

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.

Contents	Page
Editorial	2
100 Editions!	4
Keith Holt and Stan Frost	4
Elizabeth Bonham	7
Introducing: Susan Cooper, CHRISM Secretary	8
A New Journey	10
Peter King	10
Tired and Devotional	11
CHRISM Survey of MSEs	12
Letter to the Editor	18
Adrian Holdstock	18
Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers	19
Phil Aspinnall	19
MSEs of the Old Catholic Church of Germany	21
Phil Aspinnall	21
Mission in London's economy	23
CHRISM Theology Working Group	24
Adrian Holdstock	24
Self-employed Consultants	26
A Development Officer for CHRISM	27
Adrian Holdstock	27
New CofE Director of Mission and Public Affairs	28
A Lent Course with a difference	29
News and dates	30
Resources	32
2007 CHRISM Reflective weekend	33
2007 CHRISM Conference and AGM	33
International Worker Priest Conference	34
Pentecost 2007	34
Phil Aspinnall	34
A view from 3006	35
Robert Foreman	35
A DVD worth watching	39
Norma McKenzie	39
The Woodpecker might have to go!	40

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The views expressed in this Journal are those of the author unless otherwise stated. If you would like to reproduce any items in another publication, please contact the Editor.

Editorial

When I took over as Editor of this Journal at the back end of 2000, keeping up the high standards set by my predecessor, Dorrie Johnson, was a tough act. As time went by it I became aware that the 100th edition was not that far over the horizon and that I might have the honour and privilege of seeing "Ministers-at-Work" into its second century. I have made it clear from a while now that I'd like to stand down at the next AGM, so we do need a new Editor. Given that the AGM is now at the end of September, that means that I'll produce the October edition, and I'm a happy to assist with the January 2008 edition. By then I'll have done 7 years, which is, I think, the longest editorial stint in our 25 years, so you all deserve a change! Thus far there has not exactly been a stampede of volunteers interested in what the role entails, and it would be better to have a longer period of shadowing. If you are at all interested, do contact me – I promise to treat all enquiries in absolute confidence!

We have come a long way since "A Newsletter among Ministers-at-Work and others concerned" was first launched by Michael Ranken, as is described by Keith Holt (with input from Stan Frost) and Elizabeth Bonham. It is a pleasure to have many of the 'originals' are still with us and still flying the flag for MSE. There is still much for those of us who came on the scene later, in the '90s and noughties, to learn about the origins of MSE and CHRISM, so their contributions are very much appreciated. I love listening to our 'more mature' members, and them a great deal on my own MSE journey. I am indebted too to those who have worn the mantle of Editor before me, and established the basis of a cracking good Journal: Michael Ranken, Nicholas von Benzon, Will Baines, Stan Frost, and Dorrie.

I regularly receive notes (by normal as well as e-mail) from readers saying how much they appreciate the Journal, and these are greatly encouraging: thank you very much for your contributions and appreciation. One such after the last edition was from Bishop Stephen Lowe, whose appointment as Bishop for Urban Life and Faith we covered in the last edition. Do continue to remember Stephen in your prayers, and also Malcolm Brown, newly appointed

as Director of Mission and Public Affairs for the Church of England. As a reader of this Journal and incisive writer on issues affecting MSEs, Malcolm promises to be an interesting and excellent choice.

Our roving ambassador Phil Aspinall has been 'at large' once again, and he contributes informative articles on gatherings of fellow MSEs in the USA and Germany. The annual Pentecost gathering of European Worker Priests this year comes to the UK and CHRISM is heavily involved in the organisation and hosting. We particularly invite your input to the discussions at the meeting, through responding to a number of questions put in Phil's third article, which also has more details of the event.

One area CHRISM has always been keen to develop is theology of and around MSE, and Adrian Holdstock invites your contributions in his first article. After steady growth in circulation over the years I've edited the journal, numbers sent out plateau-ed at a steady 300 last year. The Committee therefore think that we may benefit from a Development Officer; again we invite your thoughts.

The Coventry MSE 'cell' has developed (and effectively used) a Lent course with a slant towards ministry in the workplace. Felicity Smith explains more and is the contact for obtaining copies. I also invited the seemingly growing band of self-employed consultants to send me their details, and those who have I detail on page 27. I know there are more of you out there, so do contact me!

Robert Foreman, and Organist friend of Adrian Holdstock, takes a critical look at today's society through the lens of a thousand years in the future. I have an image of one day several centuries in the future a historian beavering through an ancient archive called "The Michael Ranken Memorial Library" (incidentally housed at the Royal Foundation of St, Katharine, where we are holding our summer Conference and AGM) and examining copies of a yellowed journal. Will they find a historical curiosity? Or perhaps the early stirrings of a great revival of the Christian faith, when it finally learned that God's creativity and grace is not confined to sacred buildings or liturgy? What mark MSE makes is up to us, as servants of God.
Happy New Year!
Rob

100 Editions!

Keith Holt and Stan Frost

We welcome the New Year with a celebration of the outline story of Chrism! It seems right not to claim too much for our efforts as space is limited and we are sure to have forgotten something, or decided not to mention some deserving person. Hope you enjoy the narrative.

The 100 editions of the Newsletter/Journal could have been 100 years in the sense that the story really has its roots in the theological upheavals of the 19th century in Europe, including Britain, and in the international violence of the 20th century. Post world war two the movement towards new understandings of the word "Church" and a re-appraisal of the relationship between Christian teaching and the world in which Christians find themselves day by day accelerated. In 1955 the late George MacLeod, founder of the Iona Community, wrote (unpublished) "God is the Life of life". Perhaps that deep wisdom reflects a little of the mood of change in the post-war world. Anyway, the period 1943—1980 is splendidly described in John Mantle's book "Britain's First Worker Priests" (ISBN 0-334-02798-5) published by SCM in 2000. The book is a good read and fascinating background to the origins of Chrism, if you find that subject appealing.

Another piece of the background is the foundation of the Southwark Ordination Course in 1960 by Bishop Mervyn Stockwood at Southwark with his Bishop of Woolwich, John Robinson. Many of the early graduates of that course saw themselves as Ministers in Secular Employment MSE, including Michael Ranken. The Southwark Priest-worker Chapter was formed soon afterwards.

I have mislaid the first edition, but the second edition of the "Letter of ... A Newsletter among Ministers-at-Work and others concerned" is dated May 1982, and published by the late Michael Ranken. The content is pithy, informative and thought provoking, as ever! It was reported that: "Dr. Moses Tay, who entered the self-supporting ministry in 1977 is to be the new Bishop of Singapore". In 2007 England is still waiting! Then, and for many years to follow, the

Newsletter's front page carried, courtesy of the pen of Harry Hill, a wonderful cartoon of a "dog-collared" person doing an ordinary secular job.

It was around this time that a group of NSMs who saw themselves as having a work-focussed vocation began to meet at the Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside, in the city of London. Canon Gerald Hudson was the incumbent part of the period. Subsequently the meetings were transferred to a venue next door to St. Andrew by the Wardrobe, also in the city, and from there to either Anthony Winter's flat (he was Hon. Treasurer at the time) or to Anthony and Vickie Hurst's home in Victoria, where it retained the title of the "Wardrobe Group").

