

# Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in  
secular ministry

Number 109

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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 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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## Editorial

As I was writing my editorial for the last edition of Ministers-at-Work I was conscious that there was very little in that edition that acknowledged the global financial crisis, which by then had begun seriously to affect us all in many different ways but had, in particular, begun to change the world of work. My wages, for instance, and the wages of most of my team are supported by a major British charity which - hit by a reduction in income from legacies (because of falling property prices) and even in revenue from its charity shops - is planning on cutting back on how much it gives away next year by between 15% and 20%. This makes our jobs - in the comparatively cosy world of academia - just that bit less secure. I guess you all have similar or even worse tales to tell.

This lack of acknowledgement of the financial crisis seemed odd - even remiss - for a journal aimed at MSEs - who of all ministers - surely need to be thinking about and responding to changes in the world about them. In Ministers-at-Work we surely should be reflecting on what major changes in the world of work signify and what they are going to mean for ourselves and others. (Various of Jesus' parables, such as the one about the wise and foolish virgins, seem relevant here, together with his many injunctions to be watchful.) And so I planned to try and include some articles about the global financial crisis in this edition.

This seemed particularly imperative because, as I indicated in my editorial to the last edition, a dominant theme of that issue was the relationship between MSE and church - both traditional and fresh expressions of church. Of course that relationship is interesting but surely of much greater concern is our relationship with the world. Dorrie Johnson - in her contribution to the last edition - expressed the wish that MSEs should spend less time talking about church 'and through that discover what ministry might really mean in other environments' and this is surely true.

At our Reflective Weekend in February we revisited 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.' I say 'we' but regrettably I couldn't be there. However it sounds as if the weekend was a great success if only because 'we' stopped talking about church and returned to discussing and reflecting upon what is surely more important: our core values as MSEs. In this edition of Ministers-at-Work there are four contributions stemming from the Reflective Weekend: two interesting reflections upon the events of the weekend itself, some thoughts presented at the final Eucharist and a rewriting of the Beatitudes!

But where are those articles on the financial crisis? Well I have only managed to solicit one: it's a paper produced by Andreas Whittam Smith - written as a briefing for a brief debate on the financial crisis at the General Synod of the Church of England on 10th February (page 10). I was hoping for more. Christians are of course responding to the financial crisis (c.f. the Archbishop of York's speech on the implications of the financial crisis and the recession later at the same Synod<sup>1</sup>) but if anyone would like to contribute an article on the subject - especially from an MSE's perspective - I would be very grateful.

Meanwhile CHRISM has made 'Ministry in Recession' the theme for its annual summer conference on the 25th-27th September, at St Chad's College, Durham (see page 4 and enclosed flyer for details). See you there!

If there's not much about the global financial crisis in this edition of Ministers-at-Work then there is, I hope, much that you will find interesting. And, oh sorry that it's rather late: just the pressures of work I'm afraid!

**Mike Rayner**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.archbishopofyork.org/2172>

## CHRISM Summer Conference 2009

25th - 27th September 2009  
St Chad's College, Durham

### *Ministry in Recession: Living in an uncertain world*

The conference will tackle issues such as: sustaining work in a time of economic decline, making people redundant and being made redundant and will seek to answer questions such as: 'When we are walking the tightrope of economic upheaval, can a theological analysis help?'

The conference will incorporate the CHRISM AGM and visits to local places of interest and work.

St Chad's College is centrally located in mediaeval Durham City, directly across from Durham Cathedral and just a couple of minutes walk from Durham's historic market place. Accommodation is in single-bedded accommodation (some twins available on request), and a number of rooms have en-suite facilities.

**Partners welcome – why not make this part of a longer break?**

Cost, from dinner on Friday evening to lunch on Sunday, inclusive: £110 (members); £125 (non-members).

