

Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in
secular ministry

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

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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Monday 5th January 2009	
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Editorial

This is the third edition of Ministers-at-Work that I have edited. I guess I am beginning to get the hang of it and I hope that you find something to interest you in the following pages.

I was rather hoping that there might be a theme to this edition that I could comment on in my editorial - something along the lines of Ministry in Secular Employment as a 'fresh expression' of church - but in the end I could only persuade one person to contribute a piece on this: Michael Moynagh with his article 'Why not church at work?'. However I am still hopeful that others might pick up, comment on and/or take issue with some of the ideas in Michael's article, and indeed submit their own thoughts on the question: 'Why not church at work?' It is surely an important question with an answer that has an important bearing on the nature of MSE. Put simply: if Michael is right and there are no good reasons for there not being churches at work, then why aren't MSEs doing something about the deficit? If Michael is wrong and there are good reasons why churches at work won't 'work', then there is little point in trying to create them.

As I've said before - and am risk of being boring about - I'm interested in the themes of this journal and I am glad to see that Rob Fox has picked up on a theme - indeed the major idea - in John White's article in the last issue of this journal entitled 'Maintaining Anglican pastoral integrity'. John maintains that 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.' and that this threatens the pastoral integrity of the Church. Rob questions the premises for this view. I would be very pleased to consider responses to this 'letter' from Rob and indeed to any of the other articles in this edition of the journal.

This edition does contain three articles about one event - CHRISM's recent Summer Conference - which all who attended agreed was excellent (and particular thanks to the St Philip's Centre, Leicester for that). The conference took as its subject 'Leicester - Working

Life in a City of Faith'. John Eatock and Jim Cummins have provided reflections on the conference and Andrew Wingate has kindly supplied me with the text of his 'key-note' talk. Stan Frost took photographs at the conference some of which I have reproduced here but there are more!

There is no space to comment on all the contributions to this edition of the journal (for which many thanks) but I think the closing remarks of John Eatock's reflection on the CHRISM Summer Conference deserve a mention here and will hopefully elicit at least one 'Letter to the Editor'. John asks: 'But what of CHRISM? ... I guess that I had hoped to meet a group with some radical ideas and more fascinating insights' and ends with 'My initial contact tells me that originally CHRISM was radical in every way. If this is so then I missed it at your weekend conference!' 'Harsh' I thought when I first read this but it got me thinking. Is it true that CHRISM has lost its radical edge? I hope not and I am looking forward to the special event to discuss the future of CHRISM (to which you are all invited) advertised on page 4 to reassure me. But perhaps those of us who see ourselves as MSEs, worker priests, tentmakers, self-supporting ministers whose ministry is exercised in their workplaces (surely what we call ourselves doesn't really matter John?) do need to be more confident, and indeed convincing, about our special role and tasks within the Kingdom of God.

Mike Rayner

The Future of CHRISM

A special meeting to review our strategy for the future growth and development of CHRISM

Saturday 22nd November 2008, Manchester

At the 2007 Annual General Meeting 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 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.

We intend to involve the whole membership in this review and so we would like to invite you to a one-day session in Manchester on 22nd November to discuss and design the way forward. If you are unable to attend, please do send in your thoughts and comments. If you have not yet returned the questionnaire included with the last edition of the journal it is not too late to do so. Please send your completed questionnaires or any thoughts and comments to Pauline Pearson at p.h.pearson@ncl.ac.uk.

The meeting on 22nd November will be held at: Whitefield Methodist Church, Elms Street, Whitefield, Manchester, M45 8GQ. You can find details on their website: www.prcircuit.org.uk. There is easy access from the motorway (M60, Junction 17). The church is just off Bury New Road (A56), below the junction with Radcliffe New Road (B6473). You can also take the tram which is a 15min ride from central Manchester and Piccadilly Station (direction Bury).

The day will run from 11.00am to 4.00pm. Lunch and refreshments will be provided. Overnight accommodation can be arranged with church members if you need it.

The plan for the day will include:

- Reviewing the responses to the questionnaire and identifying threads/themes/directions that emerge
- Using these, plus additional contributions from those present, with a substantial dose of practical reality, to determine a short (1 year), medium (3 year) and long-term (5 year) strategy for CHRISM
- Setting out the actions and identifying the responsibilities to kick off the first year and start planning for the medium term.

We hope that you will be able to come and join the discussion and contribute to helping CHRISM grow and flourish.

If you'd like to come please e-mail Catherine Binns (revcathfrog@talktalk.net) or send the enclosed booking form to her at 23 Scott Street, Ringley, Radcliffe, Manchester, M26 1EX. Please also let her know as soon as possible if you need overnight accommodation.

CHRISM Reflective Weekend 2009

27th February – 1st March 2009,
Morley Conference and Retreat Centre, Derbyshire

*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 shall use the weekend to explore our understanding of the CHRISM mission statement, what it means for each of us individually and collectively, and the implications for the ways in which we exercise our ministry.

Using the usual mixture of private reflection, shared discussion, and creative activity we shall look into each of the aspects of the theme. And, of course, the weekend will above all provide space and a chance to reflect and recharge among friends old and new. As usual the weekend will start with dinner on the Friday and end after Sunday lunch.

We have visited Morley several times before and found a warm welcome in congenial surroundings, spacious grounds and pleasant countryside for walks. Single and some double rooms are available.

Please return the enclosed registration form, or for more information contact Phil Aspinall on 024 7646 7509 or at philaspinall@vectragroup.co.uk.



Letters to the Editor

From Rob Fox

Maintaining Anglican pastoral integrity? On what basis?

Back in May I listened intently to John White as he expounded on 'Maintaining Anglican integrity', I read his talk twice afterwards, then twice more when it was reproduced in July's Journal. Several drafts of this response later I hope it is more considered than reaction.

Underpinning John's essay there appears to be the following premises:

1. The Church of England, and the wider Anglican communion, "is being led into an ecclesiology that sees the Body of Christ as an ark of redemption rather than an existential affirmation of incarnation."
2. The two ecclesiologies are in opposition to one another.
3. The first "suggests that the Kingdom of God...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."
4. The second, inclusive, ecclesiology has been the norm for the Church of England.
5. The shift between the two threatens the pastoral integrity of the Church.

For reasons that are elaborated below, I consider each of these premises to be mistaken.

I'd like to begin with the claimed inclusivity of the Church of England. As John pointed out, the concept of a national church in England was not new to Henry VIII, who made liberal use of historical law and declaration in asserting England's right to govern its own church. However the inclusivity was only available for those who conformed, as confirmed by Elizabeth and James I/VI on their accessions. If you were the publisher of an unauthorised Bible translation, Catholic recusant, Calvinist, Anabaptist, or more exotic Protestant, you were excluded, sometimes to death.

Inclusivity is far from immune from exclusivity, especially when it defines itself over against that which it is not. Would “Inclusive Church” welcome members convinced that same sex relationships were immoral and respect their right to believe this? The history of the Church of England shows how flaky even the inside of inclusivity has been. Consider the conflicts between Laudians and Presbyterians, Tractarians and Evangelicals, for example.