Out of these gatherings came the thinking and planning which led to the first Conference for NSMs held at Nottingham University from 6/8 April, 1984. Organisers included Michael Ranken, Canon Hudson, Christopher Martin, Patrick Vaughan, Michael Skinner, and David Gill. Another name that comes to mind from this time is that of Elizabeth Bonham, Chrism Membership secretary for many years, and one of several early women enthusiasts. Beginning in the early 1980s it became usual for a Bishop passing through London, or working in the area to join in some Wardrobe Group evenings. In the Newsletter of July 1985 Bishop Kenneth Woolcombe reported on the Archbishop's residential for Bishops, held in June that year. The Bishop said he had been encouraged to continue his supportive role in, with and under the MSE, if that is their wish. Bishop Martin Wharton, now of Newcastle, and Bishop David Smith, later of Bradford, continued this tradition. Thus grew the practice of nominating a Bishop to have a special interest in MSE.

Similarly in the 1980s there were specific contributions from the Newsletter readership if time allowed, and from the Wardrobe Group, about the growth of NSM in the Anglican Church, and to the development of central regulations for NSM ministry. By 1987 the Wardrobe Group consisted of Bp. Kenneth Woolcombe, Chairman, Will Baynes, Nicholas Von Benzon, Deirdre Palk, Michael Ranken, Michael Skinner, Timothy Tyndall, Bp. Stephen Verney, Vice-Chair, Anthony Winter, and Barry Wright.

The Newsletter reported in 1986 that there were "Chapters of MSE in a number of Anglican Dioceses." Michael Ranken was commissioned as Dean for MSE in Guildford that year, whilst Bath and Wells, Birmingham, Canterbury, Rochester, and Southwark had Chapters. A number of other Episcopal areas also had regular or occasional meetings. In 1986 "Chriset", the Christians in Secular Employment Trust, made a grant of £100.00 to encourage the group of MSEs based around the Elephant and Castle in London to launch a newsletter called "Shades of Grey" edited by Anthony Hurst and Keith Holt. Paul Nicolson, still a Chriset Trustee, reported on the financial results of the Nottingham Conference in Newsletter 11 of 1984.

The 1980s saw increasing interest in MSE from the Methodist and other Churches, as well as stronger links with our European colleagues, and the self-supporting ordained ministry groups NASSAM and the Presbyterian Tentmakers, in the USA. We must not forget the arrival of the first Church of England women Deacons in the late 1980s, after the Measure of 1985. But it was not until 1994 that the first women in the Church of England were Priested. Meanwhile other countries and other Christian groups were further ahead. All this contributed to the growth of Chrism and to the continuing debates centred on what the focus of Chrism should be after almost 100 Editions!

Back in November 1991, the then Rev. Canon Professor Rowan Williams addressed an "Oasis Day" for Southwark MSEs. It is a splendid sign of continuity that Rowan, as the Archbishop is now our Patron!

National Conferences continued regularly after Nottingham and reflective weekends evolved from their beginnings at Sutton Courtenay Abbey, with the support of Bp. Stephen Verney, to the regular programme feature they are now. The Conference at Rydal Hall in the Lake District in July 1992, was the 5th National MSE/NSM gathering. There were friends from abroad including Marc Laurent from the French Mission, Len Hornick of the USA Tentmakers, and Isolde Boehm from the German Lutheran Church. But the Conference was notable for the decisions it took to adopt a statement of

our mission as MSEs, and secondly to form a national, permanent association of Ministers in Secular Employment. Firm proposals were to be tabled at the Manchester Conference in 1993. This of course was the foundation of Chrism, as it became known. Newsletter 43 records and reproduces the "Agreed Statement of the First National Conference of MSE-1984", which made the decisions of 1992 possible. The people who came to the Rydal Hall event expressed many different views, and the vote to form an Association was not unanimous, but it was very positive, and Chrism goes forward!

And from Elizabeth Bonham:

"This means nothing to me" said Tim (*sounds like the beginning of a first reading book, doesn't it?*) "Why don't you have it?" 'IT' was an early edition of the newsletter, which certainly did mean something to me.

"Michael", says I "I've got a computer. Would you like me to bring it to the conference?" "Yes" says Michael Ranken. (*It is a first, reader!*) There is a rumour that Michael could say no but no-one heard him.

By which means we managed to produce a written statement after the first national conference, by Michael, Michael Skinner and I staying up until the early hours photocopying and stapling like mad. In mentioning the first conference, there were about 119 attendees, of which 6 were women, a scenario which was interesting and on which I will make no further comment.

While the conferences - particularly with the Saturday afternoon visits - were and still are important events, the reflective weekends with the Saturday walks, are equally valuable in that we organise them to suit where we are coming from, without the need to explain our positions. Plenty of time to be quiet and reflect, with thoughtful and sometimes challenging theology in thoughtful and challenging venues.

Memories include Marc Laurent wrestling with his angel and remark-

ing that he liked coming to England because he got kissed - something which rarely happened to "an elderly catholic priest in France", agape, Felicity and tea towels, pork pies, wine and laughter, Renee and Henri, tap dancing, traffic jams, Virgin trains, drawing up the constitution Jim and his nemotodes. Welcoming fellow travellers on the working road, supporting the despairing, rejoicing in finding like minded souls, watching people relax once they realise they have reached a safe haven.

Railing at the hierarchy, button holing anyone wherever and whenever the opportunity arises, to carry on explaining yet again what our form of ministry is about and that there is plenty of room for all. Perhaps our function is to nudge and keep the wheel turning, not trying to reinvent it, but perhaps a redesign might be possible?

As for me, workwise I have left my job of 18 years in a firm of chartered accountants (they relocated and I chose not to go with them). For the present I am secretary to a solicitor, but retirement is definitely on the horizon. I have my bus pass and just might become one of those little old ladies who dawdle in the street at lunchtime blocking the way to the sandwich shop.

CHRISM will change because it is an organisation of questing people who are continually pushing boundaries while attempting to work within rules and regulations, of both church (whatever/ wherever) and workplace. It is no bad thing to be a little irritant or flavour in the pottage of ministry.

Introducing: Susan Cooper, CHRISM Secretary

I am not quite sure how I got elected as Honorary Secretary of CHRISM, but the election was not as hotly contested as the one I had to undergo when I was re-elected in autumn 2005 to represent London as a lay member of General Synod.

As you may have guessed, I am a member of the Church of England. I am a Reader in my local parish of Pinner in the Willesden Area of London. Our local bishop, Pete Broadbent, is known for sporting purple hair at Spring Harvest (it was often green or orange

when he was an archdeacon).

In my spare time, and more lucratively, I am an actuary working for the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) and, therefore, am, also, a Civil Servant. My small section of half a dozen actuaries advises overseas insurance regulators on actuarial and other aspects of insurance supervision. Most of our work is carried out at our desks in London and much use is made of e-mail, fax and couriers to keep in contact. In October, I travelled to Beijing to the annual conference of the International Association of Insurance Supervisors. The conference material was sufficiently relevant to count as CPD (continuing professional development). But the conference was also a major marketing opportunity to meet in one gathering most of our clients and potential clients – from Cyprus to Chile and from Sri Lanka to Saudi Arabia. I did not have much time to sight see, but I did learn of the phenomenal rate of growth in the insurance industry in China – a sign of the rapid development in the economy in the most highly populated country in the world.

I average about one overseas trip a year, which about as glamorous as I want the job to be, but I do value the opportunity to visit developing and emerging nations such as Jordan and China. I try when possible to make contact with the local Anglican church – where I have always received a good welcome. I failed to make contact with local Christians in China, despite being in Beijing at the same time as the Archbishop of Canterbury.