Please return the enclosed registration form, by the 27th August to:

**Pauline Pearson,**  
3 Belle Grove Place,  
Spital Tongues,  
Newcastle,  
NE2 4LH.



## CHRISM Membership 2008/2009

Elizabeth Bonham

As you may be aware, following the untimely death of our Treasurer Richard Dobell, membership matters fell into a bit of a black hole and I have "volunteered" to take on the role of Membership Secretary again. Some membership forms and payments for 2008 have not been processed in time and cheques and credit card payments have fallen out of date. Normally membership renewal forms are sent out in January, but because records have not been brought sufficiently up to date, this did not happen this year. To help me get the records straight:

- If have you sent in forms for 2008 or 2009 could you please check your records to see if your payment has been processed and confirm directly to me whether or not the payment was confirmed.
- If you know of someone who has paid and is not getting the journal please let me know.
- If you Gift Aid please let me know.
- Please note that the current membership fee is £30 (and that the reduced membership fee for retired/unemployed is £20).

If you want to join/renew for 2009, could I please ask you to download the membership form from the website: [www.chrism.org.uk](http://www.chrism.org.uk) and after completion send it directly to me: Elizabeth Bonham, 5 Lacock Abbey, Bedford, Beds, MK41 0TU. If you are a UK taxpayer please consider using the Gift Aid form.

## CHRISM Paper 10: MSE and Fresh Expressions

With this edition of Ministers-at-Work you will find a copy of the tenth 'occasional paper' published by CHRISM. This paper - written by Catherine Binns - the Secretary to the CHRISM Committee - explores the relationship between MSE and Fresh Expressions: an issue which has been the subject of recent articles in this journal.

Further copies of this paper can be obtained by writing to: Mike Rayner, Editor: Ministers-at-Work, 198 Marlborough Road, Oxford, OX1 4LT, and enclosing £5.00 for each copy requested.

## Letters to the Editor

From Graham Cornish

*MSEs etc.*

At a recent meeting for NSM/MSE/House for Duty clergy in Ripon and Leeds Diocese the following issues were raised and I wondered if they are ones with which other CHRISM members are grappling, especially the third (MSE in retirement).

### *1. Congregations find NSM a confusing model to understand*

Some NSMs have expressed a view that congregations find the NSM, and especially the MSE, model confusing and baffling. My personal experience (which may not be common) is that this is not the case. I had worshipped at the same church for 12 years when I went to train. The congregation affirmed their view that it was my vocation and supported me through training. I have now ministered there for 25 years and am seen as a member of the congregation who is ordained rather than an ordained minister who happens to be part of the congregation. In this I think I follow a model which is quite common in the Greek Orthodox Church where the village priest is identified from the community, goes away to train, and then returns as an integral part of the village. I don't say that is a model we can all follow but I find it a useful parallel.

## *2. House for Duty and Non Stipendiary Ministry*

In our diocese NSM/MSE and House for Duty (HfD) are put together in one group with the definition of NSM being given to include HfD. I do see that HfD might well suit some NSMs as an alternative model especially when they have retired from secular employment or other commitments which may have inhibited them from following "full-time" ministry. However, I personally feel we should always distinguish between NSM/MSE and HfD as the significant differences make it harder to identify common ground between the two groups and this could become quite confusing for those reading the papers on NSM but not appreciating the important differences. HfD ministers presumably work to some kind of contract (e.g. two days plus Sunday in return for a house?) whereas NSMs/MSEs deliver their contribution without remuneration of any kind and this in itself has implications for accountability and flexibility.

## *3. MSE's when retired*

We discussed various models for NSM including parish focused for full-time employed NSM, NSM not in employment, work-focused MSE, specialist ministry exercising specific skills and HfD. My view is another category needs to be added to the models. This is the MSE with a strong work-focus but who may be contemplating (or who has already reached) the point where they are no longer employed. In my case I run my own consultancy (on copyright law) so I am self-employed and have occasionally said I am a Minister in Self-Employment! But the important issue for me is: what form does ministry take when employment per se ceases as part of my life? I am already Chaplain to a major supermarket in our town but I see no reason why I should not exercise a ministry in any other organisation in which I might become involved. Therefore I am now exploring the title Minister in Secular Environment as a possible alternative.

I would be grateful to hear from other CHRISM members wrestling with these issues.