Throughout its history, both ecclesiologies have existed within and around the Church of England. If at different times one has been in the relative ascendancy, generally they have managed to co-exist, and most members’ ecclesiology – if they have one – is a mix of the two. What I suggest here is that they are, rather than standing in opposition, complementary: the one is greatly diminished without the other.

“Ark” ecclesiology needs “affirmation” ecclesiology because it may otherwise develop a siege mentality. The history of the Christian churches is littered with the bones or scarcely breathing corpses of groups who have thus battened down the hatches. Hands up if Jonestown, the British Israelites and the Muggletonians don’t draw a blank look. In the same way “affirmation” needs “ark” if it is not to decline into sterility, as so many Western Anglican churches seem to be doing.

There is one undeniable fact here: the churches that are growing in the Anglican Communion are predominantly those with more “ark” ecclesiology than “affirmation”, be it in the UK, USA, Nigeria or Malaysia. The African Anglican can quite reasonably say to the “enlightened” US Episcopalian: “show me how God is blessing your church in growth and then I will believe the path you are walking is also blessed by God.” I see no evidence of this growth resulting from being behind walls, embattled and diminished; quite the opposite.

A brief diversion: one way individuals and groups identify themselves is to assert their difference from the other. This can, reasonably, be seen as negative, “we are not ...”, and if identity subsists in this alone it will remain purely negative and inward

looking. Where groups have majored on this means of self-identity they tend not to proselytise, either dying out or remaining relatively small and reclusive. John cites the Amish and Shakers, reasonably, as two such groups. Yet a definition in contrast to something(s) else can be very useful, particularly when that is what enquirers are looking for. It is notable that in mission situations in Africa and Asia, and on occasion in the "Old World", successful churches emphasise "ark" ecclesiology and an identity built to contrast with others around them, be that Islam, animism or the unbridled pursuit of hedonism. A strong identity, based on a mix of "we are" and "we are not", coupled with a clear purpose, appear to lie behind successful churches.

It is also important to be culturally relevant, firstly because the message will then be intelligible. The re-discovery of process evangelism by churches in Britain is a step towards such relevance. At the heart of process evangelism is the understanding that for most enquirers, belonging precedes believing, and people like to belong to that in which they feel comfortable. The journey to and of faith is easier when it is in familiar surroundings and language. There is a time and place for asking enquirers to take a leap of faith, but while the paths we choose may skip over a stream or climb a stile, few choose one that is all streams and stiles. The challenge to churches in the UK now is how to reach those who have had no more than fleeting contact with churchy sub-culture, when the words we use, the rituals we perform and the beliefs we espouse are not part of their library of experience. Like it or not, the churches are increasingly seen from without as "arks", and as the moral and ethical standards we extol cease to be mainstream, this different-ness will pose ever more dilemmas. How might we respond? Retreat and stuff the world? Adopt secular moral and ethical standards in an effort to be relevant? Can we do either and retain our identity? If our identity is to be genuine it must be ours, not what others impose on us. And if we do not have confidence in our identity our integrity suffers.

A comment was made at the conference John addressed that many of the beliefs of "ark" churches are a long way from the principles of Western Liberalism. This is hardly surprising when many

cultures in which Anglican churches operate have a heritage not based on Western Liberalism, which if known at all may be associated with cultural, economic and political imperialism. When a Nigerian Anglican is seeking to preach the Gospel in competition with Islam, the principles of Western Liberalism are not going to impress his hearers, who will soon walk away. And it is not just outside Europe, and its far-flung pales, that Western Liberalism is often tarnished. Its 20th century record is hardly unblemished.

It was Desmond Tutu who highlighted the conceptual shortcomings of Western Liberalism for the churches in Africa when he noted that we in the "Old World" are used to seeing our identity in the Cartesian "I think therefore I am." In Africa identity begins with "I relate therefore I am." If our message is to be received by others, it is not just the language that must be intelligible, but the conceptual framework too. In this respect, St. Paul was a master communicator.

So what of the current threat(s) to Anglican pastoral integrity? I suspect that part of the alarm amongst some "Old World" Anglicans has as much to do with control as ecclesiology. Because churches in much of Africa and Asia are growing apace, these Anglicans are now very much in the majority and, not unreasonably, want to have a big say in the direction the Communion develops. One criticism levelled against them is the numbers of clergy being ordained and bishops consecrated in these churches, often younger and with less systematic training than is the "Old World" norm. But when a church is growing rapidly, how is it to address its pastoral needs? Have we a vast reservoir of leaders, teachers, and evangelists in the UK, North America and Australasia we can deploy, even if they were wanted? In terms of numbers of clergy and bishops, it is we who are vastly over-staffed, not they.

Then how has a threat to integrity arisen? I'm sure someone will correct me if I've got this wrong, but was it not North American Anglicans who stepped outside the integrity agreed at the 1998 Lambeth Conference? No matter where we stand on women or gay bishops, it was not African or Asian Anglicans, with more "ark" ecclesiology than "affirmation", who moved. A response involving a

breakaway Conference just aggravates the situation by itself stepping outside the integrity. On occasion stepping outside may be the “right” thing to do. But a “right” that labels someone else’s as “wrong” is divisive and destructive. It is surely one of the tenets of Western Liberalism that we respect and protect others right to disagree with us (yes, I’ve read Voltaire).

In the current climate we would do well to identify those things that unite us over those that might divide us. Being sprung from a common root is certainly one, tolerance is another. Tolerance is not, however the same as unconditional love, as it has its limits. Rather than go into this in great detail I have taken the liberty of placing John Locke’s “Essay on Tolerance” on the CHRISM website as Locke was an important contributor to Western Liberalism and clear about his faith.

The bottom line is, I think, accepting one another as Christ has accepted us, to the glory of God. If our heavenly Father can put up with us, might we not try putting up with each other, warts and all?

From Fiona Stewart-Darling

This might be of interest to CHRISM members who work in either Canary Wharf or the City of London: for the last couple of years I have been running an informal group which meets every two or three months over lunch. The group is currently made up of prospective ordinands, ordinands (training on courses) and self supporting ministers (SSMs)/ministers in secular employment (MSEs) from five different dioceses.

The aim of the group is to:

- Provide a space where we can explore together what ministry in the workplace means
- Help those who are preparing for full time stipendiary ministry to think through issues their parishioners will face in the workplace

- Help those who feel their vocation is to ordination but to SSM or MSE and hence what it means to remain in the workplace
- Act as a place for mutual support and sharing

Here are a few comments from group members:

"I have found the meetings useful as they provide an opportunity to share experiences of Christian discipleship with my peer group in an informal and supportive environment. Being a Christian in the financial sector is challenging and I am always questioning how my faith is affirmed by the work I do. This group has been a great help in discerning the many issues that arise."

"The group has been a valuable resource during the period of discernment - a real opportunity to meet and discuss and to try to work out what God is calling us to do. It certainly helped me when I came to discuss this with my diocese and at the Bishops' Advisory Panel. I am sure the group will remain a great source of support as I embark upon training, and into Ministry in the future."

"One of the things that I have found very helpful has been discussing difficult work issues with other Christians from around Canary Wharf in a confidential environment. In particular there was a discussion about the bonus environment that I found particularly helpful."

As Chaplain to the working community I am aware that many people travel some distance to work, hence my writing to you. I wonder if you have anyone who works in Canary Wharf who may be interested or would benefit from joining this group. It is also open to Readers but as yet we do not have any who are members.