GAD actuaries work for territories with small insurance industries, where the supervisor cannot justify employing a full time actuary. We also work for emerging economies, which are developing their insurance markets and supervision. Funding agencies, such as, the World Bank, may support the work, or we may be employed directly by the supervisor and part of our role would be to help the regulatory staff to build up their own body of expertise.

Recently and sadly, through attending a memorial service for an actuary the same age as myself, I have discovered an organisation seeking to encourage people to qualify as actuaries in Africa. One of its sponsors is the Church Mission Society – the first time that I have

come across a mission agency showing an interest in either actuar-
ies or insurance.

I look forward to my time as Honorary Secretary and the opportu-
nity to work the lively team that make up the committee of
CHRISM. I hope to use my membership of General Synod and con-
sequent visibility to my own diocesan dignitaries to forward the in-
terests of those trying to exercise their ministry and work for the
Kingdom in their own workplace.

Susan Cooper

A New Journey

Peter King, Presiding Moderator

We enter into the New Year, with its new challenges and opportuni-
ties. We launch forth upon the uncharted waters with Jesus in the
boat of faith.

Any journey requires two perspectives. There is the longer or
wider contextual view, to know the direction, destination and over-
all purpose for the journey. There is also the need to focus upon
the detail as to how that journey will be achieved, the arrange-
ments, the step by step itinerary and the practical matters to at-
tend to closer home.

As with the Wise men we need to ever have before us the vision of
the star and of the incarnation of our Lord. We hope to see a
world brought into being and sustained by a loving creator. In a
world often clouded by sectarian violence and prejudice, we need
to rejoice in the loving support of our family and of the family of all
believers. We need to celebrate the gift of human dignity. In a
world often darkened by fear and by greed we need to remember
the loving purposes of God. In a world of poverty, marginalisation
and disease we do well to remember the humility, vulnerability and
suffering of Jesus. When we feel overwhelmed by the burdens and
cares of our lives and of the world we remember with gratitude the
tools which we have been given, of grace, love, forgiveness, hope
and peace.

The journey of the wise men was a long one searching for Jesus. We do not have to repeat that journey as in the incarnation Jesus comes to us where we are. He is our companion on every journey we make.

Often we are too impatient for change to take place. We make fine and bold resolutions and feel deflated and weak when they fail. We need to attend as much to the fine detail in our lives as to the grand design. To quote the Chinese philosopher Te Ching: "accomplish the great tasks by a series of small acts."

The Gospel deals with real and particular issues. How do we respond to weakness, fear or uncertainty? Do we think about the quality, balance and purpose of our living, whether individually or collectively? What burdens from last year can we leave behind to ease our new journey? Do our routines entangle us or give us freedom? Are there fences to build or failures to come to terms with? Are there opportunities for service or to do things more constructively?

We are not alone in our journey. We have the Angels; the Saints; the Faithful Departed; our family and friends; the wider families of the congregation, community and beyond. To quote Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations: "Things get better when enough people decide that they should get better. Things change when ordinary people come together in a common purpose."

We are citizens of earth and heaven, children of promise and stewards of God's grace and of his world. I am looking forward to making some exciting and fulfilling journeys in 2007. Are you?

Tired and Devotional

For those with a mischievous bent, Shop of Fools, "The magazine of Christian Unrest" has helpfully reproduced the new *Southwark Christmas Service* on it's website. For the full flavour visit http://shop-of-fools.com/Features/2006/southwark_service.html, or visit the nearest Irish embassy.

CHRISM Survey of MSEs

Rob Fox

During 2006 we serialised an excellent piece of research by Tim Key, *Reflections on the Non-Stipendiary Ministry*, a comprehensive survey of Non-Stipendiary Ministers in the United Reformed Church. In the autumn we extended this work by undertaking a slightly modified version of the survey Tim used, distributed among CHRISM members and made available on the website. This article summarises the responses and makes comparisons to the findings in Tim's work. A second article, in the next edition, draws some tentative conclusions. I make it clear at the outset that the interpretation of the data and the conclusions are my own!

A total of 38 completed replies were received; more than I had feared but less than hoped for. On a distribution of 300 copies of the Journal this is could have been better, but is a large enough population to make valid extrapolations. Several comments were made about the way the questions were put, and interpretations of what a particular question meant varied considerably, for example most respondents read that on time devoted to ministry as 'formal' time while a significant minority used 24/7 or similar. I have not sought to interpret replies where the question has been read differently, just to record them. As I noted in launching this survey, in order to make valid comparisons with Tim's findings it was necessary to stick as closely as possible to the original questions. That some respondents took issue with the odd one is no surprise, coming from MSEs.....

The questions in Part A were baseline: who are you, denomination, ministry title and work status. The majority of respondents were Church of England (some using 'Anglican'), with two from the wider

Anglican Communion, while the United Reformed, Methodist and Congregational churches were all represented. Ministry title provided some interesting replies, with most using their 'institutional' designation but a significant minority identifying the title they use of themselves. Most respondents are ordained, but Deacons, Readers and laity are also represented, as are MSE, NSM and OLM. Employment status too proved interesting: 18 in full-time paid employment, 10 part-time paid, 9 retired and 1 student. Around a quarter of replies elaborated on this. Tim recorded 29 in full or part-time paid employment, 35 retired, and 9 of indeterminate status. The CHRISM survey responses therefore show a significantly higher proportion of respondents who are still economically active. As it is an organisation for MSEs, this is not a surprise.

Part B, *Your experience of ministry*, got down to brass tacks. Question 1 asked respondents to describe their ministry role. The variety is considerable, but the following come up several times: team minister, facilitator, consultant, manager, among colleagues at work, bridging the gap, alongside stipendiary colleague(s), ministry to those on the margins. One reply finds echoes in many others: "Primarily a ministry to the secular world claiming it for Christ."

Question 2 asked respondents to match their pattern of ministry to 5 suggested models (with the option to describe instead). Most respondents identified with more than one option, so the breakdown is:

	CHRISM Responses	URC Responses
Service in a congregation as part of a team	17 (8 of which were one of two or three patterns)	11 (6 of which were one of two or three patterns)
In pastoral charge of a congregation as part of a team	4 (two of which were this alone)	18 (8 of which were one of multiple choices)
In sole pastoral charge	3 (never sole role)	30 (11 multiple choices)
Exercising a ministry at District / Deanery / Circuit or Synod level	6 (once the sole role)	28 (17 with multiple choices)
Ministry in secular employment	20 (10 chose this option on it's own)	14 (12 as one of multiple choices)
Other	2, both replies along the	5 (1 of which had

lines of ministry through
living

another role indi-
cated too)

Question 3 asked if you felt your ministry was understood and valued. Overwhelmingly the replies were that it is – to a greater or lesser extent – locally, but the more remote from the person of the MSE the less this is the case. Some reported different experiences, with little or no understanding at any level, “baffled” was one expression used, and it is important not to overlook this. If there is a common thread to the latter, it is that the respondent reports being relatively isolated from other MSEs. The URC survey results showed stronger understanding at local level, but the majority of respondents still thought they were understood and valued a wider level. There is a significant difference here that will be explored in the follow-up article.