## From Rob Fox

### *A letter from Jersey*

It has been an interesting start to the New Year on this lump of granite in the English Channel. January saw the half way point in my two year secondment; it seems much longer than a year since I arrived, so much has happened. A few miles to the north west, Guernsey has just owned up to seriously considering a Goods and Services Tax (GST) which suggests a possible relocation next year. It does need to raise money somehow – the economy is not in good shape. However the recent furore over whether to introduce a charge for car parking (at – don't laugh - £26 a year) does not bode well. It will also be interesting to see if Alderney and Sark decide to opt out – as they are entitled to do, though the prospect of explaining to the Sarkies how GST operates is a challenge I'd relish. (I don't think Sark would need a second hand car scheme somehow).

Then one morning in February Jersey was blanketed in something cold and white, at least an inch deep, which brought the whole island to a standstill. The buses were cancelled, schools closed and an emergency order placed for something called 'grit'. Still, the look on the faces of children who had never seen snow before was a sight to behold. They soon discovered it could be scooped up and shaped into a ball.

A few days later, after the wisdom of inviting this strange being called an 'MSE' had exercised the finest ecclesiastical brains in the island for several months, yours truly gave the Wednesday lunchtime talk at 'Business Connect', an outreach enterprise run by St. Helier Parish Church. No prizes for guessing what was covered under the title 'Taxing Times'. And yes, it was another opportunity to point out that I'm only in Jersey for tax reasons. The response was encouraging, to say the least: a range of excellent questions on the day – and later by email, lunch with a local businessman, a meeting with the technical adviser to Jersey Finance, the industry's representative body, and an invitation to address 'The Men's Group'

– a get together over dinner of Christian men on Thursday evenings.

A hot topic here is the question of tax havens. Jersey feels unreasonably got at, not least as a recent 'Panorama' programme on the BBC implied that it was as bad as Liechtenstein. Then there was last year's Christian Aid report, showing how businesses and individuals use off-shore tax havens to avoid taxes that would otherwise benefit the developing world. The reality is not so black and white. Yes, money from companies and individuals is managed in Jersey. Yes, some of it is money that should have been taxed (or more taxed) elsewhere at some point. But no, Jersey as a jurisdiction does nothing to abet this, and can do precious little to prevent it. The remedy for tax avoidance generally lies with the countries where the avoidance takes place. The UK could, for example, structure taxation in such a way that the likes of a supermarket where every little helps (for example) does not derive a tax advantage from vesting ownership of its vast property portfolio in a Jersey company. Similarly, whilst it is possible for wealthy individuals to purchase residency in Jersey (20% income tax – no higher rate), this is rather more expensive than the £30,000 it costs 'non-domiciles' to avoid income tax in the UK. Motes in eyes spring to mind.

Internationally too, the answer to the problem of multi-national companies 'negotiating' tax breaks in poor countries lies with the large economies. The said multinationals are located in the UK, USA, France, Germany, Japan.... Their governments are best placed to exert pressure on the multinationals not to bully small countries into costly concessions.

Meanwhile, Jersey is busy signing Tax Information Exchange Agreements (the UK on the day of writing this; France next week). Strangely, the UK was somewhat slow to do so. I wonder why?

## A brief account of the financial crisis

Andreas Whittam Smith

*This paper was produced as a background briefing for a debate at the General Synod of the Church of England on the international financial crisis and the recession on the 10th February 2009. It is reproduced here by permission of the author.*

The deep recession now under way differs in two respects from anything we have experienced in our lifetimes:

1. It is totally global in nature. It affects both the West and the rest of the world. I emphasise this aspect because there is a tendency in Britain to think that it is only the US and Europe that are facing difficulties. Thirty years of globalisation means that every country, from China to the tiniest African state, is caught up in it.
2. Its proximate cause is a sudden withdrawal of credit by banks that has reduced business activity. This crisis developed spontaneously and was not the result of direct action by governments to cool their economies as has often happened in the past.

The over-trading by the banks that created simultaneous bubbles in housing, in consumer credit and in the financial industry itself – driven by greed - finally collapsed under its own weight in the second half of 2007. These booms were not confined to the West. There have been unsustainable rises in residential property values all over the world – from the United States and Britain to Eastern Europe and from India to Thailand and Vietnam.