If anyone would like further information please could they contact me: Revd Dr Fiona Stewart-Darling, Bishop's Chaplain in Docklands, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5AB; tel: 020 7477 1073/ 07739 461090; e-mail fiona.stewart-darling@london.anglican.org; website: www.docklandschaplaincy.co.uk.

Why not church at work?

Michael Moynagh

Up and down the country, of course, church is already present in the workplace. It is there corporately when groups of Christians gather to pray, for example, and it is present in mission when individuals seek to advance the kingdom at work. But how 'full' are these expressions of church?



Christians have traditionally assumed that what it means to be church in a specific place is expressed most fully - in a Church of England context - in the parish. The parish church embodies a tangible presence of the four dimensions that are at the heart of church:

- The IN dimension, which is community (the 'One' church);
- The UP dimension, which is a movement toward God ('Holy');
- The OF dimension – connectedness to the whole body of Christ ('Catholic');
- The OUT dimension, which is joining God's mission to the world ('Apostolic').

The Church of England has recognised that not all local expressions of church can be confined to the parish – hence the various chaplaincies. But the latter have been seen as exceptions. The norm has been for the most rounded expression of church to be in the parish. Workplace ministry was intended to complement the parish church, but not rival it. But with the emergence of 'fresh expressions of church' (one or two in the workplace), this assumption is beginning to be challenged. Rethinking the relationship between the parish church and the workplace is urgently needed for three reasons.

Centres of power

First, the centres of power in modern society are in the workplace – in the multinationals, the advertising industry, government departments and so on. They are highly organised. By contrast, the industrial revolution, which separated work from home, left the church relatively dis-organised at work. Organised church stayed at home rather than joining the bulk of the workforce in commuting to work. Two hundred years after the industrial revolution, church resources and most of its organisation are still concentrated on the 'local' church, which members attend at the weekend when they are not at their jobs.

This dis-organisation at work puts the church at a serious disadvantage in combating 'the principalities and powers', which are extremely well organised and deeply entrenched in today's workplace. Would a trade union wanting to change the workplace organise at the weekend in a church hall? Why should the church, whose mission includes modelling Christ-centred forms of organisation, expect to be effective in the workplace when its energies are focused elsewhere? Lack of organisation at work may be one reason why the church often has been less than effective in advancing the kingdom.

Community in mission

The second reason involves a proper understanding of God's mission. Theologians use the Latin term 'missio Dei' to describe the 'mission of God'. This is an impulse that throbs in the heart of God. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are so full of energetic love that this love naturally overflows beyond themselves. The mission of God results from this vibrant, overflowing love.

'Missio Dei' is sometimes understood as God singular. It is the one God who goes out in mission. This helpfully reminds us that the three persons of the Trinity are one. But if God is conceived as a single entity engaged in mission, it becomes easier to imagine Christians undertaking mission as individuals. To put it crudely,

once we think of God as an individual in mission, we can we think of humanity's mission - in imitation of him - as being done by individuals. This indeed is how Christians have often thought of mission. They have seen the church's task (mainly at the weekend) as being to equip individuals to join in God's mission during their everyday lives, including their work.

Recent Trinitarian theology has put the accent on the 'threeness' of the one God. Using words that are inadequate to the mystery of God, we might say that the Trinity has a community dimension. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct persons who relate together in a form that is akin to community. The 'community' is so tight-knit that the three persons are also (in ways we don't fully understand) one person. All three persons are involved in mission. The Father sends the Son, who is bringing the kingdom to fulfillment with the aid of the Spirit. The Trinity has the feel of community-in-mission.

Seeing God's mission as community-in-mission takes the emphasis away from Christians embarking on mission as individuals. If we are to be like God, we are to engage in mission as Christian communities. These communities are to have a oneness about them that mirrors the oneness of God.

The first 'mission command' given to humanity has this community dimension. In Genesis 1, God's image is given to the man and the woman together. God's image is reflected in their relationship. This is the context in which they are given the command to master the world (which chapter 2 unpacks as caring for creation). Human beings were to look after the world in relationship with each other. In terms of the workplace, this means that mission is to be done not primarily by individuals, but by missional communities. Christian teams are to advance the kingdom.

To do so, these groupings will need:

- a healthy community life (the IN dimension of church);
- the spiritual resources that come from opening themselves to God (the UP dimension);

- relationships of mutual support with other groups (the OF dimension);
- a strong mission focus (the OUT dimension).

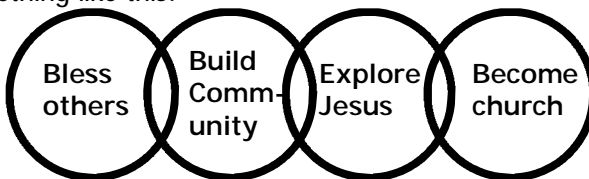
In other words, they will need to embody the same elements that characterize – or should characterize – the parish church.

New ways of thinking about church

A third reason for rethinking the place of church at work arises from the spread of fresh expressions of church. These new and different forms of church are beginning to show how it is possible to remain church in a richly theological sense, yet develop innovative forms of Christian community that connect with many who are currently outside church. Fresh expressions have a strong mission focus and are modeling a method of mission that is relatively uncommon in the UK.

- Traditionally, some churches have adopted an attractional approach to mission - 'you come to us' (normally on Sundays). Evangelistic programmes are designed to draw people into church.
- Others have used an engaged approach - 'we'll come to you – in a community project for example – in the hope that some of you will then come to us and join our worship.'
- Fresh expressions are pioneering a variety of incarnational approaches – 'we'll come to you and walk alongside you, if you want, as you begin to experience God and form your own distinct Christian community in relationship with the wider church.'

We suspect that most fresh expressions emerge through a journey something like this:



The normal starting point is to bless people who don't usually attend church, perhaps by establishing friendships or through some form of loving service (a series of stress management workshops, for instance). A friendship may lead to meeting your friend's friends and becoming one of the group. Perhaps you strengthen the group by contributing to it. Or in your stress management workshop, you work hard to create opportunities for people to make friends and feel a sense of community. Participants so enjoy each other's company that they keep meeting together after the series of workshops are over.

It may take time to create a bridge from 'building community' to 'exploring Jesus', but this can be done in various ways, such as:

- 'God talk' – Christians in the core team sharing their faith stories.
- 'Apt worship' – opportunities for individuals who wouldn't describe themselves as Christians to encounter God. For example, at the end of each stress management workshop you might have a brief time of headspace, with a lighted candle and possibly some music, during which individuals are invited to connect with God as they understand him/her or to have positive thoughts for others in the group. In time, people might be invited to share their experiences.
- 'Creative expressions' – members of the group with gifts of photography, painting, poetry, pottery-making and so on might be invited to use these gifts to share their spiritual journeys and hopes with others in the group.

As spiritual longings come to the surface, individuals can be given opportunities to explore the Christian faith – possibly through a small group convened for this purpose or by one-to-one mentoring (or both). The small group might evolve into a cell, with all the four marks of church (One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic). Or individuals being mentored might be drawn together in twos and threes to form the nucleus a new cell.

