

Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in
secular ministry

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

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Copy deadline for the July edition: 3 July.

All views expressed in articles are those of the writer unless otherwise stated. If you would like to reproduce any items in another publication, please contact the Editor.

CHRISM SUMMER CONFERENCE 2005

22nd – 24th July, at Plater College, Oxford

TOMORROW'S WORKPLACE

- § what might the workplace look like in 2020 ?
- § what does this mean for MSE and CHRISM ?
- § visits to various workplaces in the Oxford area

The weekend will be based around the Tomorrow Project by Michael Moynagh and Richard Worsley, see www.tomorrowproject.net, and includes the CHRISM AGM.

Cost, from dinner on Friday evening to lunch on Sunday, inclusive:
£100 (members); £105 (non-members)

If you intend to come, please contact:

Margaret Joachim, 8 Newburgh Road, London, W3 6DQ

Plater College (www.plater.ac.uk) was the venue for the 2000 Conference and is in the quiet Headington Hill area of Oxford, on the east bank of the River Cherwell, about 1.5 miles east of the rail and bus stations. Detailed travel directions will be given with joining instructions. Accommodation is single bedrooms with a basin, desk with lamp, and on each floor there are bathrooms and/or shower rooms.

We recommend reading the Project summary on the website before the Conference.

Editorial

It was a real pleasure to meet up with old and new faces on the Reflective weekend at Morley, near Derby, in February. CHRISM is blessed with a generous share of characters and it does me good to be reminded that there are folk in the churches who are just as barmy as I am.

Over this and the next edition those who enjoyed the excellent and generous fodder are contributing their further reflections on the weekend and how it takes us on our journey as MSEs. Interesting—but not surprising—to see some common themes too.

I found myself looking at the two parables—the treasure in the field and pearl of great price—in rather different way to the usual interpretation, not least from my background pursuing businesses for the right amount of tax. The buyer of the pearl in particular was a merchant; he made his living by buying and selling pearls (and quite possibly gemstones). Coming across one of exceptional beauty and value, he sold everything he had to sell to raise the price asked for it. Why? To enjoy owning it and to ‘treasure’ it? So how would he live, and support his household? How could his business survive? What he did only makes sense if he were going to sell it, and quite quickly, at a good profit. The pearl had no value if it ruined him but great value if it enriched him and those dependent on him.

Similarly, the man who stumbled across treasure buried in a field would soon starve and probably be robbed if, having sold everything to buy the field he was left to sit in the middle of it, trying to fend off all-comers. The story makes sense only if—and Jesus’ hearers would understand this without explanation—he were to sell the treasure (and then the field) to realise, make real, the value he saw in it.

In order to use wealth for the good of others it first of all has to be created. Without the wealth existing or being created in the first place, this is not an option. Jesus point was that having discovered that which is precious, even beyond price, it is of no value to us if

we do nothing with it. So with the treasure of God's grace, calling us to him as His Children. What is it worth if we keep it to ourselves and do not share this treasure with others?

Before this is read as a defence of wealth creation—it isn't. Wealth creation may or may not be at the expense of others; the greater ethical issues surround how wealth is used, which is much more to the point in the parables.

I suspected that the item on the diaconate in January's edition would draw a response from Deirdre Palk, permanent deacon, and was not disappointed. Deirdre has always been a master of developing a line of enquiry and her piece is an excellent contribution to the debate on the diaconate.

After January's splurge of (timely) book reviews we return to more normal levels this time, but with a couple of real gems. On the subject of books, Margaret Joachim has contributed an appeal for more to place in the Michael Ranken Memorial Library to swell the ranks further. One that will be going in, when I've read it, is a biography (in English) of Henri Perrin, one of the earliest and most important French Worker-Priests, found on the second-hand shelf at the Birmingham SPCK before our last Committee meeting. Speaking of which, if you would like to join the Committee, to help in the essential work to maintain and expend CHRISM and support MSEs, do talk to Phil Aspinall (or any other Committee member). We can co-opt up to three members on top of those elected at the AGM.

A reminder that if you have not yet paid your subscription for 2005, please do! This pays for the Journal and most of our other publicity and training materials, and meets the modest expenses of the Committee. Weekends generally break even and we use CHRISSET's reserve judiciously for MSE development work. Donations are always welcome, and it is also well worth using Gift Aid for these and your subs. As well as getting back 22p for every 78p you give, if you are a Higher Rate income tax payer the slice of income on which you pay basic rate (22%) tax is extended by the amount you give under Gift Aid. For example, if you have total giv-

ing to charities in a year of say £1,000, the amount of tax you should pay on this is £220. If you are a Higher Rate payer you will have paid £400. Using Gift Aid means that the charities will recover £282.05 from the Inland Revenue and, if you are a Higher Rate tax payer, the amount you can earn before this kicks in is extended by £1,000. Unless you give through Payroll Giving you will need to submit a tax return to show your Gift Aid giving. If you pay your CHRISM subs by direct debit, 'DD' will appear on the address label from this edition.

And on the subject of 'giving', the main reason why "Ministers-at-Work" is described as "an excellent little Journal" is the content, largely penned and provided by YOU! An Editor is only as good as the material he (or she, recalling my gratitude to Dorrie Johnson) has available. So keep it coming!

Rob

2005 Reflective weekend

Morley Retreat Centre, a few miles north of Derby, was an ideal venue for CHRISM's Reflective weekend: a peaceful 18th century former parsonage next to a lovely little church, and excellent food!

In the past some of these weekends have been perhaps a little business-like, reflected in a specific 'output'. This year it was more the personal experiences arising from our time and shared experiences together that stay with us. In this and the next journal those at Morley will share with us what pearl of great price they discovered.

Phil Aspinall:

"A CHRISM Reflective weekend is like treasure which a man found buried in a field. He buried it again, and in joy went and sold everything he had, and bought the field."

Well not exactly **everything**, but it was definitely more than worth the subscription fee. A reflective weekend like this certainly represents treasure hidden in the many fields and pressures of working life. And it is amazing what many treasures and hidden pearls come to the surface during the course of the weekend – I was grateful for

the space which allowed this to happen. I wouldn't say that there were any life-changing revelations, but the many little insights seemed to enable a number of different strands to fall into place.

But the story in the parable continues – the things discovered get hidden again and inevitably get buried again under the business of life. But the secret (may be the real pearl) is to know where to find these things, to dig them up again when I need them (like the squirrels opposite my balcony rooting around for their hidden treasure as winter drags on...).

But there was also more tangible treasure – the many conversations and friendship with others, a bracing walk on a wintry day, good food and drink, shared worship and all in a very restful environment. And, of course, the other participants were all real treasures !



Margaret: "I wish Phil would point out which field we'll find the treasure in"

Moira: "Well there are a lot to choose from, but I'm sure we'll get to the bottom of it."

