

# Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in  
secular ministry

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Copy deadline for the next edition: Friday 3rd April 2009  
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## Editorial

In previous editorials for Ministers-at-Work I have complained that there didn't seem to be a theme to the contributions. Well this time some themes do seem to have emerged. Perhaps this is because CHRISM is going through a period of self-reflection, which culminated recently in a special meeting on the future of CHRISM on a cold wintry Saturday in Manchester. See page 26 for a report of that meeting from Margaret Joachim and pages 20 and 24 for two written submissions to the debate, one from Keith Holt and the other from Dorrie Johnson - both long-time members of CHRISM.

A theme of many of the contributions in this edition of Ministers-at-Work is the relationship between MSE and church - both traditional and fresh expressions of church. Why are many MSEs seemingly so 'preoccupied' (as John Eatock puts it on page 8) with their relationship with the rest of the church? John seemed to be suggesting - in the last edition of Ministers-at-Work - that this preoccupation means that MSE/CHRISM has lost its radical edge. Of course MSEs are going to be riled by this, and in this edition Dorrie Johnson responds by appealing to CHRISM's roots (see page 6).

For me there are two aspects to this preoccupation (or less pejoratively 'concern'): firstly MSEs seem to worry (probably too much) about how they are treated by the rest of the church and secondly MSEs are rightly concerned about their identity — what we are called to be and do - and this identity is, in part, fashioned by our relationship with the church (both visible and invisible).

It is perhaps almost inevitable that a minority group within the (visible) church - such as MSEs - are going to be at best ignored and at worst discriminated against by the majority. I personally have never felt discriminated against. I know some MSEs feel that they have been but surely discrimination is now relatively rare - and the worst we are likely to feel is forgotten or ignored. So perhaps we should 'stop worrying about the church' and just 'go forth and be MSEs' as Dorrie Johnson says on page 25. If we are confident

in our 'MSEness' then they - whoever 'they' are - won't be able to forget or ignore us. Sometimes of course the church remembers us and when it does so can even be complimentary (see Bishop John Pritchard's article on page 16) but even this can feel a bit uncomfortable.

However our concern with our relationship with the church is also about our own identity. Minorities often find their identity in what they are not - the majority or other minorities. They may even seek to define themselves by what they see as wrong with the others. MSEs seem rather prone to this. But our concern with our relationship with the church also has its positive side. The church is after all the body of Christ so even MSEs need to find their place within it, to work out which part of the body they are: a hand, a foot, an eye, an ear, etc. (cf 1 Corinthians 12: 12-30).

MSE is not parish ministry, chaplaincy, industrial mission, etc. Well of course not - and for MSEs to be useful we may need to regard ourselves as having a distinctive ministry - very different from other ministries - as different as the eye is to the ear. And of course the view that MSE is a distinctive ministry (radical even) was the reason for the formation of CHRISM as Rob Fox reminds us in his response (page 9) to an article from Michael Moynagh in the last edition of Ministers-at-Work.

The view that MSE is and should be very different from other ministries seems fairly common amongst MSEs - well at least the vocal ones. Rob Fox, for example, argues that MSEs should have a radically different perspective on mission to the rest of the church - and even 'fresh expressions' of church. But it is also possible to see MSE as having similarities with other ministries - even (heaven forbid) parish ministry or fresh expressions - and there is surely nothing particularly threatening about that. The hand is no less useful because it has five digits like the foot.

In this edition Bishop John Pritchard suggests that 'Ministry in Secular Employment seems to me to be both the original form of ministry and the original fresh expression' (page 16). In other words Bishop John seeks to reassure us that we not so different

(radical?) really and that the rest of the church might even be coming round to our way of thinking.

Of course how we regard our distinctiveness or otherwise affects whether we see ourselves as being inside or outside the church. If we see ourselves as very different we might be tempted to ignore the rest of the church, if we don't then we are liable to be quietly absorbed into it. There is something to be said for complementarity here. MSE is surely complementary to other ministries rather than in competition with them.

But however we view our distinctiveness, Bishop John is surely right when he says that we MSEs need to be 'more confident of our gifts' and to see ourselves as 'a resource of experience and wisdom which goes back to the origins of ministry', however grandiose that may sound.

What this indicates is a much more important role for MSE in today's church than we might be tempted to think when the bishop (or equivalent) has 'forgotten your name' or has 'never even heard of MSE and can't understand it'. (See Bishop John on page 19 and Dorrie Johnson on page 25.) It also suggests that we can - by God's grace - do much more than just 'keep on keeping on' as the sub-title of Margaret Joachim's report of the day in Manchester implies was the main conclusion of that meeting. If MSE is to be recognised as the 'treasure' that it is we surely can do better than that! Watch this space.

**Mike Rayner**

## CHRISM Reflective Weekend 2009

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

We were challenged in the October Journal about losing our radical edge. This weekend will be an opportunity to get back to our roots in the CHRISM Mission Statement:

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

We shall use the weekend to talk about our work; to talk about God and the life we find in our work and to explore how we see and tell the Christian story there. We shall look at what it means for each of us individually and collectively, and the implications for the ways in which we exercise our ministry. We shall hopefully develop insights and resources for all those actively engaged in Ministry in Secular Employment.

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

The Morley Conference and Retreat Centre is a delightful place, offering a warm welcome in congenial surroundings, spacious grounds and pleasant countryside for walks. Single and some double rooms are available .

Please return the enclosed registration form by the 13th February, or for more information contact Phil Aspinall on:

024 7646 7509 or at:

[philaspinall@vectragroup.co.uk](mailto:philaspinall@vectragroup.co.uk).



## Letters to the Editor

From Dorrie Johnson

*A letter to John Eatock in response to his report 'An "outsiders" view', Ministers-at-Work, October 2008*

Dear John,

If you haven't joined CHRISM, and you implied in your report that you would not, then you probably won't be reading this. I respond to it, however, because I read your contribution to the journal with tenuous hope, tremendous sadness and an impulse to put out a plea for joining CHRISM – the first I've had for some time. As a retired MSE I wonder whether I now can offer valid opinions but your article re-ignited a spirit I thought quenched. So you could not find, in the weekend of the Conference, evidence of the radical approach you desire.

Way back, sometime in the late 1980s, Peter Beacham submitted an item to the then 'A Newsletter among Ministers-at-Work and others concerned'. I may not have precisely the words he used but his contribution began with something like, 'Among the many questions that I ask myself 15 years into MSE is the question "Is it a radical enough movement?"' He went on, I think, to consider an aspect which the church found difficult to appreciate – the invisibility of MSE. He compared the under-cover nature of secular employment ministry and (what I consider to be vital) engagement with the life of the world, to the distinctive traditional church role with specific tasks, albeit, for the MSE, part-time. I would challenge the description 'under-cover', not because I think MSE ministry should have an evangelistic purpose but because standing up to be counted must be overt and can be costly – but this is not my point at the moment.

Peter argued, as I would, that the MSE should affirm the lay ministerial role at work (may, indeed, not be distinctive from it). Many people have supported the 'being' aspect of this ministry and have accepted the role-uncertainty, but, please John, go further.

Consider the theological aspect of ministry in a secular work situation. Ask yourself what does God see in you and in your organisation/company/system? What is God's perspective on the strategies, the policies, the mission statement, the good practice guidelines, the end-of-year targets, the ethos and ethics of government, financial and managerial directives? A very good friend and much valued critic to whom I turned for views about this letter before I submitted it suggested 'Yes, but don't waste (or spend perhaps) too much time on all that. Just get on with it, ignoring whatever you can; and from time to time, when appropriate, apologise to God because it's unlikely anyone else will.' I warmly endorse his comment.

