry

Number 106

July 2008

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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.*

## **CHRISM is the National Association of CHRistians In Secular Ministry**

for **all** Christians who see their secular employment as their primary Christian ministry, and for those who support that vision.

To further this aim, CHRISM publishes a quarterly journal, releases occasional papers and organises an annual retreat. Conferences are held regularly and worldwide links pursued.

CHRISM welcomes members, both lay and ordained, from all Christian denominations, encourages them to be active within their own faith communities and to champion ministry in and through secular employment. If you would like confidential support as an MSE, please contact any member of the Committee (see inside rear cover).

**Further information about CHRISM may be obtained from the Secretary or the Journal Editor**

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Copy deadline for the next edition:

Friday 3rd October 2008

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## Editorial

In this edition of Ministers-at-Work you will find most of the usual fare: notices of forthcoming events (and in particular please take note of the reminder of CHRISM's summer conference), reports of past events, an 'and finally' item, etc. These have generally been written by members of the CHRISM Committee. But you'll also find two articles from non-CHRISM Committee members: a long piece from John White and a shorter article from David Clark. I hope you'll find them as interesting as I do.

David Clark's article is in this edition because he asked me whether we could include a flyer for his new course on 'Mission and the World of Work' at Cliff College, Manchester, this autumn, so I then asked him to write about it for the journal. Coincidentally (?) his new book: 'The Diaconal Church: Beyond the Mould of Christendom' (Epworth, 2008) then plonked through my letterbox to review. This turned out to be a fascinating read. Basically it's a series of 12 reflections, by a range of different authors, on his previous book 'Breaking the Mould of Christendom: Kingdom, Community, Diaconal Church and the Liberation of the Laity' (Epworth, 2005), reviewed in the April, 2006 edition of Ministers-at-Work. Reading 'The Diaconal Church' made me want to read the earlier book, and both books are now on my bookshelf. I can highly recommend them.

John White's article is a slightly edited version of a lecture he gave - and which I was privileged to hear - at a St George's House consultation on MSE (on which more in future editions of Ministers-at-Work I hope). This lecture made me really think and challenged some of my preconceptions. OK it's a bit long for the journal but nevertheless I hope you will make it to the end.

I think these articles are interesting, and in particular interesting to compare, because these two authors share much in common - in particular the view that the institutional church in England needs a radical overhaul and that MSE has much to offer new forms (expressions) of church should they emerge. However they differ greatly in their analysis of the origins of the problems the

institutional church now faces and in their view of its role in society.

David Clark's thesis (and for this you need to read his books as well as his article) is that the problem with the church is that 'the model of church that we in the West have inherited is that of Christendom' and he defines 'Christendom' as 'a society where the historic Christian faith provides the cultural framework for social living - as well as the official religious form of the State' (Breaking the Mould, p 58). He sees the Christendom model of church as proselytising, exclusivist, dogmatic, clericalist, parochialist, etc.

John White, in contrast, bemoans the fact the 'the institutional Church has lost itself as a self-conscious single entity' and 'is rapidly abandoning all responsibility to encompass and enable the spiritual aspects of our personal and social life' (this journal p 10). He seems to think that the Christendom model of church - though clearly he would not characterise it in precisely the way David Clark does - has much to offer us still. He reminds us, for example, that Lesslie Newbigen in the 1980s, commenting on the Constantinian roots of Christendom, asked: 'What then, should the Church have done? Should it have advised the Emperor that it was better for the spiritual health of the Church, and therefore the purpose of God, that he should remain a pagan and continue to persecute the Church?' (p 14).

These different views of the past and its legacy lead these authors to different views of the role of the church in the present and the future. David Clark argues we need to break the 'mould of Christendom' but John White seems to be suggesting that we need to refashion that model of church rather than to break it.

John White argues that 'the Church should be committed to live in the heart of the social order' and be 'culture critical not alternative culture' (p 17). David Clark, on other hand thinks, that while the church should 'respect the autonomy of secular culture' (The Diaconal Church, p 185) its mission is 'to model and to build learning communities that are transformed by and manifest the gifts of the kingdom community' (p 181) i.e. to be and to build an alternative social order.

Which of these two perspectives are correct: I leave it up to you to judge. Perhaps it is unfair of me to point out the differences in the biographies of the two authors (pages 23 and 29 of this journal) but these have clearly moulded and/or been moulded by their views. And in the end perhaps the difference in perspective on what it means to be 'in and not of the world' does not matter much. The proof of the pudding is in the eating (Matthew 7: 15-20). And both David Clark and John White end up with seeing a key role for MSE in the future church.

John White says that 'it is only by...involvement in the moral and spiritual complexities of the world [including the world of work] can we know something of the implications of that great mystery of God-with-us' (p 21) and that MSEs should 'encourage the people of God in their mission and witness to live out the Gospel of God in their daily lives' (p 22). David Clark, too, sees engagement with and ministry in the world of work as key to his vision of a new (Diaconal) church and world. His new course 'Mission and the World of Work', for example, aims to enable MSEs and others 'to explore...mission in the world of work' because this has been 'a task too long neglected by a church that has become detached from... the workplace.' (enclosed flyer)

Well most (all?) readers of this journal will agree with these sentiments. And although stories of the past are important - they clearly shape our identities and how we see ourselves - the task now is, surely, to stop whingeing about what has happened, to be thankful for what we have, and - as the French Worker Priests remind us (page 44 of this journal) - get on with the task in hand: 'to proclaim an always-new Gospel in a society which is in constant flux'. Christ has ascended, leaving us his Spirit, and now we need to be what he has told us to be: his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

**Mike Rayner**

**CHRISM Summer Conference,  
5th – 7th September 2008, Leicester**

**“Leicester – Working Life in a City of Faith!”**

Included with your copy of the last journal were two flyers giving details of our summer conference. Are those flyers still to be found in your journal or nestling in alternative accommodation such as the attic/wheely bin or being used as book-mark/emergency cat tray liner? Or, did you use them wisely?

To all those who have distributed them, our grateful thanks. For those yet to do so or have ‘misplaced’ the original set, fear not, for this issue contains another flyer for another opportunity to do the right thing. Either fill it in for yourself or give it to someone else.

The list of people you might give it to is almost endless but as a stimulus for action how about:

- Your church’s inter-faith contact person
- Your diocesan MSE contact person
- A fellow MSE
- A work colleague
- A Chamber of Commerce contact
- A fellow member of a diocesan or provincial committee



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## **CHRISM Annual General Meeting, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

Notice is hereby given that the 2008 Annual General Meeting of CHRISM will take place on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September, at 6.00 pm, in the John Foster Conference Suite, University of Leicester.

### **Agenda**

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of AGM held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2007
- 3 Matters arising
- 4 Presiding Moderator's report
- 5 Hon. Secretary's report
- 6 Membership report
- 7 CHRISSET financial report
  - Adoption of Accounts for 2007
  - Motion to continue the arrangement with the CHRISSET trustees
- 8 Subscription for 2009
- 9 Election of officers and Committee members
- 10 CHRISM nomination of a CHRISSET Trustee
- 11 Date and place of next AGM
- 12 Remarks by the in-coming Presiding Moderator

### **Review of CHRISM's structure and the ways in which it operates.**

#### **Margaret Joachim**

At the last AGM (now there's a really riveting way to start an article, but please hang in with me for a few more paragraphs) the members made it very clear to the newly-elected Committee that it should carry out a review of CHRISM's structure and the ways in which it operates. It is several years since this was last done, and many aspects of work and society (and even of the churches) have changed a great deal. If CHRISM is going to continue to be a useful and inspiring focus of MSE ideas and practice, it needs to keep up.



Last time, we shut the Committee in a room for a series of strategic planning sessions. They had a thoroughly exciting time and contributed to a significant upturn in the sales figures for PostIt Notes. This time it makes sense to involve the whole membership right from the start. First we would like your comments and ideas. We will collate these, and if people have responded promptly we expect to have at least a summary available for the 2008 AGM, which will take place on 6th September 2008 at our Leicester conference. We will then invite everyone who is interested to a one-day session in Manchester on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2008 to discuss the results and design the way forward.

With this journal you will find a copy of the brief questionnaire which has already been e-mailed to all members whose up-to-date e-mail addresses are on our records.\* If you've already responded, thank you very much. If you haven't – or if some more good ideas have occurred to you since you did – please take the time to give us your opinion and suggestions on CHRISM present and future.