Moira Biggins:

I thought I'd write a few words from the perspective of a newcomer.

Why attend your first CHRISM reflective weekend?

Meet others who have the same crazy, God-inspired dreams as you do. Talk about work-as-ministry with people who don't look at you blankly. Think – pray – reflect – laugh – argue your way to a better understanding of what your life is about. And as a bonus, put faces to some of the names you read in the journal!

Jim Cummins:

The place – once found (following deviant route through Telford and another in Derby and overshoot at the entrance) an interesting mix of ancient and modern with rather diverting little zigzags between the 'a' and 'm' which left me still taking wrong turnings at the end as at the beginning – very reflective it was. But surprising to find a place so close to the city yet in a quite rural landscape.

Saturday morning sunrise, crisp and clear, was a joy. The birds were not observing the discipline of silence but indulging in a chorus worthy of Spring regardless of the frost. Wonderful. The only irritants were the notices encouraging us to reflect on trite little half truths – e.g. the once-upon-a-time walled garden. Niggling! And the staff? Unobtrusive but attentive, providing good food and plenty of it.

The Content – small input but offering big opportunities for all sorts of interpretations. And then a chance to thrash about in waters too deep for anything other than drowning. (And by the way I hatched out some eggs earlier in the year and so there are two handsome young cockerels finding their voices now in the dawn over here and just two pretty pullets to respond!) One member of our small group talked far too much, especially when the door opened and the others were much too tolerant and failed to silence him.

The Company – almost all familiar and full of skills and understanding of complex issues too deep for me; (“wither shall I go, then, from your presence?) but loving and forgiving – very tolerant, as Christian gatherings should be.

Personal – thoughts started from daily life as I live it today. Just family, friends and farm, which sphere I have chosen to prevent me from doing too much damage to the more conventional ‘people congregations’. Hence the pearl I offered, symbolic of the farm which is my life. But then Saturday morning came a request to call home and then the news that one little grand-daughter was very ill in hospital with a burst appendix and secondly (insignificant in the shadow of that first blow) result of medical test on our cattle means that three must go to be slaughtered because of a nasty bug that has got into the herd.

At that point I became aware of other pearls whose value is too easily taken for granted, until we are threatened with the loss of them. All this made me realise the only real pearl is *love*. (And nowadays any attempt I make to express things personal like this get me all emotional – another penalty of getting older – sorry about that). Whatever love we have or can offer is our part in the divine love which is by its nature vulnerable and ‘hurty’.



Margaret Joachim

Well...

The gift of the screen-wipe, coupled with the injunction to "Keep shining", was the revelation from my pearl that sank in during the weekend. At the time I thought of Moses coming down from the mountain, and since then I've also remembered the piece of the baptism service which everyone loves: "Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father". Which I have taken into what has proved to be an extremely difficult Lent, because suddenly I have nothing at all to do - no people to manage, no work to organise, just a void. The job I moved into turns out to have no funding, the salesman is generating no prospects (which would provide funding for me to do what I thought I was supposed to do), and for all practical purposes I've vanished! So I'm hanging onto the pearl almost as a talisman, while feeling thoroughly shoved under a bushel. (And now I'd much rather be out there helping with the election somewhere, than stuck here wishing I was busy).

Rob Fox:

The injunction to bring along with us something symbolic of our pearl of great price proved a lot more challenging than expected! But over the past 15 years or so I have been fortunate / blessed / grateful to work with a number of constantly changing teams of people, and after considerable reflection it was clear that it is those with whom I work that is a real pearl for me. But how to capture that and offer it at Morley?

It is almost a standing joke at work that when I'm talking through a problem I very soon reach for a sheet of paper and start drawing pictures and lines on it. It is much easier to see a solution when all the relevant information is set out in relationship. Besides, I like pictures – they make so much more sense than writing! As often as not these days as I visit a colleague in another office there is a small pile of paper ready and waiting. So what better to stand for the people I work with than a blank sheet of paper!

For a couple of reasons my confidence at work was shaken up a bit

in the autumn, not least in a few colleagues. Our time at Morley helped me reflect on the whole position and reminded me that, although my role has largely been to support others in what they do, I couldn't do this without the support they have given to me. A couple of very demanding tasks soon after Morley helped restore my confidence in what God has been doing in our work, even if I do seem to be chasing myself around the country these days.

As we departed I was reminded of another pearl, one too easy to take for granted. Louisa and our son David came to pick me up. Something of a longer journey than they had anticipated as unexpected road works (on a Sunday!) meant that after an hour they were less than 3 miles from home. Long after most had started out for home they arrived at Morley, tired but glad to have finally arrived. After a refreshing cup of tea we set off to my parents in Macclesfield for 'proper' tea. Family are the pearl we easily overlook, but treasure beyond price.

Jane Shaw

The life of the NSM is a constant search – at one level for time, for balance, for integration of thought and activity; at another level for meaning, for the Kingdom of God, for signs of God at work in our workplace. And if we are searching for the pearl of great price, how do we recognise it?...it may often seem well buried! Perhaps this searching is reciprocal – Jesus comes looking for us, and pays a great price for us, so we are precious in ourselves. And we are looking for him and for evidence of his activity, his partnership in our work.

For me the "pearl" at work is in the relationships I form and am formed by. I find heavenly treasure in the delighted recognition that colleagues and students alike are engaged in the same struggle to change things and improve them, often in unpromising environments. I find it, thankfully, in the mutual support we offer one another in the teeth of adversity, whether it be hostile management or economic downturn. I find it, shinningly, in engaging in creative teaching and ground-breaking research; and in enabling knowledge transfer which empowers and liberates. I find it, fruitfully, in

watching students grow in confidence, skill and judgement, and in directing their attention to ethical and moral aspects of their work. In such ways the Kingdom's work is taken forward.

The richness of the weekend was also in sharing and listening to colleagues' accounts of their own pearls and the "fields" in which they found them; and in exploring together how we can celebrate and capitalise on them.

At the end of the weekend I committed myself to praying more – more for my colleagues, more for our students, more for our development work – and continuing to search for the shine on the perfect pearl.

On the Buses

Nothing to do with the early '70s comedy series, but a tale from Trentbarton buses, of the East Midlands. A local company, in this day of the super bus company, Trentbarton recently started to name many of their vehicles, so on February 19 the Nottingham Evening Post included coverage of the naming ceremony of a bus in memory of Howard Ellis, by his daughter, MSE and CHRISM member Moira Biggins.

Howard was well known to the drivers on the Nottingham – Bingham route, as always ready with an encouraging word and appreciation of the service they gave the folk who used the service. One of his last wishes before his death in July last year was that a posthumous letter be sent to the bus company thanking the drivers for their kindness to him over the years. The company managers were so moved that they named a bus after him. Managing Director Brian King said he had felt "humbled" by the letter.