I would ask you to delve (although you may well already do so) into all of these 'for examples' (in working, not religious, language) of repentance, confession absolution, death and resurrection, salvation and all the doctrines we're immersed in. Michael Ranken wrote an article for *Theology* (March 1982), and from which a quotation was placed in the Foreword of his book *How God Looks If You Don't Start in Church* (Cairns Publications, 2001) (Michael gave me permission to quote from his book before his death: I don't believe he would mind if I carried that forward.)

Consider the sewage worker, the dustman, the morgue attendant, the lavatory paper manufacturer, and their share in keeping us healthy, each continually recognizing, acknowledging, accepting, correcting faults – and forgiving them, for in the world 'out there' not so many of the myriad errors that they face are actually left unresolved, provoking guilt... note how much of good 'secular' management techniques attend to the business of bringing errors to light, gently, so that they can be resolved and new life begin. And the sewage worker and the others are doing God's work for us (or is it our work for God?) with real sacrifice of social regard. They work, by and large, as God does, silently and without thanks. By the rest of us, by and large, they are misunderstood, disparaged or ignored. And the work of giving, of creating life, goes on. They are our servants. Isaiah's descriptions fit. Daily they forgive our negligences

and ignorances, mostly they do not store them up or hold them against us. That is much more than we deserve, and in that respect too we should see that it is exactly what we say about God.

Now, having said all of that, I come to the point of this response. Please, join CHRISM and, from the radical perspective you seek, feed back to remind us of what it means to focus on a work oriented ministry, lift our eyes above our navels to meet each others' and see there the purpose, the imagination, the integrity, the courage that this ministry needs and demands. Please, articulate the radical approach you exercise, share it, bring that dynamism into CHRISM – not perhaps for your benefit but for ours.

**From John Eatock**

*A response to the previous response*

Dear Dorrie,

Through the good offices of the Editor of your journal your letter has been brought to my attention.

I appreciate all that you have said and all that you have quoted from Peter Beacham and Michael Ranken and would affirm all that they are saying. The problem for me is that it is precisely that pre-occupation with the 'distinctive traditional church role with specific tasks, albeit, for the MSE, part-time' that, rightly or wrongly, I experienced in my mutual conference attendees. I have asked myself if there would be benefit from joining CHRISM? Is this the best way to use my God-given energy and resources?

I noted when looking at the latest Ordination lists in the Church Times that a considerable number of ordinands are now NSMs and MSEs and recognize that ministry is changing its shape very rapidly at the moment. Connecting with these individuals can be done, and is being done by myself and others with or (I suggest, without

wishing to be cruel) without CHRISM. Other networks are springing up locally which appear to be vibrant and worthwhile and I have been aware of these long before CHRISM was brought to my attention earlier this year. I appreciate your heartfelt plea; however my decision remains the same for now although I am curious to know how the recent Manchester review meeting progressed?

**From Rob Fox**

*A response to Michael Moynagh's article 'Why not church at work?', Ministers-at-Work, October 2008*

*What mission looks like ... if you don't start in church*

CHRISM old-timers will no doubt instantly recognise an allusion to Michael Ranken's book, *How God Looks If You Don't Start in Church*. The aim here though is not so much to pick up on Michael's themes as those of Michael Moynagh in his article "Why not church at work?" in the last edition of this journal. My choice of title will become apparent.

Let's begin by setting the recent historical context. Two allied initiatives dominate the first decade of the new millennium across the churches, though especially the Church of England: *Mission Shaped Church* and *Fresh Expressions*. It is against this background that Michael poses his question.

He rightly notes that the dominant and historic model of what it means to be 'church' is the parish. Denominations that do not operate on a comprehensive area basis nonetheless use the local church as the primary model. Other models of church have had to both compete with, yet conform to, that model, which, like a planet's gravity, keeps its moons in orbit. Thus chaplaincy, which Michael mentions, is still based primarily on the concept of a geographically defined community, be the boundary a campus, hospital grounds or prison walls.

Michael goes on to say that the permission to explore the boundaries of what is church, and to think outside the box, granted within Fresh Expressions, includes permission to rethink the relationship between church and workplace. He gives three reasons why doing so is “urgently needed.”

“First, the centres of power in modern society are in the workplace.” He gives a number of examples of places where, and ways in which, the most important decisions that affect peoples lives are taken in workplaces. Arguably the most important decisions are now taken in business and finance – especially within multinationals. Even in top 10 economies such as the UK, governments are increasingly reactive to what happens than proactive themselves. And in ‘developing nations’ governments and peoples face economic disaster if the wishes of the financial barons are ignored. (I could cite numerous examples of this, but let recent events in Sark suffice). The churches have only spasmodically sought to engage with the world of work since it ceased to be the co-located with where people actually live. Occasional short-lived success stories only serve to highlight this failure, which stands in marked contrast to, for example, the way in which Islam has engaged with the finance industry to develop halal finance.

Secondly, “community in mission”, mission as the work of God as Trinity, in which we His people participate, is something that God-as-we and us-as-we do together, as part of His nature as God and ours as His people. Michael rightly emphasises the importance of mission for the health of the church, however defined or scaled, being as it is the “out” element of its being, balancing the in, up and of elements. To take it one stage further, a church that ceases to be missionary ceases to be church. He continues: “In terms of the workplace, this means that mission is to be done not primarily by individuals, but by missional communities. Christian teams are to advance the kingdom.” I shall return to the last point.

Thirdly, because of the new ways of thinking about church, especially as embodied in Fresh Expressions, which seeks to “develop innovative forms of Christian community that connect with many who are currently outside church.”

Developing this, Michael sets out, simply, three models of mission:

- The “attractional” approach – ‘you come to us’, the pattern of the ‘traditional’ mission.
- The “engaged” approach – we’ll come to you in the hope that eventually you’ll come and join us. Chaplaincy, official or not, is an example here.
- The “incarnational” approach – *“we’ll come to you and walk alongside you, if you want, as you begin to experience God and form your own distinctive Christian community in relationship to the wider church.”*

I have put the first and final clauses in italics to flag up both a weakness in this model and a key issue facing Fresh Expressions.

Let’s look at the key issue first. If the new Christian communities that form – in the workplace, in communities of interest, affiliation or skill - are free to be distinctive, there is a real risk that some will be too distinctive. There are important lessons from history that may have to be re-learned the hard way: sectarianism in 1645-55 England, the recent proliferation of Pentecostal groups in many countries of Latin America, the churches formed by Caribbean immigrants to Britain as they found little welcome in the Anglican Church they had belonged to in the islands.

The hard question has always been: do we leave the innovation alone to grow and risk it falling into error, or do we keep it on a tight rein? Having said this, most ‘fresh expressions’ of church (and it is not a novel concept!) do not wander from the path, or consensus, of what is ‘OK’. The minority that do rather attract the headlines; the demise of the ‘Nine O’Clock Service’ in Sheffield did no favours to the many quietly successful similar ‘fresh expressions’.

When things start to go pear-shaped the hardest decision is when and how to intervene. In the case of the Corinthian church, Paul clearly wished he’d waded in earlier, but when he did it was with directness and vigour. And it seems to have worked. Will our church leaders have the same judgement and decisiveness?

The weakness of the third model is that it still external to the context, “we will come to you,” rather than starting with what and who is already there. This is reinforced when Michael adds: “In terms of the workplace, this means that mission is to be done not primarily by individuals, but by missional communities. Christian teams are to advance the kingdom.” This sounds reminiscent of the ‘Christian Commando’ campaigns sponsored by the Methodist Church 60 years ago. Yes, this may enjoy some success as a mission strategy, but is still ‘being done to’ from without. And I look forward to the Bishop of Manchester directing where I shall work, what I shall work, and whom with as part of a missional community. And to how the States of Jersey will respond to being told whom to employ. Hang on, Jersey is in the Diocese of Winchester, so who should do the directing?