We hope you enjoy filling it in – it isn't quite the usual style and there are absolutely no boxes to tick or “Strongly Agree – Agree - Neither Agree nor Disagree – Really Couldn't Care Less” columns to struggle with. We're not going to enter you in a prize draw when you return your forms, but you should win a better organisation once we've worked through everyone's contributions.

*\* If you didn't get the questionnaire by e-mail, we either don't have an address for you, or it is incorrect. Please help us to keep our records straight by e-mailing your current details to the Membership Secretary, [scooper@hedstone.demon.co.uk](mailto:scooper@hedstone.demon.co.uk)*

## Maintaining Anglican pastoral integrity

John White

*This article is the text of a lecture given at a conference: "The developing contribution of Ministers in Secular Employment to the future Ministry of the Church" held on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008, at St George's House, Windsor Castle.*



In this relatively short presentation I wish to challenge what I consider to be a rapidly developing ecclesiology of the Church of England which whilst, in a similar manner to iconoclasm, has lurked like a virus in the bloodstream of the Church to surface as a fever from time to time, now, I believe, threatens to be a major contributor to the terminal sickness of the institutional Church in this country.

Initially, it may not be apparent why I should use this present gathering to air this view but I hope within a short time from the beginning of what I have to say you will appreciate why I think the issue is strikingly relevant to our discussion around the topic of (what I still choose to call) Ministry in Secular Employment.

I would not like you to think that my introduction is simply offered for rhetorical effect. I recall that a few years ago when our choir school here was in serious difficulties which brought it near to the point of closure, in my genuine anxiety I was offered consolation by a person who assured me that as the school had been part of St George's since 1352 it was therefore effectively invincible. I pointed out that at that very moment St Bartholomew's Hospital in the city of London which had been there since 1123, was about to be closed down by Her Majesty's Government. The then health minister said she was not in post to protect heritage but to deliver health care, which proved retrospectively to be a somewhat ironic response as I believe she later became heritage minister! As it

happens, both the school and the hospital have survived and now flourish but, be it admitted, only through the concerted determined efforts of many people who were persuaded of the continuing value of the institutions and so worked hard for their survival.

It was Studdert-Kennedy (the First World War padre known to the front-line troops as Woodbine Willie) who in the aftermath of the Great War wrote:

“If the Church of the twentieth century does not repent, and proclaim open war against war; if she does not make good her right of entry into the factory, the office, and the counting house; if she is content to remain a department of life, a State institution largely supported by money gained by methods into which it would not be wise to enquire too closely; if she makes her aim and object to produce the kind of piety which regards religion as having nothing to do with money, except so far as it is needed for the upkeep of altars and the payment of priests; if she allows her members to be dishonest, and then to comfort their consciences by pauperising the poor with doles and easy charity; if she is content with merely individualistic Christianity, she will discover that neither doctrinal orthodoxy nor ecclesiastical correctness can save her from the doom which God pronounces upon all rotten institutions; and will learn as the Jews learned, that God’s election is an election to service and not to privilege, and that it is impossible to establish and maintain a monopoly of grace.” (G A Studdert-Kennedy, “The Wicket Gate”, Doubleday, 1923)

Prophets have a history of being done to death. In the past, and sometime still in the present, that “doing to death” has been and is, brought about by assassination or execution. More often today prophets are slain by the wounds inflicted by a thousand qualifications, or perhaps what is worse, by being added to the Anglican liturgical calendar to be sanitised into sanctity having “done a good job.”

Every time someone points out the very obvious fact that the institutional Church, not only in England but throughout western

Europe and to a less obvious but relatively equal degree in the United States, is in chronic if not terminal decline, vehement voices are heard that claim this not to be the case and assure us that in isolated places there are expanding congregations and manifestations of renewal. If the first observer goes on to say that the Church has considerably less influence in society than once it had, the vehement voices will return to say either, "quite right, we are here to save souls not to be involved in the social programmes of a naughty world" or "the Church is here to offer a counter-culture to the God-less materialism of the present age."

At risk, not of being a prophet but rather such an observer, I know that everything I am about to say is open to challenge and I recognise that I shall speak in broad generalisations but I feel justified in this approach because I sense that the institutional Church has lost itself as a self-conscious single entity, in the manner in which it has lost its liturgy, through a mass of optional variants created in order to satisfy everyone and in the hope of stifling criticism before it can emerge. Some see this response as an attempt to maintain structural unity even at the cost of internal integrity.

I do not know what Studdert-Kennedy would make of the Church of the twenty-first century. For me, the fact that much of what he wrote in the 1920's still applies as valid criticism of the Church today, concerns me. But what can now legitimately be added to his confessable list of faults perhaps concerns me even more.

I think the Church of England is being led into an ecclesiology which sees the Body of Christ essentially as an ark of redemption rather than an existential affirmation of incarnation. I think the institution is rapidly abandoning all responsibility to provide a means to encompass and enable the spiritual aspects of our personal and social life. By spiritual I do not mean the specifically creedal, moral or affective, aspects of religion. I mean that which gives us identity as social and individual beings. In the Biblical tradition of the Christian faith, which faith provides the religious origins of the vast majority of people in this country, it is the spirit (the breath) of God that animates the first human being and gives

Adam identity (Genesis 2: 7); it is the spirit, in Ezekiel's vision that make the dry bones live (Ezekiel 37: 7 ff); it is the spirit that Jesus gives up on the Cross (Mark 15: 37); and the spirit that comes on the disciples to create for them their renewed post-Crucifixion identity (Acts 2 and John 19: 22).

I am amongst those who believe that concepts of salvation and redemption, in the Christian tradition, are dependent on the belief that God is with us and that we are in God. As a consequence of this belief (or perhaps the belief is a consequence of conviction born from experience) I hold the view that what we do in the here and now, how we are as individuals and as groups behave, has eternal significance and value.. I do not see the created order as full of things of "passing and little worth" (cf. the hymn, "Soldiers who are Christ's below") but rather open to constant creative opportunity.

I have been considerably influenced by a passage from a poem by Charles Peguy the French atheist socialist who, by "following the same straight route" (his own words) that brought him to atheism and socialism, found himself a Catholic Christian. Peguy was killed in the first few weeks of the Great War in 1914.

In this passage the Virgin Mary is speaking to a group of women:

It does not make sense  
We who are nothing, who do not last,  
Who endure hardly at all,  
It doesn't make sense that it is we who are ordered to  
Preserve and feed  
On earth,  
The word which has been spoken.  
The word of God.  
It is our business to feed the living word from the time  
In which it was spoken until the Day of Judgement.  
In saecula saeculorum  
World without end  
From generation to generation...

It is not enough that we should have been created,  
That we should have been born,  
That we should have remained faithful.  
It depends upon us...  
That the eternal should not lack the temporal  
(Strange reversal)  
That the spirit should not be deprived of the carnal...  
That eternity should not lack time...  
That the spirit should not lack flesh  
That the soul, so to speak, should not lack a body  
That Jesus should not lack a Church,  
His Church,  
And it is we who must carry it through to the end,  
So that God is not deprived of his creation.

(Extract from "Le Porche du Mystere de la Deuxieme Vertue"  
translated by Marjorie Villiers, from Marjorie Villiers, "Charles  
Peguy", Harper and Row, 1965)

I am not unaware of the limits of Christian perception, neither am I unsympathetic to inter-faith dialogue (though I think few of us recognise the implications of truly open dialogue), but from within my own tradition of religion I think I have found an important affirmation of the cosmic significance of human life and of the actual and unrepeatability of every human being within that cosmic order. I believe that our life matters and in some real sense that we who understand this to be the case (whatever our tradition of faith or ideology) have a special responsibility to ensure that, in Peguy's words, "God is not deprived of his creation."

My personal fear is that the Church is being led, slowly but determinedly, towards an ecclesiology which suggests that the Kingdom of God (that by which God makes a rightful claim on creation) can only be achieved by those who live behind the walls of an embattled and diminished institutional church that has politely abandoned the rest of the world to some kind of perdition. We have renewed our pre-liberal shibboleths which, in the Church of England, are surprisingly similar in content if not design, across the

spectrum of party allegiances. Right belief and even right practise are increasingly seen as marks of authentic Church life (and have been, I think, since the sixties of the last century). If you ever needed to be convinced of the resultant insularity of the Church all you would have had to do was to be in the conference hall next to that in which the Episcopal Church of the United States, at its General Convention, was debating the Gene Robinson issue. Dr Gaskell (Director of Studies, St George's House) and I were trying, markedly unsuccessfully, to promote St George's House amongst the delegates.. For several days the only discussion in the Convention and about us was on the Gene Robinson issue so that eventually much of the other business of Convention was either hurriedly accommodated on the final day's programme or left over to some future occasion. This is, for me, merely an example of an obsession with the internal concerns of the institution which obsession appears to have marked the public face of the Church during the last decade. Some might see this apparent insularity as a symptom of an institution in decline. It is, perhaps, somewhat like an old person's hypochondria.