In his letter Mr Ellis wrote, "I have made my last trip with you, having come to the end of my life's journey. I hate to go without saying goodbye and thanking you for all the pleasure you have given me. Always cheerful and courteous, not only to me but to many fellow passengers." Trent driver Dave Nightingale remembered, "You'd

always see him with his baseball cap on and carrying a haversack", colleague Bryan Newburn adding, "Even if he wasn't catching the bus he'd see you and give you a proper wave. He was a super bloke."

Moira was pictured thoroughly enjoying the occasion. She told the Evening News, "Dad believed that, as a society, we take for granted a lot of people that provide essential services. He used to go up to street sweepers and thank them for keeping the streets clean."

Which all goes to show, "whatsoever you do for one of these little ones ...". Now if that isn't ministry in action, what is?

A Wider Perspective

Church 'seasons' are for all year round, not just 40 days, as Peter King reminds us.

One day last week I drove up the M40 and M42 to Birmingham at around one o'clock in the morning. Very few cars about but hundreds of illuminated lorries moving at a regular pace up and down the darkened motorways. An alternative nocturnal life-style, which those tucked up in bed seldom see. Lorries travelling overnight to bring the food to Waitrose, or metal pipes to Liverpool.

We all take for granted the material things which are so obviously presented to us and easily obtained. We seldom think of the long journey which is undertaken by the Banana from Africa or the spices from India. We seldom spare any thought for any life style which does not engage with our own routine or self-interest.

So too with our faith. Lent is a time for reflection and for denial, when we try to live less for self and more for others. A period of reflection to discover what is important in our lives and what is less so. We attempt to separate ourselves from demand and gratification in order to create space for thinking and feeling. We seek a wider picture of the sacred and the secular together in our quest to

be “Holy” people. The events of the Tsunami have reminded us of our vulnerability and of the limited value of material objects when set beside such gifts as hope, trust, generosity, kindness and understanding.

Lent is a time to reflect upon these wider issues; to acknowledge our dependency upon God; to see Human dignity reflected in the person of the incarnate and risen Christ; to be part of the glorious body of Christ and to share in the creative purposes of a loving God. Such wonders we seldom see, feel or recognise in our hurried and blinkered lives.

Lent is a time for humility. Such has little to do with unworthiness but much to do with a right understanding of our significance and function in the order of things and in our relationships with others. Just as the small village community owes its well being to a shop supplied by the nocturnal lorry driver, so we owe much to the love and concern of others. Often we take so much and give back so little. A selfish and indulgent life makes us greedy, weak and narrow-minded. Denial is not simply about giving things up but rather in developing discipline and strength of purpose. Our Lord wrestled with the temptations of power and popularity, calling into question who he was and what he stood for or believed. Temptation confronts us all. The more we struggle and fail the more we recognise our weaknesses and the need for love, faith and forgiveness. We share our burdens as we do our joys.

Lent is a time to rest upon the faithfulness and grace of God. We need to make the space to pray, to think in order to contemplate, with new, renewed or wider vision, the stars of heaven and the motorways of the world.

Rock on Richard!

Treasurer Richard Dobell has revealed he is the keyboard player in a rock'n'roll band, aptly named “The Racketts”!

Visit www.racketts.com for information, and pictures of Richard, “the Rockin' Reverend keyboard king”, in action!

A postcard from France

Well, an e-mail. Jim Cummins' reminiscences about the MSE Conference at Goldsmith's Hall, and Peter Draper's article on the Sydney Diocese initiative with the diaconate, prompted Deirdre Palk to write thus from her new-ish home in Auxerre. A long-standing advocate worker for the permanent diaconate, Deirdre's views are most welcome, and a full response is set out after this piece.

It was an amazing experience - we had been at the first conference (perhaps it was the second - there you go, memory again) and there were about five or six women there amongst the vast numbers of men. The worship was quite a wounding experience; the male voices were so heavy and loud that we felt non-existent, said so, and the obvious occurred - the planning group for the next conference said - do it yourselves then. I've left a lot of my MSE material behind in England so can't look back on the shape of it - it was unique - Stephen Verney's description was apt.

Now, it is great (normal) to see so many women assuming significant roles in CHRISM - the list of committee members, the photos, and articles (though perhaps not enough of those by women) - *keep writing Deirdre! Ed.* It wasn't always thus.

Aside - I was interested in Peter Draper's piece - I suppose as a permanent deacon I should respond - but he raises another question for me - retired from the work that made sense of diaconate, no longer wishing to be a priest, moving to France to an area where there is no Anglican presence - so what happens to the ontological bit - ordination is for life; that's my belief - but what is it for me in my present situation? Probably that's a question for quite a few people - it's the same sort of question that churchgoers who aren't ordained pose to you - I'm only a secretary, how do you say that my ministry is in my work - and our response to that sort of question is of an ontological sort - 'I don't know' - perhaps I should write you something - what do you think?

Absolutely! And the result follows.

Losing a sense of (holy) order(s)?

Deirdre Palk

Peter Draper's piece ('The Nature and Value of MSE' in the light of some ideas afloat in the diocese of Sydney) in January's edition of the journal invited further comment and shared experience. The editor suggested he would be interested to hear from permanent deacon members. It is in that particular capacity that I respond. However, my thoughts are more about what the plans of the diocese of Sydney for a 'new permanent diaconate' suggest about its theology of ordained ministry - the issue which most concerned Peter when he wrote his article.

Permanent, or distinctive, ordained deacons in the Church worldwide, whether catholic, anglican, methodist, presbyterian or otherwise, would raise an eyebrow at the idea of the renewed diaconate as something 'new'; parts of the Australian church in particular have had an understanding of and a significant role for the diaconate for some while. Theological debate on the importance of the sign of the diaconate for the Church and the world, particularly in our current confused and fragmented times, has been going on all round the world at depth and at length. For those who are interested, there is a wealth of published books, biblical studies, reports, newsletters and websites which may be consulted.

My response to the question Peter raises about the theology of priesthood - and, I would add, the theology of all ordained ministry, diaconate included - is a personal one, and comes from my current self-questioning about my own ordination. The view of ordained ministry which he believes to be implicit in the Sydney proposals is, I would suggest, a debased view of ordination, to both diaconate and priesthood, but one which is widespread in the Church at large. It is a view often expressed in the questioning and discouragement faced by nearly every MSE about why she or he is ordained. It results from unwillingness to grapple with the theology of ministry and of ordination.

The 'Sydney view', as Peter rightly suggests, presents an ill-thought out theology, which results in a priesthood and a diaconate reduced

to the carrying out of functions, for which, in themselves, there is no need for ordination. 'Incumbency' is a function, a job, and an often-bureaucratic one at that, for which no priestly sign is essential. If we believe that the gift and grace received through ordination - however 'high' or 'low' our theology of the sacraments may be - then we need to understand what that gift and grace are given for, what are the real and visible signs of priesthood and diakonia in the Church and in the world. (I do not exclude the possibility of arguing that ordination should be ruled out all together - is it needed for anyone to be an essential 'sign' of Christian ministry?).