Looking again at Michael’s three models of mission, each is valid. Each has a proven track record of success in extending the Kingdom of God. Each has a continuing role to play in mission. Each has limitations. And they are not the only possible models, though looking at what the churches are saying and doing, you could be forgiven for thinking they are. The three models are closer to each other than might be thought, because all are at root about “us” as church, be it ‘come to us’, or ‘we will come to you’. And therein lies the weakness. Even the ‘Fresh Expressions’ model is predicated on “we will come to you and walk alongside you.”

Where the models step outside the structures (physical, organisational or cultural) of the churches, they still seek to replicate in some way those structures. A fresh expression of church in a workplace is still church. There is of course nothing inherently wrong with this, and the model has an important role to play, but there is another model (and I do not exclude there being others too) that has a key difference, because it begins not with “we” as church, but with “we” who share ‘this’ together, be it work, an interest, or a passionate belief.

The fourth model I’d like to propose (or should that be reminding the churches of?) is that which MSEs have been acting on since Paul, that drove the French (and British!) worker-priest movement,

helped inspire the foundation of the Southwark Ordination Course and led to the formation of CHRISM. Rather than 'go to', in whatever guise it may be, this model of mission 'arises among'. The CHRISM motto, another product of Michael Ranken's fertile mind, sums it up admirably: "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."

MSEs, whether they 'own' that label or not, whether they have a ministry recognised and authorised by a church or not, will recognise what I'm talking about. We were not sent to our place of work by our church. We were not trained to do the work we do by our church, theological college or ministry training course. We have not been set the objective of forming a 'church' in our workplace by our Bishop, Moderator or Superintendent (I'd be intrigued to hear of any readers who have). It will no doubt be true that some – perhaps many – MSEs will be involved in 'churchy' activities in the workplace. Christian Unions, Bible study and prayer groups do exist, as do Alpha and similar courses. These all have a part to play in mission. But we are in our workplaces first and foremost as a colleague, relating to our fellow-workers in our role in the organisation and socially.

In that role the ways in which we participate in mission can be summarised as:

- Modelling how it is to live conscious of and inspired by our relationship with God.
- Encouraging others – including the organisation itself - to explore and work with the values we aspire to by virtue of our relationship with God. (I find the fruits of the Spirit a basis that others can buy into readily; see Ephesians 5: 22-23.)
- When we have earned the right and are invited to, walk alongside our colleagues as they encounter God, as their friend and guide.

If this last involves helping a fresh expression of church to form in our workplace, well and good. This may happen. Absence of a

fresh expression of church does not mean that mission is not present.

Michael makes an interesting statement that links in to this: "Workplace ministry was intended to complement the parish church, not to rival it." There are two revealing assumptions underlying this. First, who 'intended' that workplace ministry should complement the parish (or local) church? Such a statement may be true of chaplaincy, but I cannot recall ever seeing a church strategy on workplace ministry setting out the relationship between that ministry and the local church. It is true that mission belongs to God, and the agency of mission is through His people, expressed through the church(es), but workplace ministry can best be explained as the spontaneous result of the activity of God through His dispersed people. The church gathered, or organised, has historically shown little interest in or support of workplace ministry. Again there are notable and usually short-lived exceptions, which serve to highlight this norm.

The second is that workplace ministry might, and on occasion should, rival the local church. Those of us who minister in the workplace know (with our whole being) how important it is to be sustained by and within a community of fellow children of God. This will mostly be through and in a local church, but our support will also, most likely, be drawn from several sources. What we give to others in these contexts is every bit as important as what we receive. There is a symmetry and balance to our 'in', 'up', 'of' and 'out' relationships.

Which brings me to a further weakness in Michael's proposed model. It looks rather like putting all the eggs in one basket. Rather than seeking to maintain a healthy work – life balance, it seems to place too much emphasis on the workplace. If our spiritual community is there also, where does our balance come from? Where is our critical reference point? There are practical questions too: how can our families participate in a workplace-based church? (Its meetings are likely to be at times and places convenient for those who work for that organisation, not their families). How will the workplace itself be a balanced and outward-

looking community? None of these questions will be insurmountable in every case, but posed and answered they must be.

The role of workplace ministry in mission has long been and remains problematic for the churches. They have seldom had much idea where it 'fits'. Occasional experiments in positively encouraging it have as often as not fizzled out as official interest waned (the Luton Industrial Mission College?) or been snuffed out as too 'distinctive' (the Sheffield Industrial Mission?). Nonetheless workplace mission and ministry have been playing a part in extending the Kingdom of God ever since Paul asked Aquila if he could borrow his awl and Priscilla invited Paul to their home to break bread. Poetic license yes, and also the daily experience of those of us ministering and missioning in the workplace.

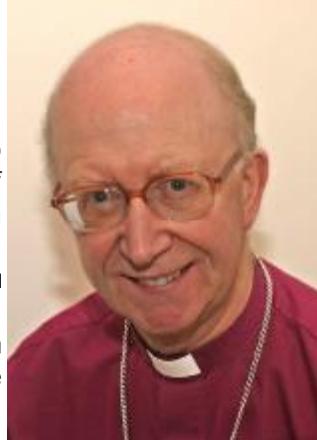
A couple of years ago I contacted Fresh Expressions to register CHRISM with it. The response was 'perplexed'. Several e-mails and weeks later, CHRISM was enrolled as a 'supporting organisation'. We weren't 'church', or a researching body, or a missionary body. We didn't quite fit in one of the pre-ordained boxes, but might be useful so a place was found.

The churches will (re-)discover the role workplace ministry plays in mission when it stops seeking to fit it into a church-shaped model. Mission-shaped church will be fit for mission when it stops trying to be church-shaped mission. And Fresh Expressions will truly be that when it accepts that it does not have to be 'of church.' Our God is already hard at work outside the churches. It's time we joined in.

## Ministry in Secular Employment: the original Fresh Expression

John Pritchard

Ministry in Secular Employment seems to me to be both the original form of ministry and the original fresh expression. That's a pretty good pedigree! So on a dark day, when you wonder whether it's all worth it, it's good to remember that as far as Christian ministry is concerned, you were there first.



All ministry is derived from Christ's own ministry of course, and therefore we all share a fundamental ministerial vocation as baptised Christians. But when Paul raced around present day Turkey and Greece he didn't leave behind a neat series of parishes gathered into deaneries within the territorial jurisdiction of a diocesan bishop: he left behind small Christian communities with perhaps a pair of overseers whose day jobs might have been as shopkeepers, stonemasons, scribes or men who cleaned the amphitheatre after a gladiatorial display.

But where they worked they were witnesses. That's how the faith spread. People watched what they did and listened to what they said in the cut and thrust of ordinary life, and they were attracted to the difference that Christian faith seemed to make. In other words, these witnesses were ministers (authorised by Paul) in secular employment (obviously). The complications began when they started to be paid!

It also seems clear to me that ministry in secular employment is the original fresh expression because it represents ministry by the church in dispersed mode rather than in gathered mode. The Church has endlessly multiplied its 'gathered' ministries, but ministry in secular employment values the place of God's ordinary

operation, i.e. the world of work where people meet in non-domestic networks and gain their sense of worth (or not). MSEs were penetrating different cultural networks long before Mission Shaped Church.