Question 4 asked *“Does your ministry present you with any particular opportunities for mission that may not be possible for Stipendiary Ministers?”* Only two respondents think it doesn’t. Nearly all the other replies were fulsome in their explanations of the opportunities that come their way. A phrase repeated several times was being “one of us”, thus relating to colleagues on levels not accessible to the outsider. Many also mentioned working or living among people with no other contact to a church. Other comments repeated in similar guises: freedom from church structures (including boundaries), the ability to be prophetic, “being able to share exactly the same experiences as everyone else on the workforce”, “relating to those at work on their terms”. A few were specific: networks of colleagues and churches – including overseas, redundant colleagues, professional networks, and unofficial chaplain to a Golf Club! The URC survey showed a very similar pattern for those in paid employment, but a clear majority of those not said that it didn’t.

To follow this up came a question about what else makes your ministry distinctive from stipendiary ministry. The range of responses was interesting and can be divided into the positive and negative (not meant pejoratively). The latter – very few - first: less time available for church activities, at greater ‘risk’ than stipendiary (1 month’s notice, performance assessment, the pressure of commer-

cial life to deliver), absence of a stipend. The comments were overwhelming 'positive', particularly emphasising shared life and / or work experiences with others, freedom from the constraints of church structures, able to use professional expertise derived from work, freedom to be prophetic, financial independence, better work – life balance, "having a greater independence and a broader outlook, a much better understanding of the day-to-day life of members of our congregation through facing the same issues that they face – commuting, work-life balance, redundancy", not being perceived as having an agenda, "credibility with work colleagues", and the ability to say 'no'. The replies tie in very closely with Tim Key's findings.

Question 6 asked: "*Would you rather be a stipendiary minister and if so, why?*" One respondent is stipendiary, and of the rest one said 'yes' (no elaboration), three answered that they would consider it, and one didn't know. I venture no view on the significance of these replies other than that they suggest openness to the possibility that God may lead them in this direction. All the rest said 'no', the great majority of these with emphasis (capitals, exclamation mark, "no way!"). Additional comments were surprisingly few, but included: "I think the petty congregational politics would drive me nuts." The strength of feeling shown tallies almost exactly with the URC findings.

The next question asked where your support in ministry comes. The range was wide, but the following stand out. Ten respondents have a spiritual director, sixteen mentioned clergy (in some form), while five referred to others at the local church. CHRISM was listed by eight, four mentioned other MSEs / NSMs or OLMs, while seven have some form of support from work colleagues. Also significant are personal friends (8) and family (5). Three respondents said they have no support networks, while two others did not write anything. It is hard to draw firm conclusions from the replies, but I venture two tentative ones. Most support networks seem to be self-constructed, with little evidence of the church as institution seeking to support MSEs. Then it is clear that those with support tend to value it highly. The sources of support, and their weighting, are almost identical in the URC survey.

Questions 8 asked if you have a contract (implicitly – with your church), and if so are you happy with it. 18 have a current contract, and 2 more have one that is out of date. No one said they were unhappy with it, though there were no overt expressions of enthusiasm either. Those without one who commented said either they felt it gave them more flexibility not to have a formal contract, or that the church did not think it necessary. Some 60% of the URC respondents said they have terms of settlement', against 50% in our survey.

Question 9 asked how many hours you devote to ministry. I expected several to reply '24/7' and was not disappointed, several others including their secular work time. The majority did give time used in overt ministry activities, which ranged from 5 to 25 hours. Most gave a spread, indicating that the time does vary. There was a close correlation between part time employment and higher hours, though one respondent seems to put in 12-16 hours a week on top of full time employment. The way this question was read was always going to affect the answers and the type of response says something about how ministry is viewed. (I think there are two ways of understanding the replies that include 'work' time, but I will leave it to readers to make up their own mind on this). Again, the URC responses were very similar in the spread of hours, with more devoting more than 25, perhaps reflecting the higher proportion of retired NSMs.

Is your church actively developing MSE? Again, a slight ambiguity in the question, with a few seeing this as meaning the local rather than institutional church. Again too the way the question was answered tells us something of the horizons of the respondent. 26 gave a clear 'no', with 6 saying that little was being done. One referred to "acceptance, but not active encouragement", while 3 gave a qualified affirmative. The weighting is almost exactly the same as in the URC survey. Interestingly there was no clear correlation to denomination. The overall picture emerges that there is very little being done on a national basis and any initiatives seem to be both local and involve the active participation of MSEs.

How do you see the future of MSE? In my experience MSEs tend to

be optimists with a healthy dose of realism, but I won't let this cloud my evaluation of the replies. The most recurring comments were that MSEs will never be great in numerical terms but will play an increasingly important role in two respects: as the churches realise the opportunities for effective mission that lie outside their traditional structures, and in helping to prop up the increasingly creaky local church network. At first sight these may appear contradictory, but this is not necessarily so. There were several overtly optimistic comments: "we are in the growth market", "of increasing importance but dependent upon MSEs self-propagating", "vital, probably essential for the future", "should greatly expand between now and 2050". And a few less so: "very uncertain and limited", "parochial focus to the detriment of MSE", "would not recommend MSE in current circumstances", "Am I the only MSE?" And there were of course the carefully balanced views: "Dare I say, I think it's possibly the only future. There ain't gonna be much else!" and "Optimistically - Increasing role in mission to where people are. Pessimistically - increasingly marginalised and limited." And a realistic view? "Eventually MSEs will become an essential element for financial and personnel reasons. However, these may well be NSMs with a parish focus. For people with a work-focused ministry I think we will always be seen as an appendage with which the church is unsure what to do." Fresh Expressions was mentioned twice, and two others pointed out that MSEs could / should be used by the churches in consultancy roles, using the skills their jobs gave them. One respondent made the telling comment that many NSMs of their knowledge had moved into stipendiary ministry as this was the dominant ministry model, a sentiment echoed in several other observations. Overall about half were generally positive (as against two thirds in the URC survey), one third cautious / uncertain, and the remainder third generally negative

Not as many as expected took the opportunity to add "any other comments", but those who did had plenty to say. One noted that work-based ministry is the "freshest expression", a couple noted the negative attitude of stipendiary colleagues and their "sensitive toes." Another noted that the Church of England is still disposed to hear the voice of the ordained rather than that of the expert lay person (in this case in finance). Finally here I think it appropriate to repro-

duce one comment in full, as a vision for the future: "I would like to see a defined plan or strategy for the development of MSE. I believe that this should start with developing the ministry of Christians in the workplace. We tend to give them a role within the church such as Churchwarden or Reader and believe that we have done it. I would like to see the Industrial Mission clergy helped by the church to work with the working laity to help them reflect theologically on their workplace."

Tim Key's survey and the paper based on it were reproduced in the three parts in the October, 2005, January and April, 2006, editions of "Ministers-at-Work".

If you know of someone who would be interested to receive a complementary copy of this Journal, please contact the Editor with details.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Rob,

Views wanted! Volunteers wanted!

What theology would CHRISM members like to see?

What would they find helpful or challenging?

How might we help their own theological reflection?

Has CHRISM the courage to step out and grow?

What opportunities might we be missing to serve other MSEs?

Have we moral support for preparing a business plan to engage a Development Officer?

These topics are covered in articles in this edition of the CHRISM Journal. PLEASE would readers write back, or email me or pick up the telephone and share your views.

Adrian Holdstock

(contact details are in the rear inside cover. Do get in touch!)

Have we got your correct details?

Not surprisingly people do move or change e-mail address (as I

found out when trying to e-mail information around CHRISM members last year! Please check the address details on the envelope your copy of "Ministers-at-Work" arrived in and if anything has changed, please inform the Editor, or Membership Secretary (Richard Dobell).

***Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers
Colorado, 20 – 22 September 2006***

Phil Aspinall

The scenery was magnificent at the Highlands Retreat Center, high above Denver on the outskirts of the Rocky Mountain National Park, and we found ourselves in the first snows of winter. This was the very modern and well-equipped conference centre of the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks, on the site of a summer camp, complete with log cabins and bunk-houses. But at 8,500 feet, the effects of altitude sickness were quite marked and badly affected several of us who were not used to it. The elks were in rut, and the bears were raiding cars for food.

The annual APT conference was held mid-week this year – which prevented many people in full time work from attending. There were no Episcopalians, so the ethos was very Presbyterian. But there were still some 22 participants, including the speakers and officials. This was actually a significant part of the APT membership, as they have only 39 people on their mailing list (counting couples as one) of whom 11 paid membership in 2006. The participants included several people who have joined us for CHRISM events: Charles Ayers, Bill and Lois Dodge. Someone noted that this was the 20th anniversary of the first APT meeting in 1986.

The theme "Integrity – the life and special gift of Tentmakers" was led by Steve Doughty, a pastor and Executive Presbyter in Michigan, and much of the material was drawn from his book "To walk with Integrity: Spiritual Leadership in Times of Crisis". Steve led four sessions spread over the three days – exploring different aspects of his theme, with various exercises: "Integrity and our stories", "Grounding, Mystery and Crunch", Going deeper into multiple worlds", and "Living as Prophets and Healers". It was an interesting

model for leading us through our reflections -maybe we could use it one day for a CHRISM weekend.....

All this was interspersed with Bible studies by Zane Buxton, the Executive Presbyterian of the local Synod (group of presbyteries) – on 2 Corinthians and the Book of Esther. The Denver synod takes in 8 presbyteries covering Wyoming, Montana, Denver and Salt Lake City, including Yellowstone national Park – the second largest in the USA.

On Thursday afternoon, a “Forum on Tentmaking concerns,” brought together Deborah Fortel, a regular visitor from the General Assembly staff in Louisville, Dan Saperstein, the Executive Presbyterian of the local presbytery and Rick Ufford-Chase, a very impressive minister from Arizona who was twice Moderator of the General Assembly.

Many challenging issues emerged:

- The increase in the number of small (<100) congregations needs more tentmakers who can serve them without needing a full stipend.
- A proposed initiative for Seminary based training on Tentmaking is not being implemented.
- The group needs to develop / involve bi-vocational commissioned lay pastors (equivalent to Lay Preachers or Anglican Readers) many of whom have secular jobs.
- The “Ministers Union”, of those who have full-time posts in large churches, tends to perpetuate the single church pastor model.
- Many people who do Tentmaking do not know of APT: “You are tentmakers – go out and find people who just do it”.
- New tentmakers are to be found in associations of immigrant fellowships (from Laos etc). There are many new congregations of this type.
- A Challenge was put down: to have 50 participants here next year; 200 in three years’ time.
- Tentmaking is an accredited category of ministry in the Presbyterian Church of the USA, and should therefore be seen as “mainstream”

Rick preached at the concluding communion and returned aggressively to his theme: new ways of being church; lay-led churches; growth in immigrant churches. "Just get organised and do it – fight for Kingdom values, not for the Church!"

The AGM tried to pick up on some of the themes. While people were still talking about how to contact new people – Rick had knocked up a strategy for growth on his laptop! Elections here are carried out on the basis of the recommendations of a Nominating Committee – may be CHRISM should try this.

The 2007 conference will be 26 – 28 October (a weekend) in Portland, Oregon. The theme proposed had been "Tentmakers in Public Service" but this may change in light of the changes of emphasis from this weekend. As the concluding line of the APT conference brochure says – "See you there!"

MSEs of the Old Catholic Church of Germany Speyer, 27 - 29 October 2006

Phil Aspinall

Our relationship with the MSEs of the Old Catholic Church continues to develop. We were pleased to welcome three of their members at the CHRISM summer conference, and I reciprocated by joining them at their annual meeting. There were some 25 participants, a mixture of mainly male priests and deacons of Old Catholic Church (AKD), including Joachim Vobbe, Bishop of Germany. As noted on previous visits, MSEs comprise some 25% of the clergy of the AKD. Several of them were new to the group. Of those who joined us back in July, Franz Segbers was unable to attend, but Nico Bachtler was present and was elected to the new committee.

The meeting was held in the Diocesan house of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Speyer, set right in the heart of the city-centre, close to the famous Romanesque Cathedral. And the total cost of the weekend was only €75!

Friday evening gave an opportunity for us to introduce ourselves and

catch up on recent news, since the similar meeting last year. We then adjourned to the huge cellar bar to continue the process.

Saturday morning was filled with the annual “Bishop’s Report” – a tour de force of the state of and current issues in the Church. I always learn a lot about the state of the Anglican communion as well as the Old Catholic Church! One significant event during the year was the celebration of the 75 anniversary of the Bonn Agreement on intercommunion with the Anglican church – Archbishop Rowan preached at the celebratory mass and delivered a lecture on “One church – one hope” which is available in both German and English. The Old Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht presided and also delivered a paper as part of the celebrations.

After a guided tour around the town and cathedral, we got to the real work on the theme during Saturday afternoon. We were asked to identify issues, themes and ideas for the Development of MSE, at the levels of the Group, the Church and in work. And – yes, in the manner of CHRISM – we used the equivalent of yellow post-its. We



then narrowed these suggestions down – and, yes, we did use little sticky dots for voting – and discussed these selected topics for fur-

ther in small groups. The output from these sessions has all been typed up as a document for presentation to the 2007 Synod of the church. We somehow ended up in the cellar bar, again, to continue our discussions.

I also had the opportunity to give an update on CHRISM activities, and, as part of this, Nico gave a report he had prepared on our summer conference – it will be published in their Church Newspaper. I hope to include a translation in the next edition of the Journal.

I also talked of our meetings with the European Worker Priests and found that I had to explain to this group (of a significant number of ex-Roman priests) that the Worker Priest movement was still active. Sunday morning commenced with very relaxed Eucharist at which Nico presided (as Speyer was his home town) using the new AKD missal. We then had the elections to the synod – 5 members who then also comprise the organising committee of the MSEs. It was an interesting process which allowed any one to nominate anyone else; each nominated person *then* says whether they wish to stand or not, and the election then takes place from among those who remain. May be we should consider that as a way of overcoming the usual silence at CHRISM elections! And how about asking for 5 places, *by*

right, for MSEs at General Synod !

The dynamic of the group was made more interesting by the addition of two members of the Order of Port Royal, from the Abbey of St Severine - a mixed order which had recently been welcomed by the Bishop into the AKD.

The overall conclusion was that the MSEs of the AKD want to continue a developing link with CHRISM, to see what they can learn from us, and others are hoping be able to attend CHRISM events. Their conference next year will be 19th – 21st October, again at the Diocesan House in Speyer – you are very welcome to join them.

Mission in London's economy

... is a recently formed independent and ecumenical organisation bringing together many of the groups ministering in and among the workplaces of London.

It has set itself the following objectives:

1. To co-ordinate the churches' interventions in discussion of London's economy
2. To respond on behalf of the churches to consultation exercises on London's economy
3. To recruit, train, support, insure and supervise workplace chaplains
4. To support Christians working in the institutions of London's economy
5. To educate churches in the issues facing London's economy so that they might be able to respond appropriately
6. To work with other faith communities in order to create co-ordinated faith-community responses to the issues facing London's economy.