Governments unwittingly created the conditions under which unbridled speculation could race ahead. Two policy changes have proved to be highly significant. In a pattern that repeats itself in this story, they were expected at the time to bring large benefits to the world economy and have done so; their perverse consequences have arisen only recently:

- a. The first was the removal of external barriers to trade. The promotion of free trade through international agreements

began soon after the end of World War II. In the 1930s, protectionism had prolonged the Great Depression. In contrast free trade benefits developed and developing countries alike. Each undertakes those activities in which it has an advantage. This expansion of free trade was a continuous process and a succession of free trade pacts was still being signed in the 1990s.

- b. The second was the lowering of internal barriers to trade, or deregulation by another name, comprising the removal, reduction, and simplification of restrictions on business and individuals. Promoted originally by Mrs. Thatcher and President Reagan from 1980 onward, a wide variety of businesses in many countries benefited including banking. The rationale was similar to that put forward to support free trade – that fewer and simpler regulations would lead to a raised level of competitiveness and thus bring higher productivity, more efficiency and lower prices overall.

The negative consequences arose as follows:

- a. As far as free trade is concerned, industrial groups in recent years have used it to move work from their own countries to less developed countries in order to cut costs. At the same time poorer countries, having signed up to free trade in the expectation that it would bring jobs, have been forced in return to deregulate their capital markets. This was the bargain. The new arrangements have precipitated a dramatic increase in capital flows. Higher output in Asian countries, in oil exporters and in other developing countries created excess savings that flowed into the financial markets of the industrialized West. Jobs have been going one way and savings the other. And it is these excess savings deployed by the banks that have created financial bubbles.
- b. Deregulation of the banks removed restrictions on what activities they could undertake. As a matter of fact, contrary to what many suppose, it didn't weaken prudential regulation as such. Prudential regulation specifies how much capital banks should hold to support a given volume of lending. The most striking aspect of banking deregulation in Britain was that building societies, mutual organisations, could transform

themselves into shareholder owned banks specialising in mortgage lending as well as in providing other financial services previously forbidden to them. They did not make a success of their new freedom. Every building society that demutualised has either been taken over by a bigger bank or rescued by the Government. None has remained independent. Northern Rock and Bradford & Bingley are examples.

Meanwhile the banks had invented a business technique that improved the workings of financial markets but, like free trade and deregulation, it had a dark side. Towards the end of the 1980s banks learnt to take the individual loans they had made, each underpinned by a legal agreement between the bank and the borrower, and combine them together so that the bundle became a security that could be traded. The process is known as securitisation. It started with mortgage loans extended to homebuyers. The banks would place these packages into specially created companies or trusts, not subject to prudential regulation, which new investors would be invited to finance in return for the interest that the underlying loan agreements provided. In this way the banks could clear their books of their old loans and then make fresh commitments, earn fresh fees and finally repeat the process all over again. The advantage was that risks were widely dispersed.

As a matter of fact, the unregulated bodies were still engaged in banking even though it was never described as such. For they borrowed short-term in order to finance longer-term business. This was shadow banking, more akin to nineteenth century practice than late twentieth century. The ratio of borrowing to capital supporting the loans was often well beyond best practice. It was legal only in the sense that ways of avoiding tax are legal until the Government closes the loophole. While it lasted the banks had found a way of escaping prudential regulation. They exploited the gap.

Ten years later, in the late 1990s, the banks devised a second method of removing risk from their books and freeing up reserves. Credit default swaps were invented. A third party would assume

the risk of a debt going sour and in exchange would receive regular payments, similar to insurance premiums, from the bank concerned. Again on first appearance credit default swaps seemed like an excellent idea. They were an additional way of cutting risk up into small pieces and spreading it widely. Banks became enthusiastic consumers of credit insurance, as did the investors buying the loans that banks were securitizing.

Once more problems appeared. The idea got about that, paradoxically, risk was nothing to worry about. It could be split up, passed on, sold off. Rather than being placed at the centre of financial transactions, where it ought to be, risk was banished to the sidelines. It was a detail that could easily be handled. At the same time, banks became careless about the standing of the counterparties to whom they were handing off risk. The USA's biggest insurance company, AIG, had to be bailed out by American taxpayers after it had defaulted on \$14 billion worth of credit default swaps it had made to investment banks, insurance companies and scores of financial entities.