I would also make a case for MSE being the best worked example of a 'mixed-economy church'. By 'mixed economy' Archbishop Rowan meant a mix of classic or 'inherited' models of church and pioneering or 'emerging' models of church. MSEs have always had one foot stuck in the door of inherited church and one foot firmly planted in the risky world of witness in the workplace – a pioneering model. It's a mixed economy in one person!

Feeling better? The fact that no-one seems to understand all this may be galling but I hope it's not entirely de-motivating. I've always appreciated not only the actual ministry of MSEs but also their symbolic value as ministers pointing to 'the world' that God apparently so loved that he gave his only Son. (God didn't so love the Church that he sent his only Son, even if the Church later became the Bride of Christ). The world is the arena of God's loving activity and the place where the Kingdom is to be built; the gathered church is the place for training, encouragement and returning to the vision.

Ministers in Secular Employment might therefore be some of the best interpreters of fresh expressions of church. They understand the context and the cultural incredibility of some traditional forms of church life. Here are some of the interpretative advantages MSEs might have:

1. MSEs know about networks. They know the world in which most secular folk live today. I remember being impressed by a short article written by an MSE years ago in which she described trying to cross a road to get to church one morning to say the daily office. It was the rush hour and the road was completely choc-a-bloc with vehicles flowing in one direction. She realised that she was trying to travel in a direction that was completely counter to the way everyone else was moving. She was trying to cut across the natural flow of society and she began to reassess her ministry

from that perspective. She ended up an MSE, witnessing in the flow of everyday human life, not trying to dodge it to get to a place of safety (a church). MSEs know that people live in very different rhythms, shapes and networks from those that parish-based ministry might like or assume. Fresh expressions of church try to take those rhythms, shapes and networks seriously too.

2. MSEs know a bit about secular spirituality. They know that more people consult their horoscopes than read the Bible. They know that self-improvement manuals and assertiveness training are more popular than Parish Communion. They understand that reiki, feng-shui, kaballah and Almost Anything are more acceptable than boring old Christianity. But they also recognise the signs of restlessness, of search and longing, of dissatisfaction and bewilderment in so many people today. They know that the riches of the Christian tradition are huge and vastly underestimated by our culture, in spite of being formed by it. MSEs can tell the same story as fresh expressions such as hOME, mayBe, Sanctus, Contemplative Fire and hundreds of others.

3. MSEs know about accountability and transparency. They understand that any organisation has to have a non-secretive culture. It thrives on mutual trust. It's easy for enthusiastic evangelists and pioneers having an entrepreneurial streak to want to get on quickly in case the fat lady starts to sing. The result, however, can be badly thought-out enterprises that founder on the first set of rapids and are left exposed and deteriorating in the middle of the river. Good accountability is accepted as normative in business and public bodies. MSEs live with that reality daily and can bring it to the fresh expressions table.

4. MSEs understand the need for sustainability. Some fresh expressions have a fast start but run out of fuel after a few laps. That only encourages the doubters and allows the Eeyore brigade to flourish. We need organisational wisdom to structure fresh expressions for life beyond phase one. Where is the funding coming from after the first five years of tapering diocesan support? What shape of leadership will be required when the first charismatic enthusiast has moved on? How will relations with other forms of

church in the deanery be maintained? Who will take the hard decisions? There is much wisdom in the worlds MSEs inhabit. Bring on the people who know.

You can see where I'm travelling. I'm recognising that in MSEs we have a resource of experience and wisdom which goes back to the origins of ministry and which addresses many of the contemporary questions about fresh expressions of church. I trust that MSEs will become more confident of their gifts, and that the gathered church will be more conscious of the treasure in their midst. We all have to work at it.

But if in doubt, and redundancy is all around, and even the bishop has forgotten your name, remember Bonhoeffer's conviction that what really matters is 'prayer and righteous action'. Whatever the pressure – prayer and righteous action. None of us will do much better than that.

*+John Pritchard has been Bishop of Oxford since 2007. He taught at Cranmer Hall, Durham, went on to be Archdeacon of Canterbury and then returned to the North-East as Bishop of Jarrow. He has a strong commitment to realistic training for ministry today and tomorrow. And once upon a time he was a tram conductor in Blackpool.*

## The future of CHRISM

*Firstly two responses to the questionnaire included with the last edition of Ministers-at-Work*

### 1. From Keith Holt

#### *Introduction*

As we know all organisations have to change to be able to communicate in meaningful ways in the new worlds that each generation experiences. In every period, charities and businesses have to try to offer something that is needed to a group or groups. Perhaps the most encouraging thing about this rather trite statement is that it applies particularly to communities of faith! None can go on doing/saying things the same way, and survive.

The biggest change in the history of CHRISM was the decision to give the original project official form, as a charity. As part of that we defined our governance, constitution and purpose. A degree of planning is clearly needed within that framework and CHRISM has done well over the years, putting much wisdom, energy and skill to doing exactly that.

The planning task has always been difficult. It is made more so when the Christian church in the UK (the chief area of concern here) seems to show even less interest in understanding that, in the real world, it is not usually helpful to try to identify places which are "secular" and others which are not. That dualistic path might suggest that God should be informed of large no-go areas! The institutional/ecclesiastical bodies at present collude in reinforcing dualism. They seem to have abandoned, for now, their original confidence that humanity needs an over-arching framework (or meta-narrative) which faith can provide. Public confidence in the value of the sacred might then grow again. Christian institutions might become less defensive and publicise the wider responsibility that each person of a faith group might be said to have for "living a good life" in their various roles and locations.

It is this loss of a sense of God's inclusiveness which is reflected in the lack of overt encouragement, for instance to Readers and Ordinands, to embrace the wider world, including that of paid work. Thus, CHRISM has found hard the path of engagement with the power structures of church, both regionally and at the "parish" level, to use an Anglican term! That path seems unlikely to ease in the near future.

Church is only one facet of CHRISM's context. Commentators and theologians have long remarked that God is not limited to structures, even churches, and is necessarily proportionately more "active" in the rest of living, simply because there is so much of it! This thought may help in considering the way forward.

We have been here before of course, and unsurprisingly it is not only CHRISM that continues to wrestle with fundamentals. At the recent AGM of the Industrial Christian Fellowship I heard that they seem, at least to some, to spend a great deal of energy and time considering their future without finding radical conclusions! Time to move on to a few quite different thoughts.

### *Some practical points.*

1. Is it too painful to set out, in simple terms, what CHRISM is primarily for? Clearly our constitution is in language designed to leave doors open. We can become defensive immediately someone says a challenging thing. John Eatock (Ministers-at-Work, October 2008) offers an outsider's view that has more than a little truth in it. To prepare realistic plans we first need to decide what we are for. Is this pointing to the need for a clear, sharp statement of what we are about now, in our present context?

2. Some areas from which such a statement might emerge include: providing a sense of belonging i.e. support - presumably for members but could also be for very specific projects - and lobbying on behalf of members but acting as "grit" to help make "outsiders" think. I note it has long been fashionable for particular aspects of theology to be handled by an authoritative external speaker at

conferences, and/or AGMs. For instance, Dr Colin Hicks, until his retirement Director of the British National Space Centre and a prominent Baptist in South London, contributed to Christian thinking on the relationship between science and faith/religion when speaking at recent AGM of the Industrial Christian Fellowship's

3. Someone wrote recently that we give too much time worshipping Jesus (I resist the theological morass out there) rather than following his example. CHRISM could spend a great deal of effort, commendably according to management theory, considering a hierarchy of strategies and detailed, calendarised, plans. It might be more appropriate to think through what modest things can be done now.