To find out more, visit: <http://www.industrialmission.org/mile/>, or e-mail info@mile.org.uk.

CHRISM Theology Working Group

Adrian Holdstock

Everyone does theology! We all interpret our environment using in-built filters. We choose to view the world according to our own familiar thought patterns. We may not feel judgemental but we want to be discerning. We may not feel prejudiced but we know when we encounter discord. We may be curious but we are also drawn to interpretation. As Christians, and Christian ministers to boot, we “do” theology.

How we express our theology is another matter. When the Committee asked me to lead the Theology Working Group, I wanted to avoid having a select few who claim a definitive position. Rather, I want us to encourage and support a diversity of theological opinions. Those opinions will arise from both our various Christian stances and our wide ranging MSE experiences. Therefore, one of the roles of the Working Group must be to facilitate everyone’s contribution.

We need to promote articles and reflections. We need to support with encouragement and suggestions. We may need to provide mentoring. Might we also, in rare cases, feel the need to be gatekeepers? Moreover, we would wish to promote a wide sharing of theology. The obvious outlet is the Journal but we may also look at active use of the website, further CHRISM papers, articles and features for other publications (e.g. ICF, IMA and Church Times) and speaking and preaching engagements.

With input from across all of CHRISM’s membership and beyond, the Working Group can function effectively with three or four colleagues. Our first tasks would be to clarify the Terms of Reference, set out a programme and start communicating with CHRISM members in the Journal. Last year’s Committee drafted some “Dos” for the Working Group. These are:

- Help MSEs **DO** theology at work.
- Ensure MSE angle gets into other theologies.

- Discover what theology there is on the subject of work.
- More work on new parables and new sacraments.
- Promote use of the CHRISM Library.
- MSE in context.
- Tools for MSEs doing theology.
- Use theologies from different denominations and traditions.
- Differences from Industrial chaplains.
- Commission articles for Journal.
- Identify relevant theology “out there” and bring it to MSEs.
- Push MSE theology into other areas where theology is discussed.
- Have fun!

Now we need to set up the Working Group. The Committee has agreed:

- A maximum 4 members
- At least 3 to be members of CHRISM (the 4th member may be a ‘critical friend’)
- Able to communicate by email as well as telephone
- Service on the group subject to annual approval by the CHRISM Committee
- Undergoing, or having undergone, some form of theological education.

What do you think?

Is the Working Group something you can help with?

Self-employed Consultants

As the number of CHRISM members who are self-employed appears to be growing, I asked in the last edition for any who would like details of the services they offer published in this Journal. I am confident that there are more of you out there, but these are the particulars of those who have responded, and a talented bunch you all are!

Graham Peter Cornish
Harrogate, North Yorkshire

Phone/fax 01423 529928

Email: graham@copyrightcircle.co.uk

Expertise:

Copyright law - Libraries, museums, galleries, archives, publishers, performers – the cultural heritage industry in general.

Adrian Holdstock

Leicestershire

Phone: 01455 251066

Mobile: 07792 452 669

E-mail: adrianholdstock@yahoo.co.uk

Expertise:

Fully accredited coach with *Coaching and Mentoring International* (www.cmiexcel.com); own business *Galilee Coaching and Mentoring* (www.galileecoaching.co.uk).

Tom Keighley

Harrogate, North Yorkshire

Office no. +44 (0)1423 755 612

Fax. +44 (0)1423 755 344

Mobile. +44 (0)7740 721 032

Email. nurprc@nursing.u-net.com

Expertise:

Health Care management (NHS & Charitable institutions)

Nursing (in particular leadership and specialism issues, and the international arena, especially EU related matters).

Organisational development in faith settings.

John Lees

John Lees Associates, Knutsford, Cheshire.

Phone: 01565-631625

E-mail: johnlees@dsl.pipex.com

Expertise:

Career development advice, Training, Executive Coaching and out-placement packages.

Website: <http://www.johnleescareers.com/>

Each of the above has considerable expertise and skill in their field.

Now I know there are more self-employed CHRISM folk out there, so

if you would like to send me your contact details and area of expertise I shall be very happy to include these in a future edition.

A Development Officer for CHRISM

Adrian Holdstock

At the 2006 AGM I thanked the Committee for all their hard work and mutual support. I also thanked all the membership for their support, encouragement and interest in the work of MSEs as agents of God's mission. But I went on to say that the Committee alone will not and cannot achieve all that CHRISM desires.

I looked into the future and wondered at CHRISM's capacity to grow much further. I continue to believe there are many hundreds if not thousands of MSEs across all denominations and throughout the UK. Can we find and serve them? Is it not our role as CHRISM to resource all MSEs? If necessary, of course, we may first have to show them that they are MSEs!

Whilst the Committee and CHRISM's work remains resourced only by volunteers, who give what they can out of a busy working or busy retired life, we have a limited capacity for expansion. I contend that we have become self-limiting. I believe the time is right for us to consider the value of building a financially resourced development programme, based on our already documented development plan. In short, I refer to a paid resource, perhaps in the form of a secretary general or development officer.

If CHRISM were positioned in our minds as a body worthy of charitable support – regular gift aided giving - rather than a membership organisation with a fee for membership rights, we may then be able to fund the outreach of CHRISM and growing support for MSEs and their work. Fresh expressions of church are already present in MSE life and networks – we just have to release the potential. The AGM responded positively and asked the Committee in the early part of this coming year to research such a development. We now have that task.

In advance of the next Committee meeting, on 10th March, please would you share your views with me?

New CofE Director of Mission and Public Affairs

The Revd Dr Malcolm Brown has been appointed as the next Director of Mission and Public Affairs for the Church of England, to succeed John Clark when he retires at Easter 2007.

A CHRISM member, Malcolm has been Principal of the Eastern Region Ministry Course, an ecumenical course based at Wesley House, Cambridge, since 2000, and teaches ethics and practical theology within the Cambridge Theological Federation. His last book, co-authored with Paul Ballard, *The Church and Economic Life. A documentary study: 1945 to the present*, was reviewed in the July 2006 edition of "Ministers-at-Work", and is published by Epworth (ISBN 0-7162-0600-5; £25).

Malcolm was Executive Secretary of the William Temple Foundation, University of Manchester, from 1991-2000, and his first hand knowledge of the interaction of faith and work is excellent.

Commenting on his appointment, Malcolm Brown said: "This is a very challenging post and I will have a great deal to learn quickly ... There is a real need now to give Christian people the tools to be a confident mission presence. The Mission and Public Affairs Division has a responsibility to make the most of the opportunities the Church is given to engage with a fragile world. I am very grateful for the support and prayers of my friends and colleagues as I prepare to take up my new role."

As Director of Mission and Public Affairs, Malcolm will be responsible to the Mission and Public Affairs Council and to the Archbishops' Council for developing policies, providing support, advice and advocacy and promoting the Church of England's engagement with social, political and environmental issues; its commitment to mission and evangelism; its support for minority ethnic Anglicans; its role in hospital chaplaincy; and its nurturing of inter-faith relationships.

We wish Malcolm well in the challenge of his new role.

A Lent Course with a difference
Joined up living – about my real life

Are you still looking for something to do this Lent? Well, here is a Lent Course with a difference! Starting from the day-to-day events of life, it is designed for use by small groups during 5 sessions in Lent. The course follows a pattern used by many of us in reflecting on our daily work (paid or unpaid).