If these cells multiply, they might be drawn together in clusters from time to time. They might attend larger Christian gatherings, such as Greenbelt or the Walsingham Pilgrimage, so that they begin to see themselves as part of the wider body of Christ.

This entire journey into church would be underpinned by prayer and careful listening (which would help to avoid some of the insensitive forms of evangelism that some have experienced). The emphasis on blessing other people through loving service prevents mission from being reduced to sharing your faith. Faith-sharing is an aspect of mission, but mission itself is much bigger and is about bringing wholeness to the world.

Might this underlying methodology, which can be expressed in many different ways, suggest a fruitful approach for thinking about forming church in the workplace?

The Rev Dr Michael Moynagh, based at Templeton College, Oxford, is co-director of the Tomorrow Project which advises businesses and Government on social trends, and is a missionary with Fresh Expressions. (website: www.freshexpressions.org.uk). He has written widely on social issues, and his books include: 'Changing World, Changing Church' and 'Emergingchurch.intro'.

What does a multi faith society mean for Christians in secular employment?

Andrew Wingate

This article is the text of a talk given at the CHRISM Summer Conference- 'Leicester - Working Life in a City of Faith', 5th-7th September 2008, Leicester.



None of us lives in two worlds, the spiritual and secular. All faiths hold that there is one world, and that religion and spirituality is about the whole of life. Moreover it is about this one world, whatever may be the case about any world to come, and religions may vary in their expectations and philosophical

understanding there. Christians are not to be dualists, and in this other faith colleagues are allies. In Islam, Allah is Lord of all things - God is one and is the all powerful and the all merciful. Hinduism calls on all Hindus to fulfil their *dharma* - their duty within their calling in life, or their caste focus - or the time of life which they are passing through. This is to be worked through in their family life, in their education, in their religious obligations, and in the workplace.

The heart of Judaism is about action as much as belief, and this action is to be taken in the here and now. For Sikhism work is a religious duty, and not to work and to be dependent on the state or on charity is a disgrace, not just to the family, but to the *khalsa*, the Sikh religious community. I recall a Sikh in Birmingham, who was a high-up professional, but became unemployed through redundancy. He took a job as a classroom assistant rather than be unemployed, and then spent every evening teaching the congregation in the Gurdwara. Both were equally part of his Sikh vocation. Buddhism's high ethics again cover the whole of life. The attitude that all life is impermanent does not lead to an 'other

world' attitude. The whole of life is one. The monks do not separate their rituals from the manual labour in which they will often engage. Some monks also involve directly in secular employment.

As Christians we also ought not to see our lives in two spheres. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbour as ourself in our church, our neighbourhood, in our workplace, and throughout the world. Expressing our religious faith in the workplace consists primarily in the attitudes we display there. Here is God's world, equally as within the church building. We are to work well and conscientiously, and honestly. And our neighbour of whatever faith or none, is made in God's image, as we are. As Gandhi said, our neighbour is God at that moment for us. We might put it that he/she is Christ for us. The well known Hindu/Gujarati greeting *Namaste* means 'May the God in you be blessed.' The South Indian Tamil/Hindu greeting is *Vanakkam*, with a similar meaning. When Jesus talks of 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's', this is not dualist; rather, the whole of life is under God, and to be rendered to him, and our allegiance to the state is within that wider loyalty.

Some strands of Christian theology have suggested two spheres or kingdoms. This has most obviously been found in a certain Lutheran understanding of two kingdoms - of this world and of the beyond. We can compare the two cities in St Augustine's writings. Things will be perfect only in heaven, there Christian ethics can find fulfilment. In this world we live within the world's social structures and ethics. This led in its extreme form to the German Christians compromise with Nazi philosophy. In a distorted Calvinist version of it, it led to apartheid. It can be found in an other-worldly Catholicism, or an other-worldly evangelical or Pentecostal approach to life. In practice, of course, such dichotomies can be found in all faiths. I think of the two spheres that I saw twenty years ago in Landikotal, on the Khyber Pass. I visited, on a Friday, this most Muslim and most fought over part of the world between Afghanistan and Pakistan. I arrived at prayer time on the Friday, when the streets were completely deserted, and every shop closed, as everyone went to the mosques. An hour later, the market place

was bustling. I could have bought every kind of weapon, and every kind of drug. All were openly on sale, and worldly business ethics and market forces reigned supreme. We see this in Sri Lanka, where the same pious monks who lead the *sangha* in this most ancient of Buddhist countries, also fire up anti Tamil sentiments, and encourage driving the Tamil Tigers into the sea, as an expression of extreme Sinhala attitudes within that tragic civil war.

Ethical issues are the common concern of all with whom we work. Such concerns are related to the human condition, and are not specific to a particular faith. The Jewish-Christian concept of the Kingdom of God holds together central values which are found within Muslim tradition, in Qu'ran and Hadith, and within the Sunna. These are the values of peace, justice, mercy, compassion, concern for the poor and excluded, etc. Commonality of ethical traditions are outlined in a book such as that edited by Peggy Morgan and Clive Lawton, *Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions* (new edition, Edinburgh, 2007). Though clearly there are different emphases at times within various faiths, there is far more that is common than is different. This applies to core values found in scriptures also.

Ethical values lead to dilemmas in the workplace, and discussion of these is enhanced if the riches of various religious traditions are brought to bear on the cases involved. These issues hit us all. When I was Principal of the West Midlands Course, at Queen's, Birmingham in the 1980s, I instituted a class where each member of the group introduced an ethical case that had arisen in their life outside church or course. Three such case studies were the ethics of: whether to join in an ambulance workers strike; whether to declare redundant a large proportion of a book production company, in order to secure a take over by a Japanese company and so secure the future employment of the rest; and whether to agree to tell what amounted to untruths about the quality of chairs and tables being sold, in order to maintain orders, and keep one's job. These discussions would have been much enriched if there had been people of different faiths involved, since such issues hit us all, and the richness of theological and scriptural traditions can be offered from each.

In the contemporary context, my brother-in-law, as an architect, has had to fight for one position in his company, against a colleague who is younger and with a family. He is the senior and won. How to evaluate the ethical issues? And what of the consequent depression on the one side, and guilt on the other? What if the two had come from different faiths? And at the macro level, the banking and credit crisis - does it make the case for Islamic banking and mortgages stronger, where interest is neither given nor expected?

Talking explicitly about faith and faith issues does not come easily to the average Christian at work. This may in some ways be a good thing, since such can be off putting to many colleagues who work only with secular agendas. But there are times when being more articulate about where we are coming from may be appropriate. Such certainly can often come easily when talking with people of other faiths. As Christians we can perhaps learn to be more explicit, from our Muslim colleagues, for example. Dialogue can be about beliefs, but also about practices. Such can centre around concrete issues, such as Ramadan traditions and fasting, and Hallal meat. It may be about facilities for prayer, and time given for Friday prayer. It may be about giving leave for festivals like Eid or Diwali. Traditions around life-cycle events such as engagements, marriages, illness and death are vital to observe. For example, if a relative dies, a Muslim will need immediate leave since the funeral should normally take place within 24 hours of death. Prayer meetings are held at particular points after death by Hindus and also by Asian Christians. It is important to understand why leave is requested for such occasions.