4. The world of work and those in it have been spun around a little over the last few months, with more surprises to come no doubt. The context has changed in many key ways, and we cannot see what may come next. This points to a rapid response stance; travelling very light. In these unusual times people are attracted to something that makes a small but pertinent/high profile contribution. That would inevitably raise CHRISM's voice, for better or worse.

5. We need to be very careful not to try to do too much. Likewise we cannot please everyone all the time! Instead impact could come from carefully pin-pointing those (and the subjects) who are likely to see something in "it" for them. That is the "it" to go for. Others may later join something that has started to meet a need. What could CHRISM offer, and to whom?

6. We should try not to fear criticism, or complaint. "Customers", and normal real people, will always shout if they are engaged or challenged! Radical going-to-the-root-of-the-present-situation may be what is needed?

7. We live in an age where competition is still one of the dominating ideas, as it has been since societies arose. Instinctively, but perhaps less logically, I sense that what is actually

needed everywhere is the prioritising of co-operation. This is not entirely a digression because CHRISM, as a structure, may feel it has to compete - you know who the others are on broadly the same "territory". After all churches even compete with similar places in their areas! I hope the outworking of the future of CHRISM will recognise the danger, and the opportunity!

8. Resources: an obvious point. I do not think CHRISM friends would expect their Committee to work themselves into the ground on our behalf. Resources are often of superb quality, but they will not run to anything more than a focussed short-term plan.

9. Rob Fox had some interesting things to say in the last edition of Ministers-at-Work. Perhaps starting where we are, an issue is whether CHRISM can be/should be directing its energies more towards ordinary people who do not hold "office"? Can we demonstrate inclusivity in this sense, without throwing the baby out with the bathwater?

10. Years ago we organised a CHRISM day exploring CHRISM related issues with Muslims, in London. Few of our usual supporters came! It was an idea ahead of its time. Now even Anglican bishops are organising similar events! Just a thought for today.

11. Now to a difficult point: timing. Most success is in large part because people got the timing of their initiative/project right. Often that comes back to meeting a need felt at that time!

That's enough from me. Some of this is old hat, most is out of touch with CHRISM's current thinking, but I hope it's better than nothing! Well done to you all for carrying the flag, and for giving so much!

*Keith Holt is a former Honorary Treasurer of CHRISM and one of its "founder" members. In various capacities his career was in the Civil Service. For about sixteen years he tried to be an MSE and retains an interest in that and liberal theology.*

## 2. From Dorrie Johnson

### *High and low points of past involvement with CHRISM?*

Sharing and exploring a deep engagement with theology – in/of organisations, systems, companies – and the sharing of information about the practice of ministry in secular environments, so that I could 'do it' without reference or even noticing through my work and relationships.

### *What would I expect of CHRISM in 2018?*

- a. God to be coming out of every communicative part of CHRISM's members – not to evangelise or even to be mentioned by name – but to bless in whatever context;
- b. Ministers so wholly immersed in 'MSE theology' that they are completely forgetful of it in seeking to enable, facilitate, affirm the being and doing of others in whatever the context;
- c. A support network for the lonely but vital MSE ministry (see a. below) – whoever practises it.

### *What would individual MSEs notice?*

- a. A blossoming of their responsibility to find (discern, if you want a churchy word) and fight for God's gifts of the Spirit – justice, hope, joy, peace etc. – in their work and that of others, so that those others may see the relevance of that discovery;
- b. A laity sure of its own ministry, its importance and relevance.

### *What would CHRISM be doing for the churches and the wider community?*

- a. Realising a new vision (see a. above and expand it);
- b. Scaring the church – at least the most conservative and traditionalist parts – with its practical vision and holistic ministry;
- c. Witnessing to God's concern for all God's world – listening to and

harnessing the actions of other organisations which affirm that – even, or perhaps especially, if not Christian;  
d. Rejoicing because CHRISM got it right in 2008.

*Plans: single small action?*

Have a whole weekend CHRISM meeting without mentioning the institutional church – its processes, its services, its liturgy, its practices, its relationship – once! – and through that discover what ministry really might mean in other environments.

*Plans: a bolder action?*

Stop worrying about the church. Go forth and be MSE – it is a difficult but God-given ministry. God did not create the church to absorb ministry or even to dictate it. It has, in some measure at least, authorised alternative forms of ministry. Does it matter if the Dean of Somewhere and the Bishop of Somewhere Else have never heard of it and can't understand it, if God has given it to us? It would be very helpful, though, if those bishops ordaining MSEs could explain to the 'church' and to those having responsibility for education, particularly theological education, what they thought they were doing.

*Dorrie Johnson is retired from the NHS where she held clinical, managerial and public health posts. She became a church authorised MSE in 1980.*

*Secondly a report from a special meeting to review our strategy for the future growth and development of CHRISM held on 22nd November 2008 in Manchester*

**From Margaret Joachim**

***Keep on keeping on***

About eighteen CHRISM members met in Whitefield Methodist Church hall on a chilly day in November to discuss the direction for the organisation for the next few years. Our discussions were based on the responses to the questionnaire circulated to all members in the summer.

There was general agreement that the aspects of CHRISM most valued by members were the friendship and support the organisation gave members, the Journal, the opportunity to discuss and develop theology and ecclesiology for work-focussed ministry, and its prophetic nature (interestingly, this is a topic currently under discussion in the Journal.) However, CHRISM is an organisation with a comparatively small, ageing membership and limited financial resources (we broadly cover our costs from subscriptions year on year and CHRISSET holds our reserve of a few thousand pounds, but we have no current method of generating additional income.) Our activities are led and organised by a small number of willing volunteers, virtually all of whom, by definition, have full-time jobs and formal or informal church links which occupy a considerable amount of their time. That is the nature of MSE, and is common ground for all our members (though an increasing number are reaching retirement age.)

None of that stopped us looking into the future. Ideas for 'what CHRISM would be like and would be doing in 2018' ranged from 'liberating the church from clerical domination' and 're-establishing the relevance of Christianity in everyday life' through to suggestions that we should become a more political, lobbying organisation (presumably within the ecclesiastical arena rather than government) and that we should have stronger, more formal

recognition within church structures to influence strategy and theology about work more effectively. There would still be a definite need to support MSEs at all stages of their development, and to continue to be inclusive in the broadest sense.

There has always been a tension within CHRISM between the need for more recognition and support from “The Church” in its various denominations, and the desire to sit very light to “The Church” and have the confidence to pursue MSE wherever it takes us. (Dorrie Johnson’s written contribution, published elsewhere in this Journal, puts the second point of view most effectively.) This ‘split’ was clear in the suggestions for actions CHRISM could take to move towards its 2018 future, which divided very clearly into:

- Things we could do to get “the Church” to notice us (‘develop a higher profile in Church House, General Synod, Archbishops’ Council, etc.’)
- Activities to support MSEs themselves and their ministry (‘an office/rule of life for work’, ‘support ordinary people ‘in the pew’ in recognising their ministry in the workplace’, ‘strong local MSE groups in every region’.
- A range of administrative actions to improve our internal effectiveness and potential reach (‘update and improve the website’, ‘ability to join and pay online’, ‘seek funding to employ a secretary-general’ etc.)

There was also one intriguing suggestion that we should do nothing for a year but pray on our mission statement and plan a roadshow and six regional events.

Perhaps because time was limited and the railways were more than usually chaotic, there was no overall agreement on an over-arching direction. The group eventually decided that, to begin with, CHRISM should focus on two things:

- Supporting MSEs to be MSEs (inward focus on members)
- Supporting and resourcing MSE ministry (outward focus beyond CHRISM itself)

And that our priorities for this year should be:

1. The Journal
2. Maintaining and updating the website, updating the mailing list and organising the Reflective Weekend
3. Running the annual conference and identifying existing MSE groups
4. Establishing new local groups

The Committee should also give time at its meetings to continue to consider CHRISM strategy, and should promote continuing discussion among members through the Journal and other appropriate means. (Which sounds quite like, 'Do nothing for a year but pray and plan.')