The course consists of five sessions:

Week 1: What's happening for me

Week 2: What's going on in some situations at work

Week 3: How can we talk about God in all this

Week 4: What about God in our work situations

Week 5: So what does it mean for what I do

This course, designed by the group of Ministers in Secular Employment in Coventry Diocese, has been run in several different groups. This is what some participants said:

"Good to look closely at situations and see what is really going on - bringing out the positive and finding God in that situation."

"It really changed the way I look at things."

"The sessions have given me the courage to carry on."

The starting point for the course was grounded in our own experience - in everyday life outside the church

Somebody was concerned about where I spend 60% of my waking life i.e. at/doing paid work and saw it as an opportunity for ministry

to both me and the people I work with.

Small group, helpful workbook, supportive and listening 'co-workers'
- an opportunity to share my real issues

Fellowship with others in the course was good - the discussions, the atmosphere and the leadership

The course is designed to be led by a Leader who has a background in MSE or has similar relevant experience. Each participant is given a course handbook, and there is a manual for leaders, which guides you through the programme for each week. Master copies of these are available from the Coventry MSE group, for a small fee, to enable you to produce the handbooks for your participants.

For more information, please contact **The Revd Felicity Smith** 01926 492 452.

News and dates

The Grubb Institute, London, hosts a two-day workshop, 20-21 February, titled 'Walking at the Leading Edge', led by Dr Judith Neal, founder and director of the Association for Spirit at Work. The vent is aimed at 'Edgewalkers' - leaders and change agents who walk between the material and spiritual worlds. Cost is £349, and can be booked through Sue Howard on suejfhoward@hotmail.com.

Especially for consultants, the ***Ridley Hall Foundation*** (<http://www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/rhf.html>) is running it's next Conference on that very topic! Entitled "***Crucial Insights: Consulting Christianity - Serving the Lord in an Advisory Capacity?***" it will take place at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, over the weekend of 30 March to 1 April, cost £225 (£175 non-residential). Full details are available on the website (above), and it does look very worthwhile for those working in consultancy.

London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) is running it's 'Toolbox 1' 5-day course twice this year: 11-15 June and 17-21 September. The course is designed for Christians in the work-

place and covers such topics as Understanding Work, Globalisation and the Global Disciple and Corporate Culture and Values. The course fees are £295, which does not include accommodation. Further details at <http://www.licc.org/toolbox>.

Christians at Work holds its 2007 Conference and AGM on Saturday, 30 June, at Rugby Evangelical Free Church, Railway Terrace, Rugby. The theme is "Exemplary Leadership" and the speakers Brian Edwards and Frank Brearley. Further information is available at <http://www.christiansatwork.org.uk>.

Workplaceministry (<http://workplaceministry.org>) has an on-line bookshop with a good range of books on faith and work, extending over 8 pages. As one would expect of a US site, most of its products are American, and prices in dollars, but that aside, there look to be some useful books at reasonable prices.

The **Christian Association of Business Executives** (CABE, <http://www.cabe-online.org/>) has its usual busy programme of events:

Supper Fellowship: Supper discussions will take place on **12 March, 25 June and 17 September 2007** at 7.00 for 7.15 pm at 24 Greencoat Place, SW1. All are welcome to this enjoyable meal plus informal discussion but please let Clive Wright know in advance at clive.wright6@bopenworld.com that you will be coming. Finish is prompt at 9 pm.

CABE Forum: 'Do Christian Values and Business Mix?', an opportunity to discuss issues raised at the recent Hugh Kay Lecture by Stephen Green, on **4 April 2007**, at St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, Bishopsgate, London.

2007 CABE Paper: to be given by Philip Green, CEO United Utilities on **3 May 2007**, at St Ethelburga's. The CABE AGM will also be held on that evening.

Hugh Kay Lecture: The 2007 Lecture will be delivered by Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach in the Autumn. Details in the next edition.

Resources

Getting God to Work (<http://www.gg2w.org.uk/>) is a website operated by Christian Vision for Men, and is linked also to Holy Trinity, Brompton. There is a range of resource material and links available on the website and it worth a search. A forthcoming publication, expected in February, is a book by Ken Costa, chairman of Alpha International and a Chairman at UBS Warburg Investment Bank, book that integrates faith and work. The advance information that has reached me us says "It addresses issues such as ambition, stress, work-life balance and giving. It is a gripping and readable book, with many anecdotes, and biographical detail of how God has directed him in his career. A course is being developed, to follow the book, for use in small groups, which will be supported by a DVD and website."

A couple of years ago Margaret Joachim carried out a survey of work-related themes and material in the new Church of England lectionary, noting the paucity of anything other than the 'caring professions'. The *Industrial Christian Fellowship* thankfully include suggestions and prayers on it's website (<http://www.icf-online.org/>), with links to the lectionary where appropriate. Being in public service, I particularly appreciate:

Those who work in Government and local Government:

Forgive us Lord
When we find it easier to criticise those in Government
Than to recognise the complexities with which they grapple;
When we reserve our praise for actions and policies that suit our
ends
Rather than acknowledging the conflicting needs they are seeking to
serve.
Be with all who hold responsibility for Governance and leadership in
wider society,
And may the will of Him who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords
Be realised through their decisions and actions.

CHRISM Reflective Weekend Feb 9th - 11th

There are still places available for this weekend, to be held at Holland House in the lovely surroundings of the Worcestershire countryside, near Evesham.

The weekend offers an opportunity for us to reflect on our ministry from different and new perspective, some time for silence and more time to meet old friends and welcome new ones.

We are also delighted that Revd Donald Eadie will be able to come and lead us bringing a wide range of ministerial experience and a deep concern for justice and a respect for all people.

A flyer and application form will accompany this journal. I shall be very pleased to hear from you, preferably by the end of January.

Felicity Smith

You can e-mail Felicity on: felicity@fandi.me.uk

2007 CHRISM Conference

This year the dates are 28-30 September, at the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine, Limehouse, London. Full details with the next edition!

The main reason why the Conference and AGM is in September this year is that the UK is hosting the ...

International Worker Priest Conference Pentecost 2007

Phil Aspinall

This year, the annual conference of European Worker Priests will be held in the UK. You are invited to join the delegates who will be attending the conference itself, for a special event for CHRISM members.

The Conference traditionally takes place at Pentecost, which this year is Friday 25th to Monday 28th May. The venue will be Oak

Hall, in Otford, Kent, which is not far from Sevenoaks, accessible from two railway stations.

The CHRISM event will be held on the Saturday and lead into a celebratory evening. We hope many of you will want to join us to meet with our European colleagues – the Worker Priests who represent our forebears and origins as Ministers in Secular Employment. This is a chance to get to know our European counterparts, and to learn more of their experiences. This is a meeting about why – fundamentally – we are who we are.

Participants will then be able to stay overnight and join in a festival Eucharist for Pentecost, which will truly involve speaking in tongues ! Our weekend will conclude after lunch, while the delegates continue their own discussions.

The themes for the conference were agreed at the end of last year's conference, and need to be considered in the context of social engagement in the working world:

Vivre avec – to live with.

In our meetings with many cultures and religions :

In these times of globalisation, racism, nationalism, individualisation of groups, immigration.....

What changes are there in us ?

What sort of society is being built ?

What prophetic signs do we see / show ?

What God ?

What do we, in our national groups, have to do ?