My concern is not that such issues as women in the episcopate, and the ordination of persons in a same sex relationship, do not need to be discussed, but that compared with the real business of the Church they are second order matters that have assumed first order status. You could easily believe, as some younger people do, that the true purpose of the Church is to conserve what many feel are out-dated views of the role and status of women and to impose on clergy a moral discipline that without transparent hypocrisy or illegality, it cannot impose on the laity. All this seems a long way from that passionate prophetic sense of the Church's mission which drove Studdert-Kennedy (and others like him) in the aftermath of the greatest experience of human conflict then known on this planet, to campaign for a view of a Church that saw its centre of action in the midst of human society as it is so that that society might reflect more closely its God given purpose. I think it is worth remembering that Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy (1883-1929) impaired his health in the ten years after the end of the First World War in trying to make what he considered the heart of the Gospel available to those same people who had provided the front line

soldiers he had served so conscientiously. William Temple said of him:

"All material things were for him expressions of spirit. He had little belief in spiritual forces or experiences which had no material counterpart; but just because the spirit needed the material medium for its expression and effectiveness he was always watching lest the medium should become the centre of interest, and the spirit be ignored. He clung to the sacraments and to sacramental order. But he greatly feared the concentration of attention on the sacramental rite in forgetfulness of the spiritual meaning and energy of which it is the vehicle." (J K Mozley (ed), "G. A. Studdert Kennedy: By His Friends", W Purcell, 1929)

When Studdert-Kennedy died he was 46 years of age.

It was fashionable in the 1960's to lay at the feet of Constantine the Great most of the problems of the Church. Establishment (in its many forms and not only the formal Establishment of the Church of England) was seen as a great burden on the spiritual life of the Church and a great inhibition to the unfettered proclamation of the Gospel. Lesslie Newbigin in the 1980's sought to challenge this retrospective historical romanticism. He wrote:

"What, then, should the Church have done? Should it have advised the Emperor that it was better for the spiritual health of the Church, and therefore the purpose of God, that he should remain a pagan and continue to persecute the Church? Let us forget - let us even forgive - the absurdities with which the Emperor was hailed as almost a second Christ. How else at that moment in history, could the Church have expressed its faithfulness to the Gospel which is a message of the universal reign of God?" (L Newbigin, "The Other Side of 1984", WCC, 1983)

The debate, of course, is not solved by Newbigin's astute question because the debate's theological underpinnings touch on much profounder matters, a fact of which I am sure Newbigin was fully aware, than merely the Church's response to an Emperor to whom one brave-ish bishop, safely back home after a Council, wrote to



say that the bishops had agreed to the Nicene formula because they feared the Emperor more than they believed the doctrinal statement.

The theological debate is between those who hold that the Church has to seek to be an independent community of believers keeping the faith, despite the fallen world in which they are placed and those who believe that the Church should be committed to live in the heart of the social order with an inclusive rather than an exclusive vision of its purpose.

The "exclusive" ecclesiology is backed by a respectable theology, in that its roots can be traced, perhaps paradoxically, to the Johannean writings (cf. John, 17: 14-19; 18: 33- 19: 12; 1 John 2: 15-17; Revelation 17: 1-7a). I am, of course, fully aware that, as with the rest of the Scriptures, it is possible to give various interpretations to passages and find them supporting rather than challenging your own convictions. This process itself is based on the somewhat difficult to maintain assumption that there is an internal coherence in all scripture. However, what that I am suggesting at this moment is that there is thought to be scriptural support for this particular ecclesiology and that this is at least a reasonable supposition. Of course a separatist ecclesiology was also behind the spiritual movement of the Desert Fathers and, consequentially, of the highly influential monastic movement that spread across Europe. However, it is important to recognise that monasticism did not always manifest itself, either through individuals or through the communities, as separatist. In fact the loss of the monasteries during the Reformation in this country brought great social deprivation for many who had been supported through their extensive social and educational commitments. The separatist ecclesiology has, of course, many present day manifestations both from churches who have it as their sole understanding of Church life and within churches that have a variety of views existing side by side.

It is my contention that the reformed Church of England opted, however, for the inclusive model. There can be little doubt that Henry VIII saw his own role as being much like that of Constantine.

It was not an idea that came to him “out of the blue”, for a similar view of royal supremacy had frequently emerged throughout the middle-ages when the conflict between lay authority and ecclesiastical authority was endemic. We may not be, in Henry's case, as generous in our forgiveness of his behaviour as Newbiggin thought we should be with Constantine's, but it must be admitted that Henry's ecclesiology (either conscious or as the result of pragmatism) was based on a view of the Church as integrated into the social order in all its parts. Henry, despite his very apparent faults, was a man of some theological ability, and I suspect he knew what he was doing. As with successive monarchs to this present day, he saw his role as being one given by God, to whom he was ultimately responsible for the charge committed to him. The sacral anointing at the Coronation is not merely a ceremony but has about it the marks of an effective “sacramental” rite and has been seen as such by more than those committed to Divine Rite autocracy.

I do not wish at this point to discuss the appropriateness of such a view of political responsibility for present day society, but I do wish to propose that as a consequence of Henry's attitude the Church of England was affirmed as a Church which was integral to the social order of the nation. This engaged the Church in a covenant relationship with all the people of the nation. It was the Church's responsibility to accept that function which it had first accepted under Constantine, namely to provide the religious framework in which the people could recognise and fulfil its purpose in the greater cosmic order of things. I think it is worth reflecting that when the Prayer Book speaks of the Church it does not mean the gathered community of pious believers, nor the members of the Church of England, but rather the whole of the social order which comes within the boundaries of Christendom.

These foundations of an Anglican ecclesiology, necessarily historically conditioned, have, I think, held together the complex building which has been constructed over succeeding centuries, but perhaps only until the present day. Moreover they have given the framework for a theology of ordained ministry which ministry has been seen as God's particular instrument to ensure that this vision

of the Church is encouraged to flourish. It was certainly the basis of the parish system when it was at its most successful and still underpins the Anglican approach (in England at least) to chaplaincy work in hospitals, schools, colleges, the military and prisons.

This inclusive ecclesiology can also claim biblical support, not least from Mathew's gospel (viz Matthew 5: 13; 13: 33; 10: 16 cf Mark 9: 38-41.) Some believe, of course, that the main concern of the teaching of Jesus is the coming Kingdom of God and as such the purpose of the Church is to help effect that coming. Others sharing an inclusive ecclesiology believe that the whole notion of the Church is dependent, more on the thinking of the early church communities, than the teaching of Jesus. In this context an ecclesiology that is inclusive and sees the Church as necessarily imbedded in its society (culture critical not alternative culture) receives support from those who sense that exclusivity and the holding of the terms kingdom and church as synonymous, are basically unsympathetic to the Gospel teaching of Christ.

Naturally a changing social and political mores requires of Christians who share this second ecclesiology a significant degree of creative flexibility in both approach and understanding. In such matters of ecclesiology and practice the Church, I would maintain, has never been static, even those parts of it that have most jealously kept a separatist understanding of themselves. Prime examples of this must be some American sectarian assemblies, not least amongst them the Amish and the Amana communities. The Shakers of course built in the seeds of their own self-destruction (though perhaps "seeds" is an inappropriate word to use in their case!) and this may be an acted parable in itself.

However, there is some effective difference between those who reluctantly agree to making accommodation with a changing world and those who willingly accept the necessity of doing so. Last year the Bishop of Liverpool gave the annual lecture at St George's around the theme of persuading American evangelical Christians to accept an active involvement in what might be required to combat climate change and global warming. I expect that as the evidence increases that climate change is a reality and that its negative

results for human habitation of the planet might be nevertheless be mitigated, there will be a perhaps slow positive response from those who by virtue of their exclusivist redemption ecclesiology have so far had a low view of the significance of the present creation compared with their expectations for new creation. But some Christians already hold a view that the Church should be in the vanguard of those forces seeking to encourage a responsible stewardship of the globe.

I have taken up you time to discuss matters theological because I think they form the basis of any creditable apologia for an ordained ministry that takes place within the world of secular employment. More than this I dare to suggest it provides grounds for the Church of England to actively encourage such a ministry in our present social environment.