Such interaction can help to develop confident Christians. It can help to encourage an appropriate Christian apologetic, being able to speak the faith within ourselves. But we need to learn to listen. As a famous Rabbi once said, God gave us two ears and one mouth, and there is a reason for that. Appropriate confidence is not about thrusting our opinions upon others; it is certainly not about denigrating the faith of others. It is about our being glad that we are Christians, and being ready to show that in our actions, in our words, and above all in our character; whether we relate to

others with integrity; whether we are people who do not bear false witness, and tell the truth in love; and so on.

People of other faiths have a strong sense of the international dimensions of their communities. For Muslims, this is a consequence of their understanding of the *ummah*: the world wide brotherhood/sisterhood of Islam. When one hurts, all hurt. A clear example is the solidarity around the Palestinian cause. For Hindus, it is their common rooting in India. Issues related to the subcontinent are their concern, whether they have ever lived there or not. So also Sikhs and the Punjab, and Jews and the Holy Land. Christians also should have such an understanding, with the community being 'the Body of Christ'. As St Paul emphasises, in Christ there is not slave nor free, no rich nor poor, no male nor female, all are to be one. It is incumbent on Christians to be deeply concerned for those who are persecuted for being Christians, such as is happening at present in parts of India, or in parts of Pakistan. But this should not get out of proportion. In the majority of villages and cities in India, Christians live in peace with their neighbours, as they always have. Being conversant with international issues is part of the vocabulary of discourse when faiths meet together.

We live in what is clearly a secular world, as we go to our workplace, but also as we live within the various dimensions of our life outside work, whether in our leisure time, as we follow the media, in the underlying assumptions of our educational institutions (with the exception of so called 'faith schools'), and within the institutions of public life. We live within a secular democracy, even if there are still the trappings of the Church of England around, as the established church. The secularisation of Sunday has been a key symbol in such a movement of secularisation, as was the end of Good Friday as a religious holiday. When I was at school, we were told that we could have the morning off to go to church on Ascension Day. Now that day is hardly known. White Monday has become Spring Bank Holiday. The danger has now arisen that as Christians we may be sought as allies, particularly by Muslims, 'against secularism.' Some Christians may be happy to go along with that. But we tread a dangerous tight rope here. We all,

including Muslims, owe so much to the secular freedoms that enable us to enjoy free speech, political choice, freedom from interference with religious structures etc. Secular values have come, in part, out of a Christian society. Moderate Muslims - that is by far the majority - are glad to be in Britain because of the freedoms we enjoy together in this society. This is something they admit they would not enjoy in most, if not all, Muslim majority countries. I was part of a Christian-Muslim journey to Turkey. As we arrived back at Heathrow, the Imam who was with us said with relief, "I am so glad to be back. Before, I thought Britain was a very good country for a Muslim, now I know I am in the best country!"

There is of course an aggressive secularism, against which unity with other faiths is a possible stance. This might apply in the face of present propagandists like Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens or Anthony Grayling. They tend to overstate their cases, particularly the first two. They raise aunt sallies which are a parody of religion, in order to denigrate them. Here, religious people have a common interest, either in ignoring the attack, or by providing arguments to counter the attacks, where we support one another. Such discussions may arise in the workplace.

Finally, the workplace, or with work colleagues, may be the place where we can engage with what have become known as the four principles of dialogue, as affirmed by the mainline British churches since the mid 1980's. They are as follows:

1. *Dialogue begins when people meet people* (not when religions or philosophies meet each other): The workplace is a place where Andrew meets Abdul meets Rashmi daily, for several hours - or Mary meets Miriam meets Lakshmi. The dialogue may be at several levels - about life, about faith, about theology, about prayer, about community concerns.
2. *Dialogue depends upon removing misunderstanding and building up trust*: Trust and understanding take a long time to develop. The workplace gives that time.

3. *Dialogue leads to common service to the community.* Possibilities may arise where we can do something for others together. This may be in practical help, charity giving, or joint projects. Such might arise amongst work colleagues.
4. *Dialogue is the means of authentic witness.* As we work together day by day, we may well find ourselves witnessing to our faith. Here, others need to know that Christians are praying people, and not just talking and acting people, they need to know that we read scriptures as others. It is sad that in many places of work, prayer rooms are provided, but before long they become de facto Muslim prayer rooms, since they only go to pray. They are sometimes accused of 'taking over' such rooms. But this usually happens through default.

In conclusion: at the St Philip's Centre, Leicester, when we lead adult education courses in parishes in the area of inter-faith understanding, we

name the six week evening class *Unfamiliar Journey*. I usually begin by asking members of the class in what way they have encountered people of other faiths. For an increasing minority it is within their extended family contexts, for others it maybe that they have one good friend, for others it is through receiving treatment from a doctor or nurse of another faith. For some it is that they have neighbours who are Hindu or Muslim or Sikh, or study at college with those of other faiths. But the most frequent answer is that they work with such a person: Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh. This is an indication that this is where dialogue can begin, and lead to friendship.

Recently, at a workshop where the Bishop of Leicester was present, a young Muslim spoke of his faith, as did a Hindu. After Christians had responded, the Muslim asked to say a final word. He said that he wanted to express strongly his wish that Christians would be more confident about their faith. It did not help Muslims at all to



find Christians who were apathetic, defensive or inarticulate. This is a challenge to all of us, whether at work, where we live or within our family context.

Canon Dr Andrew Wingate is Bishop's Inter Faith Adviser and Director of the St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi Faith Society, Leicester (for more details of training and other opportunities available see www.stphilipscentre.co.uk). Andrew's book: Celebrating Difference, Staying Faithful - how to live in a Multi Faith World (DLT, 2005) is available through the Centre.

A week in the life and ministry of an MSE

Pauline Pearson

I thought I'd pick a week more or less at random and tell you some of the things I was doing then. My day at work generally starts around 8.45, when, most days, I arrive, put on the computer and go downstairs to get water for my coffee machine. Then it will keep me and any visitors going during the day, as my office is on the second floor, and as far as you can get from the kitchen in our building! However, I don't always start the day in my office or my building.

That particular Monday I had a meeting with colleagues in another part of my building to finish off a bid for money to research the experience of medical students and qualified doctors using technology (like computers, simulated patients, etc.) to learn with. We want to know does it work? Is it better or worse than using books or real patients to learn from and on? We probably have a one in ten chance of getting the money, but we have to wait to know for three months or so. Next I had to run to get the keys for the rooms I was teaching in, in a building about five minutes brisk walk down the path from mine. I had my two groups of second year medical students, one after the other, to look at 'Challenges to Medicine' – getting them to think about the influence of 'lay health beliefs' (ordinary people's ideas about health and illness), the

media, technical developments and alternative health care – among other things – on medicine as a profession, and politicians’ and patients’ decisions about health care. Over lunchtime I had a meeting of the committee that plans and decides postgraduate study in the Faculty, on which I represent my School. Then, armed with a large bundle of paperwork (about eight ‘cases’) I walked down the campus to sit on a University Financial Assistance Panel: With two colleagues, I help to decide on giving out money to students (undergraduate and postgraduate) who are struggling to make ends meet, so long as they fit complicated government criteria for help.