Consider then where we had got to by 2003. The excess savings of vigorous Asian economies, oil producers and other developing countries that had flowed into Western banks had pushed interest rates to very low levels. Globalisation had removed bargaining power from workers in the West with the result that inflation was only a percentage point or two per annum. In real terms interest rates were more or less zero. For banks, in other words, money was free. Furthermore now that loans could be securitised and removed from banks' books so that they no longer needed the backing of their capital, lending activity had begun to appear costless. In addition, lending had acquired the extra virtue of appearing riskless because credit insurance would ensure that others would bear the cost of defaults. The upshot was clear. When money is free, and lending is costless and riskless, the rational lender will keep on lending until there is no one left to lend to.

To reach this Eldorado, the means were at hand. Automated credit scoring speeded up the processing of applications for loans.

Trimming back on documentation brought more borrowers into the fold. A proliferation of products offering credit on easy terms was devised. Moreover it didn't seem to matter if such hastily written business wasn't always of a high quality. After all the loans were to be packaged up and sold on. In other words, the banks originating the loans would have no stake in the borrower's continued solvency. At the same time, pay levels in the financial services industry were topped up with bonus schemes that gave very high rewards to those managers who could 'shift product'. New borrowing was piled on old borrowing, risk on risk.

Whereas the sum of all financial assets – stocks, bonds, loans, mortgages and the like, which are claims on real things – used to be about equal to the total of the world's output of goods and services, by 2007 financial assets were approaching four times global output. In 1990, only 33 countries had financial assets whose value exceeded that of their respective outputs. By 2006, this number had more than doubled to 72 countries. Brazil, Russia, India and China were among those with financial assets worth far more than their gross national products.

In the high summer of 2007, the first cracks appeared in the great edifice of credit that had gradually been built up over twenty years. The beginnings of a decline in US property prices were the cause. The most over-gear-ed borrowers were asked to repay their loans. They became forced sellers. This produced a triple whammy effect. As asset prices had fallen, borrowers made losses. If they couldn't fully repay their loans and went bankrupt, the banks that had financed them likewise suffered. At the same time, the values of similar assets had been put under pressure. This meant that the credit standing of fresh ranks of borrowers had been damaged. As a result a further cohort was forced to go through the same process with the same results. And then there followed another cohort and another cohort and so on.

Some 18 months since it began, this de-leveraging process is still under way and, if anything, gains in momentum. It is a doomsday machine. In my view, it explains almost everything: -

- a. Why property prices continue to fall

- b. Why any gains in stock market prices are quickly swamped by fresh selling
- c. Why the banks find there is no end to the losses that they are incurring and that they thus constantly need re-financing
- d. Why banks remain terrified and will engage in fresh lending only if the government forces them to do so or if it removes the risk.

The recession will continue until this process is over.

*Andreas Whittam Smith was one of the co-founders of the Independent Newspaper and is First Church Estates Commissioner for the Church of England.*

## Thoughts about ministry at work

### Pauline Pearson

How do you think about ministry? Ministry might be about shepherding (John 21: 17), care, concern, guiding, enabling, teaching, challenging, questioning, sharing the good news of the gospel (Matthew 28: 19) – or, as a recent book<sup>1</sup> has it, interpreting, exploring, acting as an irritant, accompanying or risk taking. Ministry is often (though not always) seen as relating to tasks and activities authorised by the churches. However, ministry is something not unique to those who are accredited or authorised by the church. It is potentially the task of all baptised Christians. It is in essence relational: all of the tasks listed above involve a relationship with others. Ministry may be seen currently perhaps as primarily about recruiting – getting the numbers in? But evangelism is about sharing the good news wherever one is – and as John Chrysostom implied (in 4th century), sharing it by what you do, how you live amongst your fellow humans, more than by what you say to them.

On my office wall I have a quote from the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State 1937<sup>2</sup>. It reads:

" .... the obligation resting on us is to refuse to be content with the present ministries of the Church... Instead of pressing people to avail themselves of these ministries, the Church must have at least some adventurers who by a bold leap will take their stand on the other side of the gulf and find a starting point for their ministry in the needs and activities of the common life."

I like the idea of being an adventurer – or, nowadays, a pioneer? But this assumes a dichotomous view, in which there is the Church – and then there is the common life. The reality is that the church is a community of people, who most of the time are engaged in the activities of the common life and experiencing its needs. Too often we take the dichotomous view, perhaps encouraged by a picture of ministry as divorced from economic support.