Clearly England is now a nation of many ethnicities and various religious traditions. It is not the first time that this island has experienced such a variety of people and beliefs, but after a long period of apparent cultural stability it seems to have come as a shock to the Church to know how to respond to its religious commitment in the presence of the new population that now make up its field for action. It is one thing to have a majority of Christendom based non-churchgoers to bring back to worship (or to hope to bring back to worship) and another to find yourself with a significant number of fellow citizens (here the old word subjects might have a slightly more cutting edge) who are protected in the integrity of their own beliefs and customs by law. The "secularism" that ensures the protection of minority beliefs is in itself something of a challenge to a Church, that I think, a little too readily, has accepted that we are no longer a Christian country.

One of the responses to so-called secular society and to other faiths whose members, unlike in the days when they were merely seen as colonial subjects, are effectively protected from proselytising not least by the Established Church, is to batten down the hatches. Whilst those who share an ark of redemption ecclesiology may seem fairly secure at this moment, those who have a more inclusive model of Church can be at risk of finding the

challenge of a changing social demography somewhat too daunting. This coupled with diminishing available income, significantly reduced stipendiary clergy numbers, a consequent tendency for parishioners, who have more say in clergy appointments than ever before, to look for ministers who will effectively be their congregational chaplains, is resulting, I think, in a drift towards a congregational model of Church with a significant shift of emphasis towards the protection of what we have rather than risk taking to find a new role for the Church in the present day social order. I once heard a bishop in this room, one supposedly sympathetic to ministry in secular employment, say with some angry passion to a group of MSEs, "You don't seem to realise, I have to fill parishes." That same philosophy backed by an Anglo-Catholic form of ark ecclesiology, at one stroke reduced the number of chaplains at the University of London from eighteen to eight.

It seems to me that ordained ministry working in the secular world re-establishes the Anglican identity as a church committed to living within the social order as we have it. It is a model based essentially on an incarnational foundation which takes the prologue to John's Gospel seriously and interestingly therefore questions some of the narrower conclusions of that Gospel in terms of those who are safely in the fold and those who are to be reckoned outside it. Ministry in Secular Employment clearly establishes an organic model of Church life and acknowledges that in many ways those who are in the world necessarily must be of the world. There is otherwise a certain concession made to a pastoral Docetism. The somewhat delayed concern of certain Christians for matters ecological I see as reflecting such a view.

However, I detect amongst some lay people an uncertainty about "ministers at work" which comes, I believe, from a long established tendency to see ordained ministry as a vicarious moral and spiritual activity which is "done on behalf" of those who have to live and work in the messy moral circumstances of secular society. The same newspapers who feed from stories of pop-stars and politicians exposed for what once might have been though inappropriate moral behaviour, express a near-puritanical shock when reporting the story of the vicar who leaves his wife to live

with the parish secretary. Similarly, I find professional people often attempt to exclude clergy from committed interest in their own professional activities. This is especially the case if those activities are mainly concerned with the making and distribution of money. Thus the idea that the chief executive of an international banking corporation might be ordained comes to many as an unpleasant surprise, and relief is found only if it can be proved that such a person sees that ministry as exercised in parish duties over the weekend. Whilst it is fairly easy to demonstrate that the ordained ministry has had an unhealthy attitude of distrust towards lay participation in matters of "Church" polity, this distrust can be balanced by a courteous and discrete anti-clericalism in English lay society, from the establishment through to the dwellers in areas of deprivation. The Rev Sydney Smith's aphorism "Don't you know, as the French say, there are three sexes- men, women, and clergymen" (Lady Holland, "A Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith", Harper, 1855) is I suspect as much about this sense of attributed "otherness" as it is about the somewhat indeterminate sexuality of some clergy!

Clergy have contributed to this view of the ordained ministers as being "other" and have thus opened themselves to be seen as vicariously righteous, unsullied by the world. Keeping up the professional pretence has cost more than one clergyperson's sanity and the stability of many a clergy family. Soon after I was ordained a deacon, now many years ago, a churchgoing elderly female cousin on my mothers side, living in a Norfolk village, said to me "Now you're a minister we can tell you the scandal of the village. A group of us members of the Mothers' Union was going down the lane past the vicarage to a meeting when suddenly a window in the vicarage was flung open and a voice screamed out, "Let them out there know what you're like in here!!"

But I do not want to leave you to suppose that I think that ordained ministers being seen as an integral functioning part of the so-called secular society is simply a way to saying "we ordained people are beneath the dog-collar the same as you laity really." I want to make a much more theological statement. I want to say that it is not the place of the Church to sit on a moral Olympus

judging the affairs of wicked people, but it is its place to engage actively in the real situations of our contemporary society and from the positions of moral compromise, uncertainty and impropriety, to see how the presence of the Kingdom of God may be found and encouraged to grow. Incarnational thinking, I believe, implies that God's presence is not restricted to a protected religious sphere but rather that God pitches his/her tent (John 1: 14) in the middle of our slightly insecure habitations.

It is only by this involvement in the moral and spiritual complexities of the world that we can know something of the implications of that great mystery of God-with-us. I am reminded of a particular war poem by Wilfred Owen, a poem which emerged from what can be seen as the maelstrom that gathered together much of the diseased morality of the age of industry and Empire into the mud of Flanders. The poem is entitled, "Apologia Pro Poemate Meo." And here are a few stanzas:

I, too, saw God through mud,-  
The mud that cracked on cheeks when wretches smiled.  
War brought more glory to their eyes than blood,  
And gave their laughs more glee than shakes a child...

I have perceived much beauty  
In the hoarse oaths that kept our courage straight;  
Heard music in the silentness of duty;  
Found peace where shell-storms spouted reddest spate.

Nevertheless, except you share  
With them in hell the sorrowful dark of hell,  
Whose world is but the trembling of a flare,  
And heaven but as the highway for a shell,

You shall not hear their mirth:  
You shall not come to think them well content  
By any jest of mine. These men are worth  
Your tears. You are not worth their merriment.

(Extract from "Apologia Pro Poemate Meo" by Wilfred Owen from "The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen", Edmund Blundel (ed), Chatto & Windus, 1931)

A woman priest friend of mine, working as the Rector of a large multi-ethnic parish recently arranged for the sale of some parish property to a local Muslim community group. After the completion they soon returned to her to ask if she would object if they built a mosque on the site having once gained the necessary planning permission. There were those in her parish who felt that she would be "letting the side down" if she supported the building of the mosque but having sufficient encouragement to proceed she said she would be happy to help facilitate their building of a place of worship. On Sunday next she is to attend the opening of the mosque as an honoured guest. She was assured that her status as a female would in no way inhibit her full participation in the ceremony. She was careful to find a head covering (bought from a Muslim dealer) that allowed her clerical collar to be seen!

I have given the poem and the story to be exploratory illustrations of what I think is the birth of a theological process which cannot be achieved by observation but only through participation. It is a "risky business" and things will appear to go wrong from time to time, but the theological process (which is basically a spiritual process on my understanding of that term) cannot be duplicated in a morally pristine laboratory. It can only be achieved by those who are "there at the time."

In conclusion: in what I have attempted to say I have deliberately concentrated on one particular form of ordained ministry amongst several. I am not ashamed to do so, for not only is it the topic of this consultation but also because, as I have said, I think this form of ordained ministry has the opportunity to help save and preserve an important pastoral ecclesiology.

I realise that it will be said "but surely this involvement with the secular world is what lay people do all the time so why does any one of them have to become a priest in doing it?" I have little difficulty myself in justifying ordination to such a ministry. Ordained ministers have a specific role to encourage the people of God in their mission and witness to live out the Gospel of God in their daily lives. Many of us have tried to do this but from the touch line. Our lives have not been easier, sometimes our financial



anxieties have been greater, than many ministers in secular employment, and we have often wondered what it means for such priests to have “sacrificed” for the Gospel, but unlike them we have not “been there.” And, if once we were there but are no longer there, through a career change, we have lost some credibility whether we like it or not. No one, I hope, underestimates the value of industrial chaplains but they come from a framework of ministry which does not depend for its livelihood and for its achievement from working in the heart of the industry itself.

Here in St George’s, I have become acutely aware of some of the real circumstances of employment in today’s society and not least the administration of the employment laws. I have been directly responsible for making people redundant and have had to face the prospect of tribunals and organise severance deals. For me it has been a significant challenge to what I once supposed was to be the function of a priest. But, I admit, I too have seen God through mud, and that vision has very much modified that understanding of ordained ministry brought to me through those pastoral situations where I have effectively been spared any real involvement in creating the very problem I expected to be able help resolve.