Two issues in the article exercise me personally. One concerns selection and training for ministry - priesthood or permanent diaconate; the other the life-long nature of ordained ministry. It is not a new idea that training for the distinctive diaconate should be a distinctive matter. It happens in some parts of the world - on the European continent, even here in the catholic church in France - and in North America¹. It may be valid when the churches involved have a clear understanding of what ordained diaconate is and is for. In the Church of England - which is the only one I know well - we suffer from a lack of clarity about what any ordained ministry is for. Current discussion on the diaconate includes the issue of specific training. As for selection, experience shows that selectors have little understanding of diaconate and those who, at that early stage, feel called to this distinctive ministry, avoid saying so because of this lack of understanding.

I sit on both sides of the fence about the idea of 'separation'. I believe that we less and less train people to be priests, and have never trained people to be deacons. I would say the real meaning of diaconate is rarely touched on in most courses, which are, tellingly, often called 'ministerial training courses', presumably to appeal to all sensibilities. Perhaps it is right that we train ministers, and not priests and deacons. Specific or separate training might encourage further a functional view of priesthood and diaconate. One wonders what the diocese of Sydney intends by proposing separate selection and training for deacons - recruitment and 'job training' of functional, service orientated, assistant incumbents?

Something more needs to be done to debate, inform, discuss the theology of the diaconate and priesthood during the period leading to ordination. Even if we all train together, there comes a time when discussion should focus on one, on another and on both together (particularly since priests are importantly also ordained as deacons - the base ministry - and most of them are pleased to say that they are always deacons as well as priests). I would not suggest the complete separation of training, since I am not sure that, until the distinctive theology of diaconate and priesthood is chewed over, we can clarify to which order we are called. I was fortunate enough (if one can call it that) to have had opportunity to mull it all over. At the end of my ministerial training in 1984, I was made a deaconess. I thought I knew then that I wanted to be a priest if it became possible, because that was the only model I observed. In 1987, I was ordained deacon. There were still several years to go before priesthood was a possibility. During that time, I worked at the theology of diaconate, with others, and concluded that I really was a deacon, needed to be a deacon, especially as an MSE, and that the Church, even if it did not care to admit it, really needed me as a deacon as a sign and an encouragement to others to carry out their diakonia.

The idea that one may 'resign ... orders for a time' is, as it is to Peter, a major problem for me. It results from a completely functional view of ordained ministry, with the function is carried out only within the church organisation. This strikes right at the heart of MSE, but we have lived with this view for a long time, and have the confidence to shrug it off and get on with our work, an essential sign of our diaconate and priesthood.

One can long for the day when the Church has worked sufficiently on its theology of ministry to realise that not all is functional. Men and women whose ordained ministry is worked out through a 'church job' may indeed have to 'step down from their role' (i.e. function) for many reasons - ill-health, disappearance of the job, moving on and so on. Maybe a they might wish to relinquish a function to 'raise a family'. But the idea that priesthood or diaconate itself is relinquished either permanently or temporarily at such times is difficult for me to comprehend since, surely, neither is limited by function.

However, are there other ways in which the ordained priest or deacon can cease to be a priest or deacon? I have been struggling with this question. I am no longer employed in the work I used to do - work which made sense of ordination and the way of life for/to which I was ordained. I work now as a member of the sector of the community called 'retired' - I write, I do historical research, I work at integrating into French society, and, most importantly, I see my Christian ministry carried out in my work for Amnesty International (France). I still regard myself as an MSE (retired section) but I am, despite my views on the sacramental nature and sign of ordination, wondering if I am still an ordained deacon. I have come to live in France - there is no 'home' for me in the catholic church, especially in a provincial diocese in the northeast of the country. My nearest Anglican community is in Paris about 150 kms away (though I am in touch with that community, and its chaplain, and the Anglican bishop in Europe has welcomed me to his diocese). I am sure that in my daily life and work I exercise diakonia. But what has that to do with my ordination if there is no link with or mission to/from the Church?

I know many an elderly retired priest, some too incapacitated to celebrate the eucharist, speak of absolution or bless the Christian community in an overt way - yet none of them has ever indicated that he felt he was no longer a priest. The essence of their priesthood was still attached to them and they were in no doubt they were still priests.

But what of the deacon, whether old and incapacitated or, like myself, 'beyond the pale'? The Anglican ordinal has a poor description of ordained diakonia, but nonetheless, I am able no longer to do the things prescribed there. A further problem is that my understanding of ordained diaconate (as of all ordained ministry) derives its authenticity from the Church, particularly from the episcopate.

For me, the best understanding of it so far is one found in the Church of England's leaflet, 'Diaconate Renewed'ⁱⁱ. It includes the New Testament images of diakonos as bearer of a message, spokesperson, envoy, a go between entrusted with important tidings; as an agent, a person given a commission on behalf of some-

one in authority, fulfilling a vital task; an attendant to a person or household on whose behalf one performs various tasks. It was in this understanding that I wore my deacon's stole, ancient sign of the ambassador who travelled the boundaries carrying the message and (crucial to the MSE) bearing tidings back to the people/person who sent me.

I sense that I have lost my links with the 'household' (Christian congregation?) or the person (bishop?) who should authorise me and have therefore 'lost' my orders. Is it possible to cease to be priest or deacon when the world around one shifts so significantly, or one's own movements create this shift? I wonder if there are other ordained MSEs who are 'beyond the pale' for whatever reason who have thoughts on this dilemma. Meanwhile, I continue to think about it, and, as any convinced MSE, to get on with the diakonia, never mind the ordination.

' Here in France, I do not have with me all my papers on the distinctive diaconate. There will be others who have information more readily available and can provide international and UK denominational information.

ii It derives from the eye-opening biblical work of John Collins, a biblical scholar and teacher in Australia that the diocese of Sydney would do well to read! For instance, John Collins, Diakonia - re-interpreting the ancient sources, 1990 and Deacons and the Church, 2002, both published by Gracewing.

CHRISM Conferences

A discussion is proposed immediately after the AGM at the Summer Conference on the pattern of Conferences. For most of the past 12 years we have held weekend conferences in early spring (reflective) and in mid-summer (business and strategy). If you have any views on this pattern, or suggestions for future topics and venues, please either bring them along to Oxford, or contact the Secretary or Editor.

London Diocese tsunami effort

In the last edition we reported on the decision of London Diocese to send a team of specialists to help in the post-tsunami relief efforts in Sri Lanka. The team was led by MSE and CHRISM member Emma Loveridge, who has built up many contacts in the area through her business, "Wind, Sand and Stars." The team has now returned to the UK and there follows a summary of what they did.