Perhaps it is disappointing that we didn't discover the grand idea which would inspire us all, but perhaps we already have it, which is why we are all wrestling with the messy business of being MSEs. One member responded to the survey with a most perceptive statement: 'We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realising that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.'



*Some of the attendees at the meeting. From left to right: Pauline Pearson, Rebecca Craven, David Simon, Stan Frost, Ruth Brothwell, Catherine Binns, Phil Aspinall, Hugh Lee, Paul Romano, Margaret Joachim, Adrian Holdstock. (Clearly MSEs can be found in diverse disguises and most good department stores.)*

## The right to liberty

Dorothy Peyton Jones

This article is based on a sermon preached in Pembroke College, Cambridge in June 2008.

Over the past months our MPs have debated passionately whether it is right to detain a person without charge for over 28 days. The proposal to do so has been vehemently opposed as an infringement of the right to liberty; one of the basic British values, Article 5 in our Human Rights Act. This human right is already regularly overruled, on a huge scale, for people considered to be mentally ill, or as Article 5 puts it of 'unsound mind'. In the calendar year ending March 2008, under the 1983 Mental Health Act, 47,600 people were detained in England and Wales. 23,000 were held under Section 2 which is for up to 28 days, and most of the rest under Section 3 which is for up to six months (and can be renewed)\*.

I am a social worker, approved under the Mental Health Act. Previously my role was known as an Approved Social Worker, but from November 2008, the title has changed to Approved Mental Health Professional (AMPH), reflecting the new possibility of nurses or occupational therapists being trained to take on this work. Part of my job is to run the process which leads to people being detained in hospital. I am on a rota to arrange mental health assessments under the act, which require an interview with two approved doctors and an AMPH. Sometimes we find people are not too unwell; sometimes they can be supported in the community; sometimes they come in to hospital voluntarily. But in Cambridgeshire, on average once a day, someone ends up being forcibly conveyed to hospital, at best by ambulance; at worst, handcuffed in a cage in a police van, having been restrained by several officers while their family watch aghast. 'You can't do this to me!' they scream.

\* Inpatients formally detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983, NHS Information Centre, 2008

If we move from the national scale to the more particular; in Fulbourn Hospital locally, there are about 70 people right now who have not agreed to be there. A few have come via a court but most have committed no crime. No judge or jury has sanctioned their detention. They cannot leave the wards, even to go out for a walk, without the express permission of a doctor. If they try to leave they can be physically restrained, or brought back by police. Some will have no privacy, being under continual observation; many may have to share a bedroom. If they are detained for treatment, they may be compulsorily injected with drugs.

I am 'approved' by my local authority, which is required by the law of the land to provide this service. As a follower of Jesus Christ I need to know whether this work can be approved by my Lord and my God; by the one who said he came to proclaim liberty to the oppressed and to set the captives free.

For a start, we are not detaining just anybody. An assessment is requested because the person is observed by others to be in acute mental distress. When I have preached on this topic, I have used two Biblical examples of people whose behaviour might nowadays lead to a mental health assessment being arranged.

The first was Saul, as depicted in 1 Samuel 16-18; a king, rich and powerful, but much stressed by having fallen out with his adviser, Samuel. He suffers episodes when he is described as tormented by an evil spirit, which is seen as coming from God. His symptoms were visible to his servants. Saul is rich, which gives him more options; he is not reliant on being offered a direct payment to purchase what he wants. He already has an individual budget. The servants suggest music therapy, and David playing on the harp soothes him. An effective, non-restrictive intervention is the social worker's preferred option. Alas, its efficacy is limited. The treatment plan breaks down because Saul's attitude to David is inconsistent. Saul throws his spear at David more than once, causing him to flee. Saul is even recorded as throwing his spear at his own son, Jonathan. Saul kills himself in the end.

The second example was the man who lived among the tombs, described in Mark 5. His social status is not recorded but it seems a fair assumption that he began as less rich and powerful than King Saul. By the time Jesus meets him he is outcast. He is described as demon-possessed. He does not wear clothes, he cries out and he self-harms, cutting himself with stones. He is chained hand and foot and kept under guard.

The people whom I am asked to assess are often experiencing some of the symptoms of those in these stories: they can be tormented, unpredictable, suicidal, screaming, self-harming, oblivious to social norms like what to wear, perhaps violent to carers or family. We are looking at a group who are already oppressed and constrained by their own condition; and additionally by others' response to them, if it is one of fear and rejection.

I believe our intervention can be justified, theologically and morally, if it is done in faith, in hope and with love. The theological basis for intervention lies in their need and our power to relieve their suffering. In Matthew 25 Jesus tells the parable of the sheep and the goats in which he censures those who have ignored the hungry, the thirsty, the lonely, the sick, the naked and those in prison. They have been aware of them but not taken care of them. When I see these people in mental distress, I feel impelled to act because I have some power to rescue them from the invisible chains which are binding them already. I make them go to hospital because I believe it will lead to healing. Traumatic though the process is, I have to believe, to have faith, that it is the route to something better, and it would be worse to leave them. Detention under the Mental Health Act is not just the exercise of power but a duty of care.

But what about the fact that it is not what they want? In effect, the hungry are saying 'no thank you, go away', and I am force-feeding them. Social work values are usually very compatible with those of the kingdom of God. Now the role is open to other professionals, social workers will be very keen to ensure the continuation of their value base. In our training respect for people's autonomy and their right to choose is absolutely

fundamental, even if we disagree with their choice. Sometimes when I leave people in the community I have to remind myself that God is a risk-taker too. If I detain them, I fall back on Jesus' command that I am to love my neighbour as myself. When people are so ill their thinking may be distorted and their judgement impaired. Every AMPH hopes that once the person has received some treatment they will acknowledge that they needed it. I am acting in hope that if I were suffering similarly, someone might step in to intervene and limit risks. Usually most damage is done to the person him or herself; through, for instance, neglect of their physical health, loss of work, loss of relationships, running up debts, risky or criminal behaviour, even death. The cost to others is usually secondary but may be deeply regretted later once insight is regained.

An additional concern is the manner in which we intervene, which is where love comes in. The man in the cemetery was chained and guarded. Jesus spoke to him, and asked him his name. When we assess someone we try to respect their humanity and dignity. We try to ensure that a compulsory admission is the last resort; that all the resourcefulness of the person's well-wishers and the services cannot come up with a less coercive approach. We try to act with discretion and avoid a spectacle in the street. The two doctors are concerned to make a medical recommendation; it is the AMPH whose job is to consider pets and children and packing a bag with personal effects to soften the hospital experience. We need to work tirelessly to make the hospital a place of safety; a therapeutic environment not a punitive one. We need to observe the due process of law; to ensure people know their rights; that they can apply to a tribunal for an independent review. Our power should not be used in an arbitrary or cruel manner.

In the end, I am not my brother's keeper, but the gospel urges me to regard any human in trouble as my brother or sister. Jesus saw a seriously disabled man in the cemetery, and left him 'clothed and in his right mind'. If our interventions go some way towards that kind of restoration, we can work with a clear conscience.

*Dorothy Peyton Jones is employed as a social worker in a Community Mental Health Team, and has been ordained since 1986.*

## Paul: a tentmaker

### Helen Parry

Paul went to see Aquila and Priscilla, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them (Acts 18: 2-3).