I hope what I have offered my have helped to stimulate some thought, but most of all I hope it will have encouraged us all to avoid the pit-fall of evaluating patterns of ordained ministry simply from an economic or organisational perspective. The presence of an ordained ministry in the workplace necessarily makes the wider Church face some theological and ecclesiological questions that a lay presence alone will, sadly, not achieve. I hope we will accept that challenge.

*Canon John White worked for the Civil Service and as a school-teacher prior to attending the University of Hull and the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield. After a period of parish and university chaplaincy work, Canon White concentrated on clergy education. He was Assistant Director of Post Ordination Training in the Diocese of Ripon (1971-1973) and Chaplain (Vice Principal) of the Northern Ordination Course (1973-1982). He was appointed a Canon of St George’s Chapel in 1982 and, in addition to his responsibilities on*

*Chapter, he was Warden of St George's House from 1999 to July 2003. He has been the Director of Clergy Courses (1998 to present). Since moving to Windsor, he has held a number of visiting posts in the USA and Mexico and is the European Deputy for the Anglican Diocese of Mexico. He is a Trustee of the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and has a number of published works, including poetry. Canon White was awarded the LVO in The Queen's Birthday Honours in 2004.*

## Mission and the world of work



David Clark

This autumn (2008) I have been asked by Cliff College, a Methodist training institution in Derbyshire, to head up a new course entitled 'Mission and the World of Work' (see the leaflet enclosed with this edition of Ministers-at-Work). It is a course that can be chosen as a substantial part of a postgraduate qualification validated by the University of Manchester. As far as I am aware, this is first time that a course so specifically focused on mission in the world of work has been offered under the auspices of a British university. Your editor has asked me to share with members of CHRISM the thinking behind, and content of the course.

### *The evangelical contribution*

It is interesting that this course is being offered by a training institution which has a strong evangelical ethos. However, for those of us that may come from a more liberal tradition (most MSEs?), a number of things are worth noting. One is, as I have commented on elsewhere (Clark, 2005, pp 254-64), that the evangelical wing of the church has been involved in seeking to make the Christian faith relevant to the world of work for half a century and more. Indeed, though the liberal wing of the church was very active in this field of mission during the middle years of

the twentieth century, led by the endeavours of such figures as JH Oldham, William Temple, Ted Wickham and Mollie Batten (Principal of William Temple College), the later years of the century up to the present day have seen the steady retreat of the institutional church from explicit engagement with the world of work. Note here the continuing diminishment of 'industrial mission' and the ongoing struggle to get ministries in secular employment taken as seriously as those related to the parish system.

It is also important to recognise that though many with a more liberal theology remain concerned about the emergence of a more aggressive form of evangelical theology on the British scene (as witnessed in the United States), it is the evangelical wing of the church that has taken most seriously the divide between an older generation which still clings to the remnants of Christendom (Clark, 2005, 2008) and those (under fifty and still working) who are almost totally unaware of what the Christian faith is all about. So as a person of more liberal views, I welcome Cliff College's generous invitation to get a course on Mission and the World of Work up and running.

### *Logistics*

What will be the nature of the course? Details have still to be worked out. However, I offer below a few glimpses of what we shall be seeking to accomplish. The course is aimed particularly at those who have some form of leadership role within the church that actively involves them either in the world or work (MSEs, sector ministers and many NSMs) or with lay people engaged in that sphere (such as chaplains). However, it is also meant for any lay person who wants to reflect at some depth on the nature of mission in a work context. Because availability and time are at a premium, the course takes place over a single week (in 2008: November 24th – 28th) and participants can attend all (if they are taking a postgraduate qualification) or specific sessions (if they are not). For the former there is a further reading week, follow up assignments and individual tutorials.

## *Theologies of work and of the workplace*

The course will place particular emphasis on enabling participants to develop their own theology of mission in relation to the world of work. This is not only because there are a number of theologies and models of mission to choose from in this context, but because unless participants own their theology and approach to mission, these will have little chance of guiding and empowering them to engage effectively with this field of mission.

The course will explore the history of mission and the world of work, in particular over the last century. It will look at the development of what David Miller (2007) has recently described as the 'faith at work movement', though his book is largely concerned with the United States where attempts to relate faith to daily life are way ahead of what is (not) happening on the British scene (see Sally Simmel on 'The Coalition for Ministry in Daily Life' USA in Clark (ed), 2008, pp 85-95).

To assist participants in developing their own approach to mission in this field, the course will offer a number of sessions looking at two foundational forms of theology; a theology of work and a theology of the workplace. Both are closely linked to a kingdom theology, a theology which needs to be brought much more to the fore in the church's engagement with the world of work (Clark, 2005, Part 1).

As Armand Larive has recently pointed out (2004, pp 1-7), surprisingly few writers have explored the theology of work. Even so, a number of well-informed contemporary vantage points from which to address a theology of work are gradually emerging (see Volf (1991), Fox (1994), Larive (2004), Cosden (2004), Stevens (1999, 2006) and Miller (2007)). Exploring a theology of work will also require some acquaintance with the main principles of Christian ethics, another relatively neglected area in the training of ordinands.

Alongside a theology of work, the course will look at the almost totally neglected yet equally, if not more important theology of the

workplace. Such a theology focuses not on work as such, but on the nature of the workplace as a community. It asks how enhancing the communal life of the school, the hospital, the service provider, the financial agency, the business and so on, can enrich the lives of employers and employees, as well as of those whom they serve. For if the workplace is a genuine community then not only relationships but the quality of the work itself will be greatly enhanced. Thus the course will encourage participants to develop what is, in reality, a theology of work-related institutions that reflect the communal nature of the kingdom.

### ***Mission in the world of work***

Theologies of work and the workplace offer us key insights into the nature of mission in the world of work. The course will begin by looking at mission in the workplace, where God is of course already in action. It will explore how Christians can enable their place of work to become a community transformed by the gifts of the kingdom. This will entail learning how to discern where those gifts are present (or denied), how we can help others to recognise and own them, and how we can work together to enable the workplace to be a community transformed by those gifts. Mission in the world of work also involves asking how work as such measures up to kingdom values. At the same time, there is a need to be aware that mission at work is not just about the relationship of individual to individual, but about how the gifts and values of the kingdom can transform the life of groups, networks and institutions as such.

Mission in the world of work is about our seeking to exemplify the gifts and virtues of the kingdom in word and deed. In the former context, 'mission as dialogue' will be an important theme of the course (Clark, 2005, pp 88-90; Thangaraj, 1999).

### ***Leadership***

The remainder of the course will consider forms of church leadership that can enable the laity to operate in an empowered, informed and confident way as the people of God in the world. 'The liberation of the laity' (Lakeland, 2003; Clark, 2005) for

mission in the world of work is, as already noted, long overdue. But the leadership of the institutional church still remains uncommitted to and ill equipped for this task. Clericalism has often pushed the clergy to the fore and the laity to the margins even in relation to the world of work. The course will discuss how the roles of chaplain, non stipendiary minister, ministers in secular employment and sector ministers helps (or sometimes hinders) in equipping the laity to be the servants of the kingdom in the workplace (see Clark, 2005, 'Sector ministers and industrial chaplains', pp 210-31).

Finally the course will look at the many, yet frequently neglected ways in which the leadership of the church can enable the church as a gathered community, through worship, pastoral care and, particularly, education to be a power house and resource for equipping lay people to fulfil their ministry as the church dispersed in the world.

### ***A partnership***

The course will seek to work closely with other agencies operating in this field, such as the Industrial Mission Association in its preparation of ministers and lay people for the work of industrial chaplain. It is hoped that a close link can be built with CHRISM and those concerned to develop further the role of ministers in secular employment. There is no such thing as a blue-print for mission in this field. We are all on a journey of exploration and discovery. What matters is that all such initiatives are used to enhance our understanding of what it means for the church to engage meaningfully and effectively, and pre-eminently through its lay people, with the massive challenge of a rapidly changing world of work.

If readers would like to know more about this course or have comments to share about its form and content please contact David Clark (01629 810172 or [david@clark58.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:david@clark58.eclipse.co.uk)).