A team of ten specialists was recruited quickly through Wind, Sand and Stars and St Mary's, Islington, consisting of:

- 1 Co-Directors Dr Emma Loveridge and Jessica Swift;
- 2 Counsellors / Psychotherapists Elizabeth Salmon and Sharon Ward;
- 3 Doctors Christopher Burrows and James Goodman;
- 4 Nurses Neil Macintosh and James Moore;
- 5 Security Civil Engineers Matthew Parsons and Alan McGrane.

As Emma puts it: "In conjunction with the Sri Lankan authorities we were able to pull together a small professional relief team for some specific medical, counselling and engineering help in the worst hit and affected areas in Sri Lanka. The team travelled to Sri Lanka for twelve days, taking not only essential skills but medical, food and shelter supplies.

"The project arose out of a request from the church in Sri Lanka for a specific type of assistance with agreement from the authorities. Many of the community leaders and pastors who survived lost their own children, yet were trying to operate refugee camps out of their remaining church buildings. Our brief was as follows: To take a team of nine integrated specialists into an already pinpointed area in Sri Lanka where relief is sparse for ten days. Our goal was to set up a system of trauma counselling, hygiene, primary care and medical clinics to enable key local people to work alongside us. We were to leave all equipment etc. in place and try to ensure the possibility of the work continuing with local organisation and staffing. The teams were experienced, committed and hand picked to include: 1 Team leader; 2 Doctors; 2 Nurses; 2 Trauma counsellors/

field medics; 2 Engineers / security / logistics.

“Colleagues and suppliers, as well as St Mary’s community, were extremely generous and approximately £55,000 pounds was raised in a week and £25,000 in kind in specifically requested equipment and medical supplies from Wind, Sand & Stars suppliers.”

The team took its own transport and drivers, so as to be self-sufficient. “Part of our aim was also to ensure that whatever we did was with the agreement of the local community and that all areas of our work were handed over to key individuals from the area or staying within the area for a significant period of time. This was to ensure that continuity was in place and that ongoing relief work was through and with the community itself.”

A full report is on the company website, www.windsandstars.co.uk. On the front page as you enter there is a latest news line – click on that and it will take you straight through to the Sri Lanka bit, where there is a .pdf file called ‘full report’.

It is well worth reading, telling the story of the mission, its contribution, and – most importantly – the stories of many with whom the team worked. Several of the team members have contributed reflections on the experience, and this one is typical:

“Different things washed over each of us, and different moments caught us unaware. It was well towards the end of our stay, after days of negotiating in the heat and days of listening to heartrending stories, that I saw a scene which tugged at my heart in a moment I least expected it. I was standing on the edge of the destroyed village, with no human being in sight, just standing quietly pondering the tasks for the rest of the day, when I saw one of the young orphaned boys of about 12. He had returned from the refugee camp alone to stake his claim to his family plot of land and was vigorously washing the clothes he owned and hanging them on the tree to dry. There was no other human being living here.

“Despite moments like this, watching the village start to move from a place of human defeat and misery to a place of hope and spirit

where lives could be rebuilt was hugely exciting and I cannot ever forget the courage of that young boy as well as so many others whose lives we were privileged to share for a short time."

Jim Cotter,

... now in Wales, reports that Cairns Publications continues to go from strength to strength and this year celebrates its 25th anniversary. A new development is the launch of a website, www.cottercairns.co.uk, which, Jim promises, will be about a lot more than advertising books. Jim is also heavily involved in the Small Pilgrim Places Network, www.smallpilgrimplaces.org.uk, promoting and widening knowledge of many ancient and holy places, particularly in the Celtic tradition.

CPAS

This year's 'You and Ministry' weekends have been arranged for:
May 20 - 22, Hassocks, nr. Brighton
September 23 - 25, Broadway, South Midlands,
November 18 - 20, Godalming, Surrey
December 2 - 4, Ilkley, Yorkshire See www.cpas.org.uk

The Spring 2005 edition of "On Call" includes an article by Simon Heathfield, Ministry Adviser, titled "When is a call not a call?" While good on discerning vocation it doesn't answer the question of vocation / call to what? Simon has hit on one truth MSEs will warm to though: "A vocation which never breaks out of the model it was formed in will never establish itself as authentic before God or truly engage with the people it seeks to serve. The biggest need in the UK today is people who will work out the creative and new thing God wants to do which is not the same as the parish up the road or the latest conference approach. The focus and motivation should be on the Master, not the model."

Ministry in Secular Employment is much more praxis than model, but the models, especially local church ministry, are what get focussed on.

Book Review 1

**'Invading Secular Space: Strategies for tomorrow's church',
by Dwight Smith and Martin Robinson.**

Monarch Books, 2003. 221 pages. ISBN 1 85424 640 2. £7.99.

Tim Key

The opening sentence in the Preface to 'Invading Secular Space' gives more than a hint as to the general thrust of this book, 'One of the great passions of both authors of this book is church planting.'

Indeed, Dr Dwight Smith is President of the somewhat strangely named organisation, 'Saturation Church Planting International', and Martin Robinson has previously published at least two books on the subject of church planting. Yes, church planting is certainly their 'thing' and a good proportion of the second part of this book is devoted to this general theme.

The authors are also particularly interested in leadership styles and they go into great detail in presenting examples of the type of leadership needed for a strategy involving intensive church planting. A variety of examples are given in the book, though a specific case study is outlined in some detail from the church in the Ukraine. Years of persecution and hardship had resulted in very slow growth for the church in the Ukraine. In 1990 there were approximately 1000 Protestant congregations left. Today, however, some fifteen years after the collapse of communism, there are apparently some 7,500 congregations and plans to plant many more (28,000, by 2015).

Whilst it is no doubt true that a vigorous scheme of church planting has been proven to be very effective in some parts of the world (for example, India, China and the Ukraine), I must admit that I was still left wondering if this really was a workable or practical idea for the UK (or the West, more generally). In a predominantly un-churched nation, with a large population, like India or China, there is no doubt wide scope for this kind of mission. In the UK, however, we already have far too many churches in our towns, cities and villages, many of which are greatly struggling to survive. We don't want any more churches here, we actually rather need less.

To be fair, the authors do address this question in the book. Their answer is broadly to suggest that church planting does not necessarily mean more churches, but the revitalisation of older congregations, or the planting of cell or house churches. Yet, I still remain to be convinced by their argument on this point. What is right for Asia or the countries of the former Soviet bloc, is not necessarily right for us.

In the earlier part of the book, there is a very good and honest description of the state of the church in the West today. A variety of reasons are given for the decline in church membership and attendance, which may be familiar to many, but which is helpfully summarised here.