Until the twentieth century, accredited ministry in the churches has tended to follow Jesus' injunction in Luke's gospel (Luke 10: 2-12) (and Mark's) that his disciples should not take purse, bag or sandals but should accept people's hospitality as it was offered – 'for the worker deserves his wages' (v7). The idea of a stipend after all (as still seen today for PhD students) is not to equate to a salary, but to give someone the space to study and reflect, or perhaps the freedom to explore and irritate, to preach and teach.

However, if we look a little further at the New Testament, we find key early Christians engaged in a variety of occupations and tasks – for example Peter and the others returned at least for a while to fishing after the resurrection (John 21). In Philippi, Lydia (Acts 16: 14) was a dealer in purple cloth, and Paul (Acts 18: 2-4) worked at tent making with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth and probably elsewhere (2 Thessalonians 3:7ff).

The focus in much biblical scholarship as it relates to self-supporting ministry seems to be around Paul's ministry and the economic and ethical arguments that he himself discusses. He wishes to avoid burdening the churches with his support whilst he preaches to them (as for example in 1 Thessalonians 2: 9) – instead it seems infant churches at least partially supported his work in other places as he continued to travel.

He aims to remain independent of those whom he teaches (as was the norm for Greek philosophers) – thus believing that it is not right to take money for teaching the gospel because it alters the balance of the relationship. Paul himself compares (1 Corinthians 9: 14-18) Jesus' instructions to his disciples that 'those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel' with his own ministry, in which (v18) he has offered the gospel free of charge to communities.

If we are thinking about ministry 'at work' – or in the workplace, we need to think what is work? It is sometimes seen purely as being mental or physical effort, and very often as synonymous with paid employment. However, a better definition might be: 'activities undertaken, often, but not always, paid, usually for others' benefit (whether persons, institutions or organisations) or out of necessity'. It can be paid or unpaid – for example housework or caring for a dependent relative may be work but unpaid. It may be seen as a duty to be completed – carrying out work to fulfil a contract perhaps – or as a challenge or something stimulating – even enjoyable – for example design work or facilitation, or perhaps a little of each. It may be 'fun' for one, but not for another, dependent perhaps on who or what it is for, and certainly on the level of control each has in relation to activity, time and outcome.

For most of us, gardening is a pleasurable activity – but for a council gardener, there may be planting targets and other requirements that detract from the pleasure of nurturing beautiful plants. For writers, painters and musicians, creation may be enjoyable but the need to sell work, or to create for a specific customer, may restrict or dull the pleasure involved. For the weekend sailor, the task of navigating and steering a boat along the shore is purely pleasurable, whereas for the fishing boat skipper it is done primarily to make a living. Enjoyment may be had, but it is not paramount. And then there are prostitutes - who clearly work, not for their own benefit but are used – devalued – primarily for the benefit of others – and usually constrained to this by economic necessity.

I want to consider a number of dimensions of work in relation to ministry.

First of all, the nature of work (manual, professional etc) in relation to ministry. Worker priests in France emerged as a direct response to the situation of World War 2 and the occupation of France, with Henri Perrin perhaps the best known, as he joined a group of French deportees in 1943. As he continued this ministry he described his role as being 'an incarnation of Christ in the very centre of human dough'. Other existing priests took jobs amongst their parishioners in shipyards, chemical plants and a variety of other places. They were limited in the jobs they could do in any case as most could only be untrained and unskilled workers. Their main purpose was to be able to accompany their parishioners on a difficult journey, and, as more educated people, sometimes to represent them to others. Near the end of the war the idea was also picked up in the UK. Michael Gedge and John Strong decided to work together, sharing a parish in a mining community and sharing shifts down the mine. The job they did (cleaning conveyor belts) was essential but semi-skilled, with training compressed into a three week period. The pair took the work on it appears as a means of connecting with the people of their very close-knit community (particularly the men, but also their wives) and also to be a Christian presence in the workplace, identifying with people in the day to day realities they faced.

These jobs were chosen by these priests to relate to their parishioners, and in both settings they involved manual work. There are arguments that St