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*David Clark was a presbyter in the Methodist Church for many years. He served in circuits in Sheffield and inner London before moving to become a senior lecturer in community education at Westhill College, Birmingham. During that time he set up the National Centre for Christian Communities and Networks, the Christians in Public Life Programme, and the Human City Institute in Birmingham. He has written widely about the Christian Community Movement, lay ministry in public life, schools as learning communities and urban renewal. In 2005, he moved out of presbyteral ministry to become a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order. He has been a member of CHRISM for many years.*

## Letter from Jersey

### Rob Fox

Despite the odd last minute flap, the “evil and iniquitous” Goods and Services Tax was safely delivered to the good folk of Jersey on 6th May, at the extortionate rate of 3%. A public meeting called by opponents in Royal Square at noon on the fateful day attracted about a hundred die-hards, and every minor hitch in implementation has been seized on as evidence that “it’ll never work.” It was probably a good thing then that the biggest gaffe was so wild we all just had to laugh. The Housing Department sent a rent bill on a car parking space for £490 plus £1.5 billion GST! I remarked to the Finance Minister that at least he could sleep happy in the knowledge that the States’ budget was secure for the next three years.

The last few months have certainly been an exercise in patience and forbearance. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that this type of tax is completely new to the Jersey ‘beans’, as the locals are proudly known, so there are many concerns, a real lack of understanding and great deal of anxiety. And each person needs to be respected, cared for, and dealt with lovingly, even the hard core of complainers.

The churches in Jersey are – without quite knowing it – helping in three ways. Firstly, the GST Team has made full use of the St. Paul’s Centre, a converted primary school run as a Conference and meeting centre by the church of that name right in the middle of St. Helier, and two minutes walk from our office. Of course we have been paying them well for the facility, which in turn helps subsidise the many activities the church itself runs there. The welcome given by Centre staff to those attending our educational evenings on GST have received has made an impression on many, and the efficiency with which meeting rooms have been set out to our requirements has led other States’ Departments to use the Centre too.

I have rather enjoyed attending the events run by St. Helier Parish



Church on Wednesday lunchtimes under the banner "Business Connect". This is a genuine attempt to engage with those working in the business community, especially the finance sector, which provides a quarter of the jobs in Jersey. A young (well, compared to me!) Australian named Matt Chase organises the sessions, which consist of sandwiches, an introductory activity (often suitably amusing), then a 20 minute talk based on a Bible passage, normally by one of the local clergy, followed by questions. Matt is slowly getting his head around the concept of someone who is ordained in the Church of England but does a secular job, but has not yet plucked up the courage to ask me to do one of the talks. There is still a bit much of feeding the people of God midweek, but, and my questions and suggestions seem to have played some part in this, there is a move to more of engaging with what it is to share in ministry in the workplace. The most effective input comes from the Dean of Jersey, Bob Key, who makes good use of his earlier experience of work (and being a football referee), and Tim Neill, a Canon of Salisbury – Zimbabwe – who is supporting himself in exile (with the master keys to MDC property) by working in the finance industry. The Church Times article on Tim on 23rd May was excellent. One great advantage to me in the meetings is meeting folk from a wide range of businesses and being able to talk to them about how GST affects their businesses, them as individuals, and explain why various things have been done. There are times when you can achieve a great deal informally.

Finally, we have had a great deal of contact with the churches and the pragmatic approach nearly all have adopted to GST has helped our team a great deal in understanding the effects of the tax on charitable bodies. You wouldn't think so from the reactions of some, but charities in Jersey have a uniquely sympathetic treatment when it comes to GST, and I'm talking worldwide unique here. All their activities are exempt from GST (and some have big trading operations, not least a zoo and a theatre), which would normally mean they cannot recover any GST they pay out on purchases and expenses. The questions we've had from the churches have helped a great deal in making sure the practical arrangements for charities are as simple as possible, and helped us to develop, with the aid of colleagues in Customs, a system

whereby they do not have to pay GST on imports. And I've been making sure that credit is given where credit is due.

Other highlights of my two-year secondment so far? Starting an address to the assembled accountants of Jersey with the explanation: "I'm only here for tax reasons." Being evacuated from the office (we adjourned to the nearest pub) due to a bomb scare sparked by an applicant for a job with our team. Working with an enthusiastic, energetic, and endlessly amusing little team – the most committed people I've worked with – and they certainly should be! And did I mention the beach?

## **Conference of International Worker Priests and Meeting of French Worker Priests, Lyon, France. 8th – 12th May 2008**

1. How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language (sauf les évêques)?

**Margaret Joachim**

There's something appropriate about celebrating Pentecost in another language – even more so in half a dozen languages – as we do at the annual meeting of European worker-priests (prêtres-ouvriers, or POs). Every few years this coincides with the big French meeting. The PO movement originated in France in the 1950s, and several hundred of them are still alive. Although mostly now retired they are still very active in their communities, with Trades Union branches for retired people and with asylum-seekers, illegal immigrants, unemployed young people, AIDS sufferers and similar groups on the margins of society. They are always a challenge to our relatively comfortable form of worker-priesthood in the UK.

The other Europeans (Germans, Belgians, Spaniards, Catalans, Italians and French) are Catholic, but the presence of Protestants and a reverend woman causes no problems unless a bishop heaves

into view, when the French suddenly become terribly correct. This year's bishop, however, didn't last long enough to be disconcerted by a woman priest. The scene was extraordinary: three hundred Frenchmen howling down the assistant bishop of Lyon who had come to lend Episcopal Presence and Authority to the gathering. He gave the opening address in a thoroughly patronising tone of voice and said, first, that the trades unions were lucky to have POs as members because they could participate more effectively than others, and then that the French church could no longer afford to train POs because it needed all its resources for parish ministry. I've never seen anyone so out-of-synch with an audience, and this was all the more obvious because all the POs were in casual shirts and light trousers with not a dog-collar to be seen, while he was top-to-toe black with a huge pectoral cross. He behaved as though he was the only real priest in the place. He disappeared at the first coffee-break and was not seen again.



After that we got down to the real business – addresses, workshops, a paper from the French POs' resident theologian, another from a sociologist, a party evening where we all sang revolutionary songs (see above), and long breaks and mealtimes filled with conversation. The second workshop I attended was particularly interesting as it highlighted one of the major differences between English and French PO practice. We were required to identify "les lieux

significatifs" (important places) and discuss PO deployment to them. Following the bishop's statement this was causing considerable angst, especially as the number of active POs is now very small. They asked how we organised this in the UK, and I did my best to explain that we didn't – MSE candidates surfaced from their existing places of work and usually stayed there after ordination – in other words, we left identification and deployment to God. This was felt to be an extremely radical and risky idea (but perhaps bishop-proof!)

The climax of the meeting, as always, was the Pentecost mass: French liturgy, the gospel in German, intercessions in English and Italian, and a wonderful Pentecostal babble when we all said the Lord's Prayer in our own languages and then shared the peace and the sacraments. All of it buzzing with energy, and all of it filled with the spirit of a shared enterprise. It was a remarkable occasion.

## **2. Report from the International Worker Priests to the French National Conference**

*This report was prepared collectively and presented by Albert Koolen and Little Sister Hélène from the German Collective.*

We came together for the annual international meeting from Thursday evening (8th May) to Saturday midday. There were 34 delegates from Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, England and Germany. The chosen theme had been worked on in detail by each of the different countries. [The questions for the theme are included in the English Contribution reproduced below].

Three points were discussed, among many others:

- Do we belong the "classe ouvrière" \* ? Does this class still exist? The "ouvriers" themselves certainly continue to exist, but they are often discovered in transient places, or as illegal immigrants, or living with insecurity, unemployment and

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\* See the foot note to the English paper for the reasons for not translating "ouvrier", "classe ouvrière", "monde ouvrier", etc.

without the structure of an organisation for resistance. This resistance, without forgetting the work of large organisations, is shown more in small actions and is less and less visible.

- We have not found the right word for this point. It concerns the idea of leaving capitalism completely and totally – of clearing our head of all the ideas of capitalism, such as: competition, money, status and position, having power over others. It speaks directly of avoiding exploitation, but also indirectly - of personal gain, or benefit to others, of returns. It speaks of spending empty time, in the desert, but time which will enable us to discover the human values in ourselves. It means to think for the present, and see what will happen afterwards – one step leads to the next.
- The secret of the Incarnation: when we speak of the Incarnation, we speak of our own incarnation. It is not for us as individuals but in our relationships with others: our networks, an encounter with a brother or sister, in a face, with my neighbour.

We considered the question: what images of humanity do we see as a concrete reality and as a vision for the future? We had a time for personal reflection and then, while sharing our thoughts, a great richness appeared in the diversity of the contributions and the involvements with other people. You can see some of that richness in the photo of the poster we created on the wall (below)



Some comments on this poster:

- We spoke no longer of those situations which exclude others – but of welcoming those situations where people are beside each other. For us this was a new way of reflection.
- We were invited to think more with our hearts.
- We spoke less of solidarity, but more of the collection of people who are on the journey together towards a better world.
- Our vision is very Euro-centric, and we discussed possibly enlarging the next meeting to include countries outside Europe.