What I found I was mostly in agreement with in this book, however, was its overall view of mission and what and where this should be in our world today. The basic premise of the book is neatly summed up on page 29, 'It can never be sufficient to constantly construct programmes designed to pull people into sacred space, we have to also consider how we might invade secular space.' The prime focus for mission today should not be the church but the world. The task of mission is also not something that should be the remit of a small group of people (e.g. the clergy), but all God's people, fully equipped for the task. Again, the case for this is made very well and very clearly in the book.

This book is certainly good in parts. Yet in the end I still found myself questioning the second part of the overall thrust. Perhaps it's me, but I find it hard to get so excited about the whole notion of church planting. And if it's true that the focus for mission today is, or should be, the world rather than the church, then this seems to me a somewhat strange emphasis for such a book.

Seen and heard

U.S. consultants visiting a computer service company in the U.K. recently announced: "Our aim is to eliminate duplicity in the organization". If only!

Book Review 2

“Who runs this place?

The Anatomy of Britain in the 21st Century”,

Anthony Sampson;

John Murray, 2004; ISBN 0 7195 6566 9; £7.99

Rob Fox

It is 40 years since veteran political journalist and writer Anthony Sampson published his first *“Anatomy of Britain”* and he completed the updates for the paperback edition of his latest just before his death last December. This is a fitting testament to a writer held in high regard by his peers, respect by political and business leaders, and whom – which can be said of few in the world of political journalism – was beholden to no-one.

The book itself is an assessment of where real political and economic power lie in Britain in the early 21st century, looking at a range of individuals, institutions and interest groups, evaluating them in relation to one another and looking at what has changed over the last 40 years. Sampson enjoyed access to key figures throughout the period. This combines with his thorough research and an incisive style to produce a book that is both a pleasure to read and highly informative. Each chapter is devoted to a particular power-base and is cleverly linked with the next; reading a chapter at a time pays dividends. Examined are: the Houses of Commons and Lords, the Monarchy, Political parties, Trades Unions, the Prime Minister, Cabinet, Whitehall, Treasury, Diplomats, Secret Services, Defence, Lawyers, Academia, Broadcasters, the Press, Bankers, the Bank of England, Pension Funds, Privatised Industries, Corporations, Accountants, Directors, and the ‘New Rich’.

There are, in Sampson's view, clear gainers and losers over the past 40 years, with few of the above enjoying a ‘middling’ performance. The main gainers have been the Prime Minister (he cites excellent sources on both Thatcher and Blair), the Treasury (which I can vouch for), the Secret Services and Defence (especially post 9/11), Lawyers, Pension Funds (who command far and away the largest financial clout), Corporations, Accountants, Directors and the ‘New Rich’. Some of the last have benefited hugely from privatisation, while the performance of privatised industry and services has been

decidedly mixed (as recent events at Rover have shown). The main losers he identifies as: Trades Unions (collapse in numbers and political influence), Whitehall (increasingly marginalized and dominated by the Treasury), Academia (much lower paid, underfunded and little valued), and Broadcasters (he charts the recent assaults on the BBC with aplomb, notes the demise of regional television, but also the rise of he whom *Private Eye* calls 'The Dirty Digger').

Sampson states that he does not look at the Church(es) as he feels he does not have the necessary expertise or understanding, which shows he has good judgement. One interesting observation he does make though, as the Churches lament falling attendances, is that the last 40 years have been characterised by an extraordinary public withdrawal from voluntary activities of all kinds. He draws attention to the loss of members to the two largest political parties (Conservatives down from 2.1 million to 310,000, Labour from 850,000 to 240,000). In this landscape the Churches, whilst far from bucking the trend, have not as badly as they think.

There has been a clear shift of political power away from Parliament and Party to the Prime Minister and his / her inner circle, increasingly made up of unaccountable advisors, and Sampson marshals his arguments thoroughly here. He also has a thorough command of the debates surrounding the Iraq war, showing how the concentration of decision-making in the hands of a very few has under-mined not only Parliament but also the Foreign Office, Diplomats in the field, and the BBC. In his 'circles' map of power in modern Britain, the two largest are the media (largely the Press) and the, increasingly non-British rich. He shows how under Gordon Brown's Chancellorship, 'non-domiciled' foreign nationals can live in Britain and not be taxed on their foreign earnings (even if not taxed elsewhere, and unlike UK nationals); this has benefited, for example, Chelsea Football Club, but made Britain a tax haven for the super-rich, with no discernable benefits for the 'ordinary' Briton.

Another trends Sampson reveals is the increasing separation between investors and investment. The proportion of investment coming from institutions rather than individuals has doubled (to

over half) in 40 years, much of it coming from Pension Funds themselves. He exposes the often lamentable management of these funds by Trustees, who are often more sensitive to the demands of employers than present and future pensioners. He notes also that the circle of people recruited as Directors of public companies has narrowed considerably over the same period, with golden handshakes helping make fortunes for many whose track record in corporate governance is less than impressive. Particular attention is given also to regulation, especially in corporate governance and finance, highlighting a number of weaknesses. Even post BCCI, Enron, WorldCom and a host of smaller and less publicised failures in the UK, there are serious flaws in procedures. One of the most important in my experience is continuing the failure to separate incompatible functions: auditors working in Directors' interests, not shareholders, financial advisers earning fees advising the Government on PFI projects and advising bidders for the self-same contracts. The Accountancy profession is not for nothing a big gainer in power and wealth.

For anyone who wants to deepen their understanding on just how Britain ticks, or just wants a readable overview, this book is essential reading. There are a few points where the reader could reasonably take issue with Sampson's conclusions, but to refute them completely he would have to be as thorough and as well-informed, a mammoth task.

We planted it - now let's make it grow

Margaret Joachim

As we reported six months ago, the **Michael Ranken Library** now exists at the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine, and can be consulted at any sensible time (a phone call in advance would be helpful to alert the staff that you are coming). However, at the moment the library contains comparatively few books, although there is plenty of shelf space. If it is to be a useful resource, and even develop to be the definitive repository of MSE wisdom, it needs to grow.

CHRISM doesn't have the funds to embark on an extensive programme of purchases (after all, we operate on your subscriptions) so we've come up with some other cunning plans.

On the CHRISM website you can find a book list. Some books (marked) are already in the library. We would like to add the others, some of which are out of print, and also keep up to date with relevant new publications. There are several ways in which this could be done:

- 1 If you already have any of the books on the list, would you be willing to give them to the library? (Think of the lovely space that would leave on your bookshelves!)
- 2 Could you buy a particular book for the library (perhaps to remember an ordination anniversary or an inspiring friend or mentor?) It could be a new book, or could be the excuse for a splendid fossick in some second-hand bookshops.
- 3 Would you be prepared to make a donation (one-off or regular) to be put towards book purchases? This could be gift-aided to make it even more valuable, and would be the best way of helping to keep the library up to date.

Your Library also needs YOU!