Bulus is pastor of a small church in sub-Saharan Africa. His congregation support him as best they can. But they are subsistence farmers or petty traders, and none has anything to spare after providing for their families. So Bulus has a chicken farm, and regularly sells eggs in the market.

Angela is a teacher. Feeling that God has called her to work overseas, she resigns her job in Britain and goes to teach in a technical college in the Gulf, earning a comfortable salary.

Which of these two is a 'tentmaker'?

Many of us might immediately point to Angela. She is working in a country where there is no freedom for open Christian ministry. So she uses her professional qualification to enter the country legitimately, with the aim of using whatever limited opportunities she has of witnessing to the love of Christ.

When the apostle Paul's ministry took him to Corinth, he reasoned every Sabbath in the synagogue. And later he moved his teaching centre from the synagogue to 'the house of Titius Justus, a worshipper of God'. He was absolutely open about his reason for being in Corinth, and he devoted himself to public preaching.

At some point, Paul had, intriguingly, acquired skills as a tentmaker. So when he arrived in Corinth, he first went naturally to where the tentmakers lived. Being welcomed into Priscilla and Aquila's house, he not only stayed with them but worked with them, earning enough money to support himself, so that he could offer the good news of Christ 'free of charge' to the people of Corinth.

So what about Bulus? Isn't he more accurately a 'tentmaker'?

The way in which Christians use the word gives the impression that for those who go to work abroad their profession is a pretext, a means of earning a salary, and their main goal is their 'Christian ministry'. First of all, however, there is an issue of integrity. A work permit is issued for the performance of a needed job, which thus requires full commitment.

But even more important: the job IS the Christian ministry. To treat it as a pretext is to reinforce the 'sacred/secular divide'. In fact, it is as Angela provides outstanding service in her job that Christ is glorified. And the same applies to us, here.

Incidentally, Bulus is the Hausa version of Paul.

*This was the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity 'Word of the Week' for 15th December 2008 and is reproduced here with the permission of LICC. Readers of Ministers-at-Work are invited to receive free bi-weekly e-mails from LICC containing such 'Words of the Week'. See the LICC website [www.licc.org.uk](http://www.licc.org.uk) for how to subscribe.*

## Reports of past events

**Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (US) Annual Conference, 24th – 26th October 2008, Santa Fe, New Mexico**

### **Phil Aspinall**

If there is one thing you have to do in life you must visit Ghost Ranch in Abiquiu, New Mexico! It is a truly wonderful place set at 6,500 feet in the high desert of New Mexico, with spectacular views and the most amazing geology all around, surrounded by staggeringly beautiful cliffs and mesas. It is also an excellent place for reading, meditation, painting, walking...

I also discovered the nearby Monastery of Christ in the Desert, at the end of a 13 mile dirt road winding over plains, canyons and river valleys. Thomas Merton spent time here in this Benedictine community (but I was recommended to it by a Presbyterian). The rock formations are spectacular. I later also discovered the gorge of the Rio Grande, which is incredible! You will gather that I have fallen in love with northern New Mexico! And the Tentmakers' conference was good too...

The venue was the other Ghost Ranch, in the centre of Santa Fe, which was very well organised and located close to the delightful old town. Both facilities are run by the Presbyterians as conference and retreat centres, but open their doors to many and varied groups.

We were 24 participants in total, including the speakers and officials, and the majority were Presbyterian, with some United Church of Christ. This year, I was the only Episcopalian and we discussed how we have rather lost touch with the National Association for the Self-Supporting Active Ministry. Among the participants were several who had attended CHRISM conferences here in the UK. The list of their secular roles is very extensive and shows a breadth of engagements – which they refer to as their “Tent”.

The theme was “Care for the shepherd; hope for the flock” and I discovered only a few weeks before the event, when I got around to reading the programme, that I was the keynote speaker! The brochure billed it as “from a ‘Kingdom’ perspective” – intended as a joke by the colonials - so I started with the thought that ‘Kingdom’ was a meaningless concept if you didn’t live in one! We talked about a non-hierarchical view of who are the shepherds and who are the flock. We did then move on to do some work on “Parables of the Kingdom” as we have done at previous CHRISM conferences. And I was taken to task for my use of non inclusive language – kingdom!

The theme was developed in its two parts: we discussed models of self care, and personal suggestions for how and where people find support and encouragement. Many people are very isolated, and get little support for their Tentmaking situation from the Session or Presbytery. The Board of Pensions has an “I can change” programme which is a holistic approach to care, principally about health, fitness and well-being. We had an interesting bible study on models of self care used by Jesus as told in Matthew’s gospel – and found that they don’t involve a lot of time spent on your own! The second plenary looked at successful and innovative models of hope for the flock – which inevitably became rather congregationally focussed.

The preacher for the four worship sessions was Bill Imes, a former President of the Presbyterian Seminary on Bangor, Maine. He gave four substantial but well argued sermons, from his avowed position of a lifelong Calvinist, with all its implications for what it means to be “ordained” and a “minister”, and for taking sin seriously. He teased out the implications for self care – the traps in our own lives which prevent us caring for ourselves.

A highlight of the weekend was a jazz concert arranged as a benefit for the Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (APT) in the 1st Presbyterian Church in Santa Fe. This was very well attended in a packed church, with enthusiastic support for the band – one of whom is a local APT member and lay pastor.

The challenge from the 2006 conference had been to attract new tentmakers from immigrant fellowships (and to have 200 participating by 2009) so this year we were joined by Angel Suarez, the member of the General Assembly responsible for New Immigrant Churches based at Presbyterian Church (USA) headquarters in Louisville. There were two other representatives from the General Assembly: Rick Young, from the Pensions Board, and Joyce Lieberman from the Office of Vocations. (Wouldn't it be great if the UK churches would send equivalent people to CHRISM conferences!)

The APT business meeting was very efficient but covered a very broad range of issues, which has been given a structure and organisation under Jeff Scott, the current Moderator. There is a positive feel of many good things happening. The Nominating Committee (of past Moderators) had done its work well and the elections went very smoothly indeed. The APT website is up and running, but the content and frequency of their newsletter "Tent-talk", is very dependent on materials received. They still have to make use of the \$2000 grant from the General Assembly to visit church seminaries, but contact has been made with Commissioned Lay Pastors (similar to Anglican Readers or Methodist Lay Preachers) for input to their annual training weekend.

The most significant discussion point was the "Big Tent" – an event being planned for June 2009 to bring together 10 different specialist sectors of the Presbyterian Church, including New Immigrants and Tentmakers, among others. APT will have an exhibition stand and will run a seminar on Tentmaking in the workshop sessions. They also put forward the idea of running a seminar on MSE – to be run by me and anyone else who would like to come.

So the dates for the 2009 conference was proposed to be Friday 12th - Saturday 13th June as part of the Big Tent event in Atlanta, Georgia. Book the date in your diary now!

## Forthcoming events

**International Conference of Worker Priests, Pentecost 2009, Bergamo, Italy**

**Phil Aspinall**

*Migration in this globalised world*

The annual International Conference of Worker Priests will take place as usual at Pentecost and this year it will run from Friday 29th May until midday on Monday 1st June. The venue will be in Bergamo in northern Italy, and there will be the possibility of staying longer at the Hermitage run by Mario Signorelli on a hill outside the city.

You are invited to join the delegates who will be attending the conference. This is a great opportunity to meet with our European colleagues and to learn more of their experiences, struggles and successes. It is a chance to understand ways of Christian engagement in the world of work and politics.

The theme for the conference was taken from a discussion at the end of last year's conference in Lyon. Migration is a phenomenon that touches all of us – through television and newspapers, in the areas where we live, in our work and in organisations with which we work. How do immigrants impact on us in our work, in our social involvements and in our spiritual life?