On the Friday afternoon, we made visits in two groups to two different suburbs of Lyon:

1. A meeting with a Collective in Bron on the subject of illegal immigrants (those without papers) and expulsions.
2. A visit to the district of Vénissieux, This covered many aspects of social issues in the neighbourhood.

On the Saturday morning, we worked in small groups on the final question: how to live as a disciple of Jesus? We collected contributions from the groups on a flipchart:

- To observe, to listen and to understand; to enter into, to work in and share the reality; to offer oneself for action – all in the spirit of Jesus.
- The other person – is more than a problem, a category, a number, a stranger. They are a face, a name – they are someone.
- Participation, networks, humanity – it is important to be in a network.
- Recognise everyone as a member of the network of humanity.
- We are always a disciple, never the master. What do I have to learn as a student – not what do I have to tell you.
- To be immersed and soaked through with the presence of God – at work, in my neighbourhood, with the refugees and excluded.
- It is for us – here and now – the Kingdom of God.

### 3. Pentecost 2008: Contribution from the English Delegation

*This paper was prepared by the English delegates and presented to the International Worker Priest Conference - Phil Aspinall, Margaret Joachim, Stan Frost, Eileen Frost and Susan Cooper*

In our countries, work is more and more insecure and the economy is dominated by the market. It is a world of complete and rapid change....

- Is it the end of a world defined by Capitalism?
- Can we see the construction of another possible world: a society that is multicultural, multiethnic and between faiths?
- What new images of humanity do we see?
- How do we live in such a world as disciples of Jesus?

#### *The end of the capitalist world?*

We do not see the end of a world defined by capitalism. Capitalism continues but its axes have shifted. The capitalism of the West is losing its influence, but the same values have moved to the East - to Russia, India and China. Their economies are dominated by capitalism, and in a form which is perhaps more brutal and dehumanizing (a return to the values of the 19th century?)

Society in England has become more and more individualistic: "everyone for him or herself", and it is not evolving into a more connected and integrated society.

- Insurance companies no longer share risk among all those who are insured. Each person must pay for their own specific risks. More and more risks cannot be covered by insurance.
- Older people lack adequate general retirement cover. Each person must make their own provision for their pension. They are no longer supported by an extended family spanning several generations.

- People are living increasingly separated one from another. For example, they use mobile phones endlessly, and become unaware of the people around them. In the office, many people work by “hot desking” - we work surrounded by people with whom we no longer have any relationship.

We do not see “the end of capitalism” but the end of the “monde ouvrier”.\* In general, the large factories employing huge armies of workers no longer exist in Western Europe. The level of society called “ouvrier” [or “industrial” or “working class” although the meaning is not quite the same] no longer exists.

From top to bottom of a business, people live with insecurity (for example, a chief executive can be sacked in an instant). This is the reality for us in England. The “working class” areas no longer exist – those who work move to the suburbs and the edges of towns and cities. “Working class” areas are for the most part occupied by immigrants and those who have no work (because of ill-health, lack of qualification, or because they lack the necessary skills). Or the “working class” areas have been rebuilt and become chic new housing developments for those with newly-acquired wealth, and the poor are cast out into the run-down districts.

### ***The construction of another world?***

The world of the 21st century is characterised by the new methods of working and interacting with other people. E-mail allows communication with many people at the same time. Young people (and increasingly the not-so-young) live and talk across social networks on the internet - many possibilities exist for easily reuniting old friends, for discussing with them and for

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\* *The expression “monde ouvrier” has not been translated, but has been left to signify that world of mass employment in large organisations, such as dockyards, heavy industry, or mining, where organised labour and trades unions were a significant factor. It is often also used by the Worker Priests to refer to the places in society where they are currently engaged in political and social action.*



communicating with large numbers of people. But they no longer speak with each other face to face - physically together with one another. This creates a new philosophy - a new vision for the organisation and functioning of society.

Globalisation overrides nationalism and the interests of a particular group or country - it transcends the barriers of race and culture. But on the other hand, specific groups still want to gain their independence - for example, the groups in the Balkans such as the Kosovars, who want to become genuine nation states.

We believe that men and women have a need to belong to small and coherent groups - social groups in which they rediscover their sense of community. In a word: villages. It is not necessary for a "village" to be a group that is physically close together or the same ethnicity. In our lives we find ourselves in many different villages (for example, at work, at the sports club, etc.)

In this new world of communications, of technology and of globalization the world itself has become smaller and smaller. All the countries of the world are brought closer to us - we can speak and work together in a renewed spirit of international co-operation.

Many new forms of communication now exist on a global scale, which are at the same time very varied and very fast. No government can completely prevent its citizens having access to them. No government, no business can now cover up all its actions: neither China in Tibet, nor Mr. Mugabe in Zimbabwe, nor the English and Americans in Iraq, nor those businesses which exploit the poor of the developing world and migrant workers, or who destroy the earth.

### *What new images of humanity do we see?*

What are the images of humanity we see in this new world? Many people have become more open to one another, accepting their differences and wanting to engage with one another. They live together in goodness, kindness, and generosity.

The new forms of communication (such as the Internet, “Facebook”, etc.) create new connections and offer new possibilities to approach others and speak with them, and thus to involve them in political action.

- Two immigrants, a woman and her daughter, live on the island of Orkney to the north of Scotland. They were illegal and were ordered to return to their country. But their neighbours and the other islanders demanded that they should not be expelled.
- Similarly, a young illegal immigrant was studying at a school in Plymouth. All the children at the school fought to demand that he could remain in England. They used the power of the internet to support their campaign.

There are men and women who fight for the environment – those who recognise the relationship between humanity and nature. They are prepared to place themselves in dangerous situations and to risk their own lives for something which, for them, is more important.

But, on the other hand, we see many people who live detached from nature; those who live in large cities, far from the natural world. Others are increasingly convinced that there is nothing that they can do to prevent the destruction of the earth. But the new technologies offer possible ways to visualise a more integrated world and to increase our understanding. This raises yet more ethical questions.

### ***How to live in all this as a disciple of Jesus?***

For the English group, it is important to state that we try to live in the place in society where we find ourselves. That is where we must live as disciples of Jesus. For some there is, perhaps, an urge, a possibility to move somewhere else or into a different role – but for the most part, we stay where we are.

The Worker Priests should recognise that the “monde ouvrier” has disappeared. We should live in the same way as the majority, who are indeed in a situation of insecurity, working in small and medium-sized businesses, without permanent contracts of employment and without the support of trades unions (which have themselves become commercial businesses).

“Vivre avec” = to live with. That is to say that we want to live and work in the same situations as others, in all the different levels in business and in the world of work. In the modern understanding of management practice, for the mutual advantage of all those who work in a business, everyone who works there is engaged in improving the organisation, health and safety and the environment. Everyone is involved in making change happen.

A promotion to a higher level can offer new means of service to others and of influencing their working environment. The management of a business (determining working hours, staffing levels, salaries, organisational structure. etc.) becomes the responsibility of Christians in the more senior positions. The disciples of Jesus can live with power for the benefit of others in a business and in society.

This situation can continue after the end of paid employment. We can work to improve the life of others. We can engage with others in the neighbourhood to force the government to establish good local facilities and provide opportunities for all.

During the last year, Stan and Eileen [Frost] have been working in a poor area of Chesterfield. It had lost its local economic development organisation and there was a threat to close the “Working Communities” organisation which helped young people find appropriate work. The local community united to oppose this proposition and the Local Authority found more money to fund the service to the end of the year. It is an example of how the solidarity between the local volunteers, and the disciples of Jesus who remain alongside them, can continue the struggle for justice.

#### 4. Pentecost 2008: Statement from the French Worker Priests

We worker-priests, meeting at Valpré on the feast of Pentecost, are launching an appeal to our Church to spread the gospel throughout the world of work.

Throughout our lives as workers, we meet with injustice, inequality, exploitation, racism and exclusion. We run up against the law of profit, the logic of capital and the sacrosanct (free) market. We endure hatred, stigma and lack of recognition in our places of work and, above all, in our cities. We feel in our bones the harshness of working conditions, the stress of work rhythms and of targets to achieve. We suffer as a result of low wages, tiny pensions and the ever-increasing difficulties of access to care which stem from the lack of provision/support services/equipment for families and children. We are worried by the growth of individualism, and by hostility to trades unions, community and political organisations, and everything which encourages collective representation and solidarity.