One of the more valuable aspects of the library will be material which has actually been generated by MSEs. At the moment there are some gaping holes which you may be able to fill. So:

- 1 If your networking group/diocesan MSE chapter has published a set of MSE stories or similar material;
- 2 If you have published a paper, constructed a course or study guide, or devised a special liturgy on an MSE-related theme ...

please send a copy to me now.

This will be valuable material as it demonstrates how real MSEs actually interpret their roles and think about their ministry - closer to the coal-face than the academic treatises. Please don't wait for someone else to do this - it might never happen. Duplication won't be a problem, but not having it at all would be a pity.

If you can help in any of these ways, please get in touch. (Email

margaret.joachim@eds.com or phone/write - details on the inside back cover of the Journal). You can send books to me directly, but it would be helpful to agree in advance what you intend to give, if only so that I can avoid being deluged with copies of the same book.

An index of publications in the Library is now on the website. It is in excel format and is read-only. To sort on any of the fields, copy the spreadsheet to your computer and save it under another name; it is then sortable.

John Paul II and the Worker Priests

The recent passing of John Paul II is worth marking with a comment on where he stood on the Worker Priest movement. As Pope he did not do a great deal to publicly affirm it, but then neither did he seek to suppress it, as Pius XII had done.

Karol Wojtyla stood rather in tradition of John XXIII, who gave a nod and a wink to the post-World War II "worker-priest experiment," which trained initially French priests to work in factories, organize strikes, and participate in violent protests against Parisian factory owners. As a young priest in Poland, he thought the worker-priest movement so positive a development that he wrote an article defending it (See Jonathan Kwitny, *Man Of The Century, The Life and Times Of Pope John Paul II*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1997, pp.114-115).

He wrote of his own experience in *Gift and Mystery*: "My experience had not been that of a 'worker-priest' but of a 'worker-seminarian.' Having worked with my hands, I knew quite well the meaning of physical labour. Every day I had been with people who did heavy work. I came to know their living situations, their families, their interests, their human worth, and their dignity. I personally experienced many kindnesses from them."

Let us pray that the new Pope knows this too, and actively supports worker priests.

Resources

MODEM has published a number of resources of interest to MSEs, all of which can be obtained from Peter J Bates, MODEM Treasurer, Carselands, Woodmancote, Henfield, West Sussex, BN5 9SS:

- 1 Three books published by MODEM:
Management and Ministry; Leading, Managing, Ministering; and, new in 2004, *Creative Church Leadership*.
- 2 *What they don't teach you at Theological College*, by Malcolm Grundy.
- 3 *The Spirited Business*, by Georgeanne Lamont.
- 4 *The Spirit at Work Phenomenon*, by Sue Howard and David Wellbourn, also new in 2004.

MODEM's website is at: <http://users.powernet.co.uk/harpham/>

ICF has just launched its latest theme booklet, *Putting Faith to Work – Six Point Plan*, penned by Vice-Chair Carol Williams. It is described as a resource for all those who are seeking to work out the meaning of their faith in their daily lives.

It is a short A5 booklet and contains bullet-pointed suggestions for action areas rather than a detailed plan. Copies are available from Ann Wright, at St. Matthew's House, 100 George Street, Croydon, CR0 1PJ. Website: www.icf-online.org

A new website called *Getting God to Work* (www.gg2w.org.uk) has recently been launched by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity and Christian Viewpoint for Men. It features workplace fellowship groups and is aimed at putting Christians in touch with fellow believers in their workplaces, with information about weekday meetings, nationwide events and links to various workplace organisations.

Church House Bookshop, the official outlet for Church of England publications, still has a number of items of interest to MSEs, and it is possible to order on-line, at <http://www.chbookshop.co.uk>, including:

- 1 *Review of Clergy Terms of Service - Report of the first phase of work* (2004), £6.00.
- 2 *Statistics of Licensed Ministers 2002* (2003), £3.00.
- 3 *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church - The Summary*. The summary of the report of the working party for the Structure and Funding of Ordination Training (2003), GS Misc 710, £3.95.
- 4 *Mission and Ministry (2nd Edition)*. The Churches' Validation Framework for Theological Education. New ecumenical edition (2003), £6.00.
- 5 *ABM Policy Paper No. 5 - Regulations for Non-Stipendiary Ministry* (1996), £1.20.
- 6 *No. 31 - Ordained Ministry in Secular Employment Reflections on the History and Theology* (1989), £1.00.

The Good Work Project is directed by Howard Gardner, a Harvard University psychologist and supports an interesting website at www.goodworkproject.org Its latest report is *Making Good: How Young People Cope With Moral Dilemmas at Work*, by a group led by Wendy Fischman. Gardner himself is author of *Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics meet*, Basic Books, New York, 2001.

Copies in booklet format of the **2004 Hugh Kay Memorial Lecture** can be obtained from CAFE, 24 Greencoat Place, London, SW1P 1BE. The Lecture, titled 'Must Business cost the Earth?', was given by the Right Reverend Dr James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool.

7th SLIM (South London Industrial Mission) Annual lecture 2004: Service, solidarity and self: a Christian ethic in a competitive workplace, which was given by Edward Lucas, Britain correspondent of The Economist magazine, is available on SLIM's website (www.industrialmission.org) along with many other papers and resources.

Edward Lucas is an economist by training and a journalist by profession. He has worked for the (non-profit) BBC, as well as for daily and weekly commercial publications, most recently The Economist. In 1992 he founded and ran a newspaper in the Baltic states. The themes of the lecture are:

What does holiness at work mean? How should Christian employees balance their duty to the employer, to colleagues, to customers and to themselves? Does a competitive, achievement-oriented work environment aid ethical workplace behaviour, or hinder it?

The Northwest Forum of Faiths was launched in February 2005 to highlight the contribution that faith communities make to local economies in the North West of England. Amongst others its aims include: to promote the involvement of faith communities in public policy, promote healthy spiritual values and integrated communities within the regional economic agenda, highlight the expertise and experience of faith communities in caring for the most vulnerable, to provide a consultation mechanism. The Forum's work and reports are detailed on its website, www.faithnorthwest.org.uk

Diary

The Christian Association of Business Executives, in association with MODEM, ICF, LICC, St Paul's Institute, CHRISM and others, invite you to the 9th CABA Lecture, by Mark McAllister, Managing Director, Acorn Oil & Gas Ltd:

'Business Leadership Today – a Christian Perspective'

On Thursday 26 May 2005, at 6.30 for 7.00 pm at St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG (close to Liverpool St station).

The Meeting will be preceded by CABA's AGM at 6.00 pm.

The 2005 *Baptist World Alliance Congress*, the centenary Congress of the BWA, marking the inauguration of the Alliance in 1905 in London, will be held at the International Conference Centre in the UK. The Congress is held every five years and around 10-15,000 Baptists will converge on Birmingham, July 26-31 2005. If you are likely to be attending and would like to take along a supply of CHRISM materials, please contact the Editor.