We are asked to discuss these questions among ourselves and prepare a short summary paper for the UK delegation to present to the conference. So, **even if you are not able to attend the conference**, I should be very grateful if you would send me your thoughts on any or all of these topics **by the end of February**, so we can send our paper by Easter. Any personal stories of an experience

connected with one of these headings would be particularly welcome – and probably make a point most effectively. We shall also discuss these questions during our workshop on the Saturday of Pentecost.

But the conference is not just about working on a theme. It is an opportunity to meet a stimulating group of people with diverse backgrounds, challenging views on the realities of our societies, and their own fascinating stories. It's also very enjoyable.

We hope you will want to join us – please return the subscription slip on the enclosed flyer, or do contact me if you would like more details.

A view from 3006

Robert Foreman

Wealthy Britain had never had it so good. In 2006 it had food and water in abundance, enough for three meals a day and cheap fuel to travel somewhere nice in the evenings for its third meal. In fact, Britain had so much food that it was able to over-do things just a tad and eat quite a bit more than it needed. This made people fat. This did not bother them much because, although it was fashionable to complain about the health service, it was usually on tap to sort things out if eating really got out of hand.

Unless it lived east of a line roughly from Chipping Sodbury to Sittingbourne, for the British, water was not a problem. This was just as well because British people had many rights and a right to clean water was one of them and it didn't matter too much that most of the world had neither rights nor for that matter clean water. So great were the rights of the British that each house had two types of water and two different types of tap to dispense it. Taps with a blue top were for water just as it comes and taps with red tops were for hot water, which was available at any time of the day or night.

British homes were heated in the winter, which made it possible, even in the coldest spells, for the lowest classes to watch an enter-

tainment facility called the television wearing only a vest. Quite a few homes were cooled in the summer so that in really hot spells it was necessary to wear a jumper indoors.

Britain was OK! Oh yes, it gave a bit of money away from time to time. Some people even did this on an individual basis and it was called a tithe. It was decided by the Spiritual Well Being and Feel Good About Yourself Society (some historians have called this the church) that the word tithe meant ten so for convenience this was rounded down to five with an added bonus that the five percent would be after tax and not before. Governments also gave money away and, taken as a whole, Britain gave away .00438 of its national assets. It had to keep most of its wealth back because it had a lot of needs.

Britain decided that it needed something to do between meals so it invented the digestive biscuit. Very soon it decided that it needed chocolate on it, which was not a problem because chocolate could be sourced cheaply in parts of the world where wages were very low. The chocolate digestive, as it was called, came in little packs of three all individually wrapped. This generated a lot of rubbish but the British, being ever so resourceful, found that they could dump this problem pretty much back to the places in the world that supplied the chocolate.

Lots of well to do middle class British people drove a special sort of motor car called a Four by Four to meetings about the environment and exploitation of the planet and the people in it. These meetings sometimes took place at the Spiritual Well Being and Feel Good About Yourself Society.

Most British people had a pair of very cheap denim jeans from a very big shop called a supermarket. These jeans were made by foreigners who were happy to receive a very small payment for their work because their needs were less than ours. The big shops helped these foreigners out with a sort of charity, which they called buying power.

In Britain in 2006 there were just a few people without a home and these people were called the homeless. There were so few of these

people that the problem, if it was a problem, was not really worth worrying about. The fact that they were homeless was probably their own fault anyway. All other British people had somewhere nice to live and, to make these places even nicer, some people bought presents for them from very special shops called Do It Yourself centres. These shops sold things that were made by chopping down forests in places that were a long way from Britain.

British people did a similar thing with their houses as they did with the digestive biscuit but on a much bigger scale. Not being content with one house, they had two. Some people had three but the third, to be fair, was usually as an investment for the children in years to come. Initially these second homes, as they were called, were in Cromer but later on, people found that their second home could be in Portugal or Spain or Cuba because, as they rightly said, it was as quick to get to Cuba as it was to get to Cromer. The aeroplane flights were not a problem because it was possible to get a flight for less than the price of the cheap jeans in the supermarket.

British people had at least two weeks away each year. This they called a holiday. It became quite common on these holidays to travel so far away that you could go and look at how the poor people in the world really lived. You could even go and see where the forests used to be.

Other holidays were not called holidays but had the name short break. These short breaks could be anything from a weekend to the full two weeks but the title modification made people feel better about them and consciences were very much eased especially if that short break was felt to be particularly needed.

Holidays were taken throughout the year and it was not uncommon for British people to return to find the doors to their local Spiritual Well Being and Feel Good About Yourself Society locked. This was because there were so many people taking holidays and short breaks that there were not enough people left behind to keep things running.

The British never really got to grips with doing anything for the rest

of the world until it was forced upon them and those who would like to know more can read one of the many accounts of World Fuel War One, World Food War One and World Water Wars One and Two.

A DVD worth watching

Norma McKenzie

Several months ago a colleague, David Fleming, told me the story of Sophie Scholl, a Christian in Germany during the early 1940s. Largely because of his article I decided to go and see the film about her life when it came to our local cinema. It is now available on DVD (*Sophie Scholl*, by Julia Jentsch, Alexander Held, Fabian Hinrichs, and Johanna Gastdorf, 2006; available from Amazon) and I thoroughly recommend it to readers of News (don't let the fact it is in German with English subtitles put you off).

The film is set in Munich in 1943 and tells of the involvement of Sophie and her brother Hans with 'White Rose' resistance group activities against the Nazi regime. Sophie and Hans are arrested for distributing anti-Nazi fliers at Munich University and subsequently executed. The film script is based on actual recovered documents of the ensuing interrogation, along with other witness interviews.

The soundtrack creates an appropriately tense atmosphere from the opening moments of the film and never lets up through the film. It is definitely edge of the seat stuff.

Sophie's courage during her interrogation and trial are ultimately what makes the film so powerful and Julia Jentsch excels in the role. But the film goes further. It explores the source of her courage. Insight comes as viewers are shown Sophie in her cell engaged in moments of anguished prayer to her Lord. Here is that authentic struggle to keep hold of faith in God in the midst of desperate circumstances. The Psalmist knew that reality. Watching Sophie Scholl reminded me of the true nature of prayer.

Despite its 'PG' rating, I for one would not encourage any one who is under 15 years to watch the film. Some of the scenes are harrowing

even if they are not too graphic. One detail I had forgotten from David's article was that Sophie, Hans and their friend Christoph Probst were executed, within hours of their show trial, by guillotine. The most traumatic moment in the film for me however was not the one when the door opens and the camera settles on the guillotine. Rather it is the scene where, having been transferred to Munich Stadelheim prison, Sophie is ushered into a cell where paper and pen await and is told by her guard "Be quick!". I will never forget the howl she releases as she realises the imminence of her death. Her faith however does not fail; she recovers her composure and in their witness testimonies, the prison officials emphasized the courage with which she walked to her execution.

In the midst of what is a pretty relentless portrayal of "man's inhumanity to man" there are a few moments when her captors show genuine compassion. However the challenge of the film undoubtedly lies in Sophie's refusal to stay silent like so many of her contemporaries. She could have saved her life by doing nothing to oppose the Third Reich. But something inside her said 'no! Her belief in justice, the value of human life and a God of love did not waiver even with the threat of execution.

In court on 21 February 1943, Sophie was recorded as saying "Somebody, after all, had to make a start. What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don't dare express themselves as we did".

The Woodpecker might have to go!

(Taken from Christians at Work)

Everything I need to know about life at work I can learn from Noah's Ark:

1. Don't miss the BOAT!
2. Remember that we are all in the same boat.
3. Plan ahead remember it wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.

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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