Nevertheless, our hopes are continually re-nourished. How could we not rejoice every time we find ourselves alongside men, women, young people and children who are open to solidarity, who don't give in to racism, who are able to take initiatives, who are available for action, who are crafting a more humanitarian world. Those who are creating this more people-friendly world are far more numerous than the media would have us believe. When in the bosom of such people, we can understand why Jesus chose this medium in which to germinate and cultivate the new humanity which inaugurated the Gospel.

We recognise the cornerstones for building a mutually-responsible, brotherly and peaceful humanity in the evidence of many episodes of collective resistance, within which we marvel at the dignity of men and women, their concern for justice and responsibility, and their partnership in workplace mission. Here the principles of the Kingdom of God are in the process of birth. These are the signs of

the Spirit which push us to struggle against evil as we follow Jesus Christ.

We have chosen to walk the paths of humankind. These journeys mark us, transform us, and have made us full members of a people who suffer and struggle, who cry out their pain and their aspirations, and who fumble towards building their future in a hostile and destructive environment. The institutional Church itself sometimes seems to us to be more concerned with preserving its identity than in recognising itself in these men and women who are dedicating themselves to the arrival of a different world.

Over the last decades our communities have undergone change right down to their most basic elements. Yet despite the attacks to which the working world has been subjected, despite the attempts to split it apart and to deconstruct it, it remains predominantly intact, with its fears and uncertainties but also with its hopes and its thirst for justice, fellowship and peace, and its refusal to give in.

With our partners in workplace mission, we share the experience of suffering and hope of today's working world. With them, we are concerned to proclaim and to bear witness that the Kingdom of God is very close to this world. That is why we are making this appeal:

- That particular attention should be given to the most significant places/areas of work. Today, just as in the past, it is there that man builds himself and where he is threatened with alienation.
- That new and diverse missionary teams, including lay people, religious sisters, deacons and, particularly, worker-priests, should be set up and sent into the working world.

At a time when there seems to be universal indifference towards the faith, when the supply of candidates for the priesthood is drying up, and when the Church is threatened by secularisation, the Church is strongly tempted to reorganise its manpower, reign in its boldness, withdraw within its rituals and its worship, and concern itself essentially with its own survival. On the other hand, our experiences confirm that the world of work justifies special initiatives, and that the Church must dedicate resources to this or risk losing sight of its mission. The first apostles well understood

that mortal risk of detaching themselves from human expectations. They bolted the doors of their room. But by the grace of God they could not prevent the Risen One from coming in, and he sent them outside to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

We worker-priests, like many others of the baptised who have a concern for mission, wish for a Church which grasps and affirms that the priest is, first and foremost, among God's people. We are trying to promote a Church which dares to go outside to meet other people with other beliefs, not armoured with its own certainties but in the spirit of one who searches and needs others to progress in truth. We are labouring for a Church that can invent new ways of living and existing in a world which is no longer Christian, a Church which dares to come out of itself, and which encourages and develops all the initiatives which put it at the service of the birth of the Kingdom of God, travelling alongside men and women who are captivated by liberty and fellowship, justice and peace, and which is searching for a future for everyone.

The Church has no meaning unless it is alive in the world. Its mission is not to treasure its institutions, but to proclaim an always-new Gospel in a society which is in constant flux. Its mission is not to fasten onto what it believes to be "its" truth, but to discover the evangelical vigour which goes ahead of it into the land of the living. It is there that it must be judged. It is that land which is waiting for it, and in which it finds its meaning.

## **General Synod of the Church of England, York, 4th to 8th July 2008**

The following motion was carried. This Synod

- (a) affirm daily work, be it paid or unpaid, as essentially a spiritual activity;
- (b) recognize the importance of Christian values within economic life;
- (c) encourage bishops and clergy to give greater priority to equipping and resourcing church members through teaching, prayer, affirmation and celebration, to fulfil their vocations, ministries and mission in their places of work; and
- (d) request the Mission and Public Affairs Council to:
  - (i) convene a symposium on theological understanding of work for today as outlined in sections 5.3-5.4 of GS Misc 890B;
  - (ii) compile a collection of supportive resource materials for church members as outlined in section 5.5 of GS Misc 890B.

More (hopefully) in future editions of Ministers-at-Work.

### **Forthcoming events: dates for your diary**

#### *United Kingdom*

#### **CHRISM**

**27th February - 1st March 2009: CHRISM Reflective Weekend. At Morley Retreat and Conference House, Morley, Derbyshire, DE7 6DE. (Contact: Phil Aspinall: contact details inside back cover.)**

## **Christian Association of Business Executives (CABE)**

**11th September 2008:** CABE Network event: 6.30 pm, venue to be confirmed. With Claire Pedrick, Co-Director, 3D Coaching Ltd.

**15th October 2008:** CABE Network event: 6.30 pm at the Hoop and Grapes, 80 Farringdon Street, London, EC4B 4AL. With Chan Abraham, Group Chief Executive, Luminus.

**18th November 2008:** Nineteenth Hugh Kay Lecture "Europe and its Values", by Peter Sutherland, Chairman BP and Goldman Sachs: 6.00 for 6.30 pm, more details to follow.

(See: <http://principlesforbusiness.com/events.php>)

## **Edinburgh Business Alpha**

**25th September - 27th November 2008:** Course based on the book "God At Work" by Ken Costa, Deputy Chairman, Lazard. (Ken Costa will give the opening talk.) 12.45 for 1.00 pm, normally at the Roxburghe Hotel, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, EH2 4DR. Over a light lunch a speaker will give his or her thoughts on that day's topic, then questions and discussion.

(See: [www.businessalphaedinburgh.com/pages/index2.htm](http://www.businessalphaedinburgh.com/pages/index2.htm))

## **Industrial Christian Fellowship**

**13th November 2008:** ICF 2008 Lecture, "The Universal Christ", by Dr Colin Hicks, recently retired as Director General of the British National Space Centre. (Further details shortly: see [www.icf-online.org](http://www.icf-online.org))

## **London Institute for Contemporary Christianity**

**15th - 19th September 2008:** LICC Toolbox. 'A high intensity training programme to help Christians engage with today's rapidly changing world.' At The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, St Peter's, Vere St, London, W1G 0DQ. Cost: £295 (A booking form can be downloaded from [www.licc.org.uk/events](http://www.licc.org.uk/events))



**Telos Programme of the Wales Management Council and the Church in Wales**

**30th - 31st October 2008:** Telos Residential Business Retreat, 'What Really Matters'. 'A chance to slow down and reflect on where you are and what really matters to you in your work life as well as elsewhere.' At Llangasty Retreat House, Llangasty, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7PX, maximum no 16, 5 places available. Cost £46.00, which includes all meals and accommodation. (Contact: Lisa Martin: [lisamartin@churchinwales.org.uk](mailto:lisamartin@churchinwales.org.uk))

***International***

**3rd – 5th October 2008:** Autumn Conference of German Working Brothers and Sisters. Haus St Gottfried, near Frankfurt, Germany. Cost: ~70 EUR.

**24th - 26th October 2008:** Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (US) Annual Tentmaking Conference. Ghost Ranch – Santa Fe, 401 Old Taos Highway, Santa Fe, NM 87501, US. Cost: ~\$330. (A booking form can be downloaded from: [www.yaphankpc.org/tentmakers/2008ConferenceBrochure.pdf](http://www.yaphankpc.org/tentmakers/2008ConferenceBrochure.pdf))

For further details of these international events contact Phil Aspinall (contact details inside back cover)

## And finally...

### Lost in the desert

It is 1894, and a patrol of the French Foreign Legion is lost in the depths of the Sahara. Food they have a-plenty but water is running low. The commander sends out scouts to see if an oasis can be spotted. And still the cruel sun beats down.

From a-top a dune a kilometer away a shot rings out and the tired troop turn to see a scout waving to them to come. As they approach the scout calls out "Capitaine, I see tents!" Struggling to the top of the dune they see shimmering colours in the distant haze. Could it be an oasis?

As the patrol approaches and slowly but surely the shapes become clear: stretched out before them is a small market. The Capitaine asks at the first stall if the stallholder has any water. The stallholder apologises and explains that he has none, only bowls of dessert made of sponge, jelly, custard, cream and glace cherries. So the Capitaine moves to the next stall, and no, there is no water, only deserts made of sponge, jelly, custard, cream and glace cherries. At each stall it is the same story.

As the parched patrol trudges out once again into the desert, the sergeant turns to his commander and says, "Capitaine, that is one of the strangest things I have ever seen." "Yes sergeant, it was a trifle bizarre ..."

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# CHRISM

CHRistians In Secular Ministry

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