2005 Annual Tentmaking Conference

November 4 - 6, 2005 in Mundelein, Illinois

Co-sponsored by Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (APT) and

National Association for the Self-Supporting Active Ministry (NASSAM).

Mark your calendar for this tentmaker gathering, which will take place at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in the Chicago area suburb of Mundelein. Further details from Phil Aspinall.

'An Honest Church', the 2005 Bishop (Ted) Wickham Lecture. 7.30 on Monday, 23 May, in Manchester Cathedral. Speaker this year is Rev Dr Andrew Shanks, Canon Theologian at Manchester Cathedral and author of 'God and Modernity' (2000), and 'What is Truth? Towards a theology of poetics' (2001).

Christians@Work ...

.. holds its annual conference on Saturday 11 June, from 09.30 at Rugby Baptist Church, £20 for members, £25 non-members. The theme is 'Creation & Work: A Biblical Perspective', and invited speakers are Pastor Owen Jones, from Gorseinon, South Wales, Professor Andy McIntosh, Chair of Thermodynamics and Combustion Theory, Leeds University, and Dr David Kellett, Croydon, who works in the field of human resource management.

Further details from office@christiansatwork.org.uk

Interfaith Worker Justice ...

.. is the new name for the US National Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice, and runs a website: www.nicwj.org
Its 2005 conference is 22-24 May, in Chicago.

Manchester Diocese is holding an ***OLM, NSM, MSE and Reader Weekend*** at Foxhill Conference Centre, Frodsham, Cheshire, 2-4 September, cost £90. The leader is Revd Canon Andrew Clitheroe, Director of Training, Blackburn Diocese. Your intrepid editor and assorted other troublesome MSEs will no doubt be in attendance!

Further details from hfallone@manchester.anglican.org

The Northern Men's Convention is at The Armitage Centre (part of the University complex) on Saturday 15 May. Speakers are: Justin Mote, Director of Training, North West Ministry Training Course, Dave Burke, leader of a new church plant near Sunderland's Stadium

of Light, Hugh Palmer, Vicar of Christ Church, Fulwood, Sheffield, and Nigel Style, a minister from Nottingham. A number of seminars are also planned and further details can be found at www.christianconventions.org.uk

Diocese of Wenchester

Rob Fox

What do you mean, "Never heard of it"? If I read the map on the website, (<http://www.dioceseofwenchester.co.uk/index2.htm>) correctly, the ancient Diocese of Wenchester lies in the Province of Canterbury, to the east of the Diocese of Chichester.

The current Lord Bishop is The Rt. Revd. Roderick Humphrey Latitudinarian, who is ably supported by his Secretary, Pansy Gigglesworth III (Ms). The first church on the site of the Cathedral was constructed on 909AD and is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle written by Herphastus, the dancing monk of Trickling Down (which monastery was dissolved by Richard III in 1485 after the Battle of Wenchester Plain due to the monks' coddling of the enemy archers), who states that this Cathedral dedicated to Saint Mary was begun by Bishop Crastin Poque and dedicated on the Feast of Saint Decumen in the fifth year of his consecration. By now you have probably twigged that this is a spoof diocese. And cracker it is too!

The site has been constructed with a great deal of loving care and humour. There is a great deal about the Cathedral and the diocese, and a link to the website of The Society for the Promotion and Inculcation of Theology (S.P.I.T.). One of my favourite sections is on The Refectory, a typical cathedral café, of which Delia Smyth (sic) says: "The location of this Refectory should be burnt into the mind of every lover of fine food." Do visit; it's hilarious!

And finally – Weapons of Math Instruction!

At New York's Kennedy airport recently, an individual - later discovered to be a public school teacher - was arrested trying to board a flight while in possession of a ruler, a

protractor, a slide rule, and a calculator. At a morning press conference, the U.S. Attorney General disclosed that he believes the man to be a member of the notorious al-gebra movement. He is being charged by the FBI with carrying weapons of math instruction.

"Al-gebra is a fearsome cult," he declared. "They seek average solutions by means and extremes, and sometimes go off on tangents in search of absolute value. They use secret code names like 'x' and 'y' and refer to themselves as 'unknowns,' but we have determined they belong to a common denominator of the axis of medieval with co-ordinates in every country. As the Greek philanderer Isosceles used to argue, there are three sides to every triangle."

When asked to comment on the arrest, the President stated, "If God had wanted us to have better weapons of math instruction, He would have given us more fingers and toes. I am gratified that our government has shown us a sine that it is intent on protracting us from these math-dogs, who are willing to disintegrate us with calculus disregard. Murky statisticians love to inflict plane on every sphere of influence. Under the circumferences, we must differentiate their root, make our point, and draw the line."

The President warned, "These weapons of math instruction have the potential to decimal everything in their math on a scalene never before seen, unless we become exponents of a Higher Power and begin to factor in random facts of vertex."

The Attorney General concluded, "As our Great Leader would say, read my ellipse. Here is one principle he is uncertain of: though they continue to multiply, their days are numbered as the hypotenuse tightens."

CHRISM - CHRistians In Secular Ministry

Notice of the 2005 Annual General Meeting Plater College, Oxford, Saturday, 23 July

The following business will be conducted:

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Note of the eleventh A.G.M., held on 1st August, 2004, at The Royal Foundation of St Katharine, London.
3. Matters Arising.
4. Report of the Presiding Moderator (Felicity Smith).
5. Report by the Secretary (Phil Aspinall).
6. Report on Membership (Richard Dobell).
7. To receive the Report and Accounts of the Christians in Secular Employment Trust (CHRISSET), presented by Richard Dobell, and approve the motion to continue with the present financial arrangements.
8. To set the rate(s) of subscriptions for the year to 31 December, 2006.
9. To elect the following: *(see Note 1)*
 - (i) One Moderator (to serve for three years, Presiding from the 2006 A.G.M.);
 - (ii) The Editor of the Journal;
 - (iii) Three Committee members.
10. To nominate a member of CHRISM for appointment by the Trustees of CHRISSET as one of their number.
11. To agree the date and place of the next A.G.M.
12. Remarks by the Presiding Moderator for 2005-6 (Adrian Holdstock) and closure of the meeting.

NOTE 1

Management Committee - Present Members:

Moderators: Jean Skinner (elected until 2005), Felicity Smith
(elected until 2006), Adrian Holdstock (elected until 2007)

Secretary: Phil Aspinall

Editor of the Newsletter: Robert Fox

Elected members: Peter King, Catherine Binns, Ruth Brothwell

Co-opted: Peter Johnson

CHRISSET representative: Margaret Joachim

CHRISSET Treasurer: Richard Dobell

CHRISM

CHRistians In Secular Ministry

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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