The next day, my first meeting was with my research colleagues, to help keep the projects we are doing on track: one is on education about patient safety and one on changes in the mental health workforce. We are also trying to encourage each other in writing papers, as these are one of the things that are seen as a measure of productivity in universities. Then I chaired a meeting of the School Executive, as I am Deputy Head of School, and the Head of School was teaching. I managed to draw it to a conclusion in time to go out of the office to meet friends for lunch. In the afternoon I met with one of my staff to talk through her personal development review, then met with one of my PhD students, from Iran, to discuss how he is progressing with his study.

Quite a lot of Wednesday I used for catching up with admin work, and trying to get a potential article redrafted. However, I also had a meeting about our ‘CETL’ (Centre for Excellence in Healthcare Professional Education), of which I am Deputy Director. It is a group aimed at sharing good practice in education for health professionals spanning doctors, dentists, nurses, therapists and pharmacists, to prepare them to meet the changing needs of the National Health Service and the expectations of patients. It involves staff and students from the Universities of Durham, Northumbria, Sunderland, Teesside, as well as Newcastle, and patients, carers and staff from the local National Health Service. It has six groups looking at different aspects of education for health professionals: how professionals learn and work together (interprofessional learning), user involvement in education, how

students can learn from each other, learning at work, technologies and new ways of working, and promoting health. I try to make sure these groups keep coming up with ideas and testing them out. In the afternoon I had a discussion with a colleague about filling in an application for ethical approval of one of our research projects, then went to sit on a disciplinary panel for All Saints College (a local secondary school jointly sponsored by the University and the Church – on which I am a University Governor) to decide whether a student's exclusion was justified, before a meeting of the Governors.

On Thursday I travelled to London on the 6.30am train to attend a meeting of the Centre for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education's Board, of which I am a member. The train down was slightly late, but I managed to catch the 4pm train home which was on time, so arriving back just after 7pm. Trains are good places to catch up on reading and writing (and to doze!) On the Friday I escaped another trip to London by dialling in to a teleconference for a Research Advisory Group I am part of. The only trouble with these is being on the phone for an hour, unable to see the other people you are talking to. You have to be quite assertive to get heard! Most of the rest of the day was taken up with admin and writing, but I had lunch with two colleagues, one from Newcastle and one from Northumbria University to discuss a couple of papers we have been drafting. My average workday ends at about 5.30, when I switch off the computer, lock up my office and go home.

Reading all this through I wonder what you will make of it. I believe that God accompanies me each day, in my work as much as elsewhere – in the obvious and the less obvious places, in fellowship with colleagues, in meetings with students with problems, in teaching, in research, when life is busy and when it's quiet. What about you?

The fowls of the air and the lilies of the field

Peter King

The holiday season for those with children is now drawing to a close. A rather bland summer at home but no doubt some found some sun and sand elsewhere.

We all need holidays to relax with family and friends; to renew the batteries and to break the routine. Sad it is that, as soon as we return, pressures and demands are swiftly upon us. A different year at school or a new school; work to be caught up with and post to be opened and replied to; bills to be paid. Soon we are back into the old routine. The memories of the peace and tranquility of the countryside or beach or the excitement of the exploration or of the majesty of ancient monuments fast fades.

In reality a holiday is a good time to review routine or to look for a different pattern of doing things upon return. Work life balance is so important for our health and for the quality of living. As with a New Year's Resolutions we promise change on holiday but seldom if ever put it into practice upon our return. On holiday we dream of freedom; of less responsibility; of more positive relationships; of the space to enjoy living and of spending quality time with those whom we love. We live in a society where 'things' and 'possessions' get in the way of who we are or wish to become. They mould and shape us, confine and define us. On holiday we were a little detached from the tyrant of 'having' and more the willing servant of 'being' and 'doing'. Can we not bring back something of such detachment or freedom? "Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

Are we the slaves of routine or does it serve our purposes? Can we discern what is important and what is less so? Are we the slaves of work or the employer or the client? Is there a better way of ordering our affairs to give a quality to our living and more space for families and friends?

Often we are like squirrels, spending every moment dashing here and there collecting and storing nuts for an uncertain future.

We live for what may be, for the good examination results next year, for the possible promotion on the horizon, for the new roof or extension or for the nest egg. Do we live for the present? "Take, therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself". Perhaps not entirely so in our complex society, as pensions are needed and future expenditure needs planning for but do we need to be so wrapped up in the future that we fail to live in the present?

The General Synod in a motion passed this year reaffirmed the spiritual nature of work and what we do in our secular lives. We are after all citizens of heaven and earth but so often we squeeze out God from our busy lives with no time to think, contemplate or pray. To quote from Michel Quoist in his *Prayers for Life*:

If only we knew how to look at life as God sees it,
We should realise that nothing is secular in the world,
But that everything contributes to the building of the
Kingdom of God.

To have faith is not only to raise one's eyes to God to
contemplate him;

It is also to look at this world - but with Christ's eyes.

A dozen ways to lose a worker

Dorrie Johnson

1. The Chief Exec. admired your last assignment;
our Chairman, though, believes in realignment -
I'm sorry but you have to go...
2. Our board had not intended change mid-term
but now we need a clear re-structured firm -
I'm sorry but you have to go...
3. I've long believed you're wise and very bright
so you'll see that to rationalise is right -
I'm sorry but you have to go...

4. I'm sure that this won't be a real surprise,
you know we're being pressured to downsize -
I'm sorry but you have to go...
5. ...and now we find our market's just lukewarm
and to address concerns we must re-form -
I'm sorry but you have to go...
6. We've run a headcount and the audit shows
it's paramount some units have to close -
I'm sorry but you have to go...
7. Our outlets for investment are quiescent;
to ensure that we remain efficient ...
I'm sorry but you have to go...
8. Though our labour force is second now to none
we must streamline if not to be outdone -
I'm sorry but you have to go...
9. We have to re-distribute talent through
the trade, to suit the last HR review -
I'm sorry but you have to go...
10. Our system's out of date; to be robust
we have to change our practice and adjust
I'm sorry but you have to go...
11. The Board regrets the drive to centralise
can hurt its workforce and demoralise -
I'm sorry but you have to go...
12. And, that man Alan Sugar is inspired
by frowning, pointing, shouting that – you're fired!

or you could submit your resignation letter ... and get in there first.

CHRISM Summer Conference: 'Leicester - Working Life in a City of Faith', 5th-7th September 2008, Leicester

Reflection 1. An "outsider's" view

John Eatock

The conference

What a conference! Here was a packed programme of visits and presentations of various types. There was little time to dialogue with other conference participants other than when travelling to various locations in Leicester or at mealtimes.

I found that all of the presentations were useful in various ways, from that of Professor David Wilson with his insights into the way that Leicester's local government functions in a multi faith city to the dialogue with Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra and Bishop Timothy Stevens. The session with Chief Superintendent Paul Smith brought a slightly different angle to the proceedings. In short, I found every session illuminating in some way and especially the final session with Canon Andrew Wingate. Most significantly I came away from the conference with great admiration for St. Philip's Centre and its staff and particularly Shanthi (Dr. Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi) whose smooth facilitation of much of the weekend was admirable.



Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Canon Alan Race and Bishop Timothy Stevens

His quiet unassuming manner throughout the weekend lent a great deal to the whole event. The highlights for me were the visit to St. Philip's Centre to meet women from different faith traditions and the visit to the Hindu Temple. As someone who has considerable experience in working with people of other faiths in a professional capacity as a psychotherapist, this conference added a new dimension to my understanding as we were temporarily but thoroughly immersed in a multi faith city community.

This conference confirmed what I already knew from my therapeutic work, that time spent on relationships at depth is essential and always worthwhile if there is to be understanding, growth and harmony between communities as well as individuals. A great deal of time and attention has obviously been given to this in Leicester.

The whole experience provided me with valuable contacts for my ongoing work and yet there was almost too much to take on board in the space available. This was a very packed programme indeed! Time for reflection during the conference would have been useful. I had hoped for some deeper consideration of what it means for others who work alongside those of other faiths in their united witness in what is often a God denying world.

CHRISM

.....and what of CHRISM? It was at the suggestion of a former Moderator of CHRISM that I found myself investigating this conference on your website. Would it be relevant to my work or to me as a self-supporting Anglican priest who works for a professional organisation? These are the sort of questions that I asked myself before making a decision to book. The programme looked interesting and the conference has borne fruit since I attended to the benefit of both myself and my employers. It certainly was worthwhile and appropriate in helping in my work in spiritual and pastoral care within counselling and psychotherapy.

CHRISM itself was entirely new to me even though I have been a self supporting Anglican priest for over fifteen years, and ordained

for almost forty years. What could this organisation add to help me to fulfil my vocation? As a self-invited guest I have pondered on these things since my attendance.

I am still uncertain as to what CHRISM is really about. It appeared to me to be a support network for those whose ministerial vocation is in the workplace and yet I wondered if this is really any different from that required of any Christian. Surely all are ministers ordained or not and the local church is the place where Christians support one another and they can seek out and identify one another in their usual place of work. Ministry is for all so maybe, I thought, CHRISM is about the outworking of priesthood for those who are ordained and yet I recall meeting those who were Readers and those of different denominations. So what is it really about? My conversations did not exactly make this clear. It seems to me that there are already organisations to support Readers, certainly within the Church of England. I noticed that no Roman Catholics were present and yet there were pictures describing visits to worker priests elsewhere. The Annual General Meeting that I observed was efficient and well run and it seems to have been a difficult year for CHRISM with an indication that, maybe, some of the issues that I mention might be grappled with at some future date in the autumn. I was left in a quandary and my conversations, such as they were, did not exactly clarify in what 'position' CHRISM sees itself.

The title MSE somehow does not sit easily with me. Alongside the issue about what is a 'minister' there is also the implication that there is actually a world that is 'secular', implying somehow that the divine does not permeate the whole. MSE is a title that I find that I do not easily wear. I much prefer to be a self-supporting priest whose priesthood is exercised significantly in my unique workplace amongst my colleagues and our clients.

So there you are. I guess that I had hoped to meet a group with some radical ideas and more fascinating insights. Maybe I simply missed these due to lack of time and space over the conference weekend? I was struck by the number of conversations about the ecclesiastical establishment and anxieties about its relationship, or

lack of relationship, with the group. Concerns about not getting enough coverage in the Church Times for me seem to be misplaced. Surely such a group would be aiming to make particular contributions to professional journals with critiques, interesting viewpoints, or even ethical and theological dimensions brought to light.

Will I join CHRISM? Probably not, I have managed so far without this benefit, and maybe I would look for a more radical approach as I continue to exercise my priestly ministry in my workplace and through my work. I do look forward with interest to the outcomes of your deliberations on strategy towards the end of the year. I will watch this space!

Thank you for your conference, allowing me to meet you, to worship with you, and your very warm welcome. If there is a 'next time' then maybe we will have longer conversations and perhaps I'll see CHRISM's 'edge'. My initial contact tells me that originally CHRISM was radical in every way. If this is so then I missed it at your weekend conference!

The Revd John Eatock is Lead Advisor, Counselling and Psychotherapy in Spiritual and Pastoral Care, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Reflection 2. A “regular attender’s” view

Jim Cummins

On Friday the 5th September I was transported by rail to the great city of Leicester, to the annual gathering of the members of CHRISM, where we were invited to share in some of the life of this multicultural, multinational, multi-ethnic and multi-faith society.

The highlight for me was a visit to a Hindu temple. We entered, soft footed without our shoes, into the brilliant light of this place of worship. We were enveloped in a flood of rhythmic Eastern music and brilliant lighting. The people, in their hundreds, came and went with complete freedom. From time to time, one or another would get up and go to the front where very large images, adorned with flowers and bright colours, filled the stage. They would bow, in worship, anoint themselves, work their way, perhaps along the front of the ‘stage’, pausing from time to time and then either return to their families and sit on the floor or on chairs provided, or they would leave and others would come in - a constant flow of people old and young. There was a marvellously relaxed atmosphere, a perpetual drama, enjoyed by all ages, and in spite of the noise, the freedom of movement and the lighting and extinguishing of candles, there was a certain dignity throughout. That is, I fear, a very inadequate description. For me, it held together, the noise, the freedom, the coming and going of a well run open youth club, with something of the dignity, the quality and sincerity of what a church service might be. But I cannot leave the Temple without a mention of the rules of behaviour written boldly on various walls - a simple morality for life. As for our group, we were looked after with kindness and generosity, provided with seats, allowed to wander around like fairly tame tourists (which I suppose we were) and offered food.

This reflection has started at the latter end of the gathering. That is perhaps, because it is most fresh in the mind. What we heard before, from the variety of speakers, was no less impressive: from the opening talk ‘setting the scene’ by Professor David Wilson - noteworthy not merely because of his complete grasp of his subject



Pauline Pearson, Jim Cummins and Catherine Binns. This and the previous photo were taken at the conference by Stan Frost.

but because he was easy to listen to, and to be heard. Equally impressive contributions came from the following morning from the Imam, Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra and the Diocesan Bishop, Tim Stevens - both with much wisdom and breadth of knowledge most readily shared. One began to sense the dedication of these and others to their city.

Next, we heard from the Police and Health and Social Services how the great community of different races works together in harmony, and one might be excused for thinking that Chief Superintendent Paul Smith, as head of the Leicestershire Constabulary Community

Safety Bureau, would have an idle life. Then I notice that he is responsible for 'intelligence, crime reduction partnerships, drugs and alcohol, offender management, race and faith issues and the prevention of terrorism'. Is that all? He revealed a comprehensive understanding of the community within which he carries so much responsibility. Then we heard from Ivan Browne - a community health worker. I left that session with confidence that if I was lost

in Leicester. (I was constantly lost on the University Campus, never mind the out in the city), I would be retrieved, dealt with compassionately, and delivered home, safe and sound.