The original discussion prompted us to think in a global perspective – to pass from our Eurocentric view, to see our life in the “north” with the eyes of someone from the “south”. It was even suggested that we should invite someone from the “south” to understand and avoid making our own projections better.

Another sub-theme was the need to understand and fight against the causes of migration and see the influences on our world of work; to consider how to fight with immigrants for their rights in the midst of insecure work and to attack the politics which builds walls around Europe.

But we must also live in the midst of people of different cultures. How are we to pass from multi-culturalism to inter-culturalism? Perhaps here we can draw on the experiences of our September conference. How can the prophetic vision of the bible help us better understand and respond?

There will be opportunity to develop these topics in the proposed workshops:

- The global financial crisis and migration;
- Working conditions and migration;
- Migration in the context of global warming; and
- Migration in the biblical perspective.

We are asked to discuss the theme 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 the beginning of April. We would particularly welcome any personal stories of experiences prompted by these questions – even the smallest contribution can be incorporated in our presentation.

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, dedicated Christian commitment, and their own fascinating stories. It's also very enjoyable.

We hope you will want to join us. Please do contact me if you would like more details. For contact details see inside back cover.

## Other dates for your diary

### Christian Association of Business Executives (CABE)

**11th February 2009:** CABE Network event with Sally Muggeridge, Chief Executive, Industry and Parliament Trust, 6.30 pm at the Hoop and Grapes, 80 Farringdon Street, London EC4B 4AL.

**18th March 2009:** CABE Network event with John Ripley, Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Unilever, 6.30 pm at the Hoop and Grapes, 80 Farringdon Street, London EC4B 4AL.

**22nd April 2009:** CABE Network event with Peter Shaukat, Founder and CEO of a global network of business initiatives based in the Arab world and Asia, 6.30 pm at the Hoop and Grapes, 80 Farringdon Street, London EC4B 4AL.

**19th May 2009:** CABE Paper, speaker: Jill Garrett, Director, Caret, 6.30pm at St Peter's, Vere Street, London W1G 0DQ.

**30th March 2009:** Network of Entrepreneurial Talent (NET) event: with Paul Williams, CEO of MLS and Steve Mills of A1 Lofts, 6.30pm - 8.30pm on the HMS President, docked at Blackfriars Pier, Victoria Embankment, London EC4Y OHJ.

**27th April 2009:** NET event with Lord Michael Hastings, Global Head of Citizenship and Diversity at KPMG, 6.30pm - 8.30pm on the HMS President, docked at Blackfriars Pier, Victoria Embankment, London EC4Y OHJ.

(See: [www.cabe-online.org](http://www.cabe-online.org) for more details of these and other events)

## **Christians at Work**

**27th June 2009:** 'Serving God at work' (2009 Conference) with Dr John Temple, at The Independent Chapel, Spicer Street, St Albans, 10.30 am. Cost: £25 for non-members or £20 for Associates (including lunch and all refreshments). (See: [www.christiansatwork.org.uk/resources/Networking%20Live%20-%20January%202009.pdf](http://www.christiansatwork.org.uk/resources/Networking%20Live%20-%20January%202009.pdf))

## **Cliff College**

**25th March 2009:** 'Liberating lay people with mission in the world of work' (day conference) with David Clark, at Cliff College, Calver, Hope Valley, Derbyshire S32 3XG, 10.00am - 4.00pm. Cost: £16 including lunch and refreshments. Booking: contact [postgrad@cliffcollege.org](mailto:postgrad@cliffcollege.org) or 01246 584216. (See [www.cliffpostgrad.org.uk](http://www.cliffpostgrad.org.uk) and also flyer enclosed with this edition of Ministers-at-Work.)

## **Faith in Business (The Ridley Hall Foundation)**

**27th - 29th March 2009:** 'Entrepreneurship': Faith in Business/ Transforming Business 20th Anniversary Conference at Ridley Hall, Ridley Hall Rd, Cambridge CB3 9HG. Cost: £225 residential, £165, non-residential. Booking: download booking form from: [www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/forms/entrepreneurship-booking.pdf](http://www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/forms/entrepreneurship-booking.pdf) (See [www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/fibprogramme.html](http://www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/fibprogramme.html))

## **The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity**

**5th February 2009:** 'Grand designs and masterplans. Or, how God put man in space' (talk) with John Lee, an architect with Arca, Manchester, 7.30pm - 9.30pm, at Starbucks, Oxford Road, Manchester, M1 6EY. Cost: £6.00 (concessions £4.00) including coffee and cake. Booking (essential): contact [manchester@licc.org.uk](mailto:manchester@licc.org.uk) or 07907 954664.

**6th - 7th March 2009:** 'Anointed for the marketplace – kingdom dynamics for the world of work and business' (two day conference) with Charles McLachlan of 'Transformation Anointing', at Carver's Warehouse, 77 Dale Street, Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2HG. Cost: £80 including refreshments, lunch, and a buffet supper on Saturday. Booking: download booking form from [www.licc.org.uk/files/Anointed%20Leaflet\\_01%2009\\_v2.pdf](http://www.licc.org.uk/files/Anointed%20Leaflet_01%2009_v2.pdf).

**2nd April 2009:** 'The culture of the corporation' (talk) with Jonathan Burr, Chief Operating Officer for IT IS Holdings plc, 7.30pm - 9.30pm, at Starbucks, Oxford Road, Manchester, M1 6EY. Cost: £6.00 (concessions £4.00) including coffee and cake. Booking (essential): contact [manchester@licc.org.uk](mailto:manchester@licc.org.uk) or 07907 954664.

(See [www.licc.org.uk/events](http://www.licc.org.uk/events) for more details of these events)

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

**25 February 2009:** 'The Good Workplace - looking at 'Leading in Managing Diversity'' with Ann Benyon, 11.30am - 3.30pm, at 39 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9XF. Cost: free. Booking: contact [lisamartin@churchinwales.org.uk](mailto:lisamartin@churchinwales.org.uk) or 02920 348252. (Contact [lisamartin@churchinwales.org.uk](mailto:lisamartin@churchinwales.org.uk) for details of this and other Telos events.)

## And finally...

The night frosts of autumn had descended on the village, high in the hills of Montana, and the Elders of the tribe came to the Chief to ask: "Tell us, wise Chief, will the winter ahead be cold?" "Yes, the winter will be cold," the Chief replied, "Go and gather wood." So the people of the village gathered wood.

Just to be on the safe side, a few days later the Chief telephoned the National Weather Service and asked, "Will this winter be cold?" "Yes, it will be cold" came the reply.

Two weeks later the sun still shone and the snow had not come. The Elders of the tribe came to the Chief and asked, "The snows have not yet come. Will it really be a cold winter?" "Yes, it will be a very cold winter" the Chief replied. "Go and gather more wood." So the people gathered more wood.

Puzzled, the Chief again telephoned the National Weather Service and asked, "Will it really be a cold winter?" "Yes, it will be very cold", the lady from the Weather Service replied.

Two more weeks went by, and still the snows had not come. The Elders of the tribe came to the Chief and asked, "The snows have still not yet come. Will it really be a cold winter?" "Yes, it will be a very, very cold winter" the Chief replied. "Go and gather as much wood as you can find." So the people gathered wood from miles around.

To make absolutely sure, the Chief again phoned the Weather Service. "You have told me it will be very cold, but still the snows have not come" he said. The Weather Service assured him that not only would it be very cold, but one of the coldest winters on record. "But how can you be sure of this?" the Chief asked. "Because we have never seen the Native Americans gathering so much wood", came the reply.....



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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