Throughout the conference, we had the pleasure of the company of Dr Shanthikumar Hettierachchi (Shanthi). He is involved in 'cross cultural relations and dialogue processes at the St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement.' He led a group of us to the Centre on Saturday afternoon via a very devious route so that we could see much of the city - a great Mosque which seemed to be disgorging large crowds of worshippers, busy streets, bustling with life and trade, leafy prosperous housing areas and others, much less so. At the St Philip's Centre we were met by four women: one Moslem, one Quaker, one Jaine and one Indian Christian: so we had an interesting discussion. While we were at the Centre, other had gone elsewhere: one group to the High Cross Shopping Centre, and another to the Police City Centre Operations. This last was hosted by Suleman Nagdi who also played a considerable part in our discussions with patience and good humour back at base. Suleman is a Deputy Lieutenant of Leicestershire and Public Relations Officer for the Federation of Muslim Organisations. He has strong links with Council of Faith, the Faith Leaders Forum and dialogue groups involving Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews and Christians in Leicester.

Somewhere along the line the CHRISM Annual General Meeting was attended to - and not without high praise for those who keep this small but powerful ship afloat. Then on Sunday morning, a summing up with Canon Andrew Wingate, Director of the St Philip's Centre, before a joyful Eucharist. That summing up included the sobering recognition that this exceptionally diverse mix of good people living in harmony together is very vulnerable. One terrorist bomb - in another city or another country - could bring the whole thing tumbling like a pack of cards or a colony of bees overturned. We must continue to pray, as we did that day, that the whole process of learning to love our neighbours will continue and be spread to those areas worldwide who cannot yet share in that ideal.

Annual Conference of the Old Catholic Church of German, 5th-8th June 2008, Neustadt/Weinstraße, Germany

Phil Aspinall

For some five years I have attended the annual conference of the MSEs of the Old Catholic Church of Germany (AKD). Over these years, we have been pleased to welcome five delegates from the AKD at CHRISM conferences as part of our growing relationship.

This year's conference differed from previous ones as it was a joint meeting between the MSEs and the stipendiary clergy. The stipendiaries had been meeting during the week and we joined them on the Thursday evening. After a collective Eucharist on Saturday morning, the group of some 24 MSEs continued for their own meeting over the weekend, along with Joachim Vobbe, Bishop of Germany. There was a significant proportion of women clergy – and some very vocal younger ones.

We met at a monastery above Neustadt, in the heart of the Pfalz wine growing region – with a well-appointed Pfalz Keller which certainly encouraged community, and lots of singing! On the Saturday afternoon we adjourned to a nearby town for a meditation in front of a 14th century altarpiece of the crucifixion, and after a brief walk through the vineyards, moved on to a local restaurant for a very festive evening with Pfälzer specialities, and varied conversations.

With so many stipendiary clergy, much of the debate was about the inner workings of the church and the parishes. But the MSEs very consciously introduced and presented themselves to the plenary in their secular work and roles. And on the Saturday we had more time to share news of work and the changes in our working lives.

Friday morning was filled with the annual "Bishop's Report". He covered the usual topics: the state of the finances, the number of ordinations, updates on AKD groups and societies, the church newspaper, the other Old Catholic churches, ecumenical relations

with other Catholic churches (Anglican, Swedish Lutherans and the Philippine Church). It generated much heated discussion and much debate about poor communications.

The afternoon was billed as a dialogue between stipendiaries and MSEs. It began with a question put to the stipendiaries: "What has been your experience of MSEs?". Someone said in our final review: "I thought I had died and was listening to the pleasant things people would say at my funeral". Most of the responses were about what a help MSEs were in the parish and did not deal with issues of time management, unrealistic expectations, communication, etc, etc.

However the responses to my question: "So how do you support your MSE in their work?" led at least to one tale of an MSE who had arranged for the parish priest to join them in the workplace. Others agreed it was an important question. One fascinating and recurring theme was what it means to be distinctively Old Catholic when so many of the clergy are now Roman Catholics who have come over (usually because of relationships). There was, conversely, a father and son from a longstanding Old Catholic family, where the grandfather had also been a priest.

Another interesting debate was over the proposal to create a Bishop's Church in Bonn (where they have their eyes on a redundant chapel). But it is key to the Old Catholics self understanding that this must definitely not be a Cathedral nor suggest anything to undermine the synodical government of the Church, which is fundamental for a church formed as a reaction to the hierarchical control of the Roman Church.

Great interest was expressed in maintaining the link with CHRISM, but the hopes they had of sending delegates to our September conference were eventually ruled out on grounds of cost. But their interest is a strong reflection of CHRISM's international reputation.

Next year's conference of the MSEs will take place again in Speyer from 16th– 18th October 2009. The theme will be 'Spirituality'. You would be made most welcome if you are able to attend.

Forthcoming events: dates for your diary

If organisers of events that are likely to be of interest to MSEs would like their events publicised in this section of the journal please do send details to the Editor at any point.

United Kingdom

Christian Association of Business Executives (CABE)

18th November 2008: Nineteenth Hugh Kay Lecture "Europe and its Values", to be given by Peter Sutherland, Chairman BP and Goldman Sachs: 6.00 for 6.30pm, at Deloitte's, 2 New Street Square, London EC4A 3BZ. RSVP to Jackie Nelson (info@principlesforbusiness.com)

26th November 2008: Women on the Move Networking Evening with Jude Simpson - more details to follow.

(See www.principlesforbusiness.com/events.php)

Industrial Christian Fellowship

13th November 2008: ICF 2008 Lecture, "The Universal Christ", to be given by Dr Colin Hicks, recently retired as Director General of the British National Space Centre. (See www.icf-online.org)

London Institute for Contemporary Christianity

27th November 2008: "Grand Designs and Masterplans or, How God Put Man in Space, talk to be given by John Lee an architect with Arca, who will share his ideas on the significance of the art and practice of architecture for Christians today: 7:30pm - 9:30pm, at Starbucks, Oxford Road, Manchester, M1 6EY. Cost: £6.00 (concessions £4.00) including coffee and cake. To book a place (essential) contact: manchester@licc.org.uk or 07907 954664 (see www.licc.org.uk/events)

International

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)

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

And finally...

Still lost in the desert

It is 1894, and the patrol of the French Foreign Legion is still lost in the depths of the Sahara. Water they found a week ago at a small, muddy oasis, but food is now running low. They ate the last of the trifles the night before*. 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 kilometre 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 a tree!" Struggling to the top of the dune they see what looks like an oak tree shimmering in the distant haze. Could it be?

As the patrol approaches the tree takes on a strange appearance, for its branches bear not leaves but what look like rashers of bacon. Driven by pangs of hunger a soldier drops his rifle, rushes forward and reaches out to snatch a slice from the tree. Suddenly a shot rings out and he falls to the ground. More shots quickly follow. The Capitaine realises what is happening and calls out to his men, "Quick, take cover. It's not a bacon tree, it's an 'ambush!'"

* See Ministers-at-Work, July 2008, p48

And really finally...

Final advice

The 98 year old Mother Superior was dying. The nuns gathered round her bed trying to make her last moments on earth more comfortable.

They gave her some warm milk to drink but she refused, so one of the nuns took the glass back to the kitchen. Then, remembering a bottle of whiskey received as a gift the previous Christmas, she opened it and poured a generous amount into the warm milk.

Back at Mother Superior's bed, she held the glass to her lips. Mother drank a little, then a little bit more and before they knew it, she had drunk the whole glass to the last drop.

"Mother," the nuns asked earnestly, "please give us some final words of wisdom before you die."

The Mother Superior raised herself slowly up in bed and with a pious look on her face said "Don't sell that cow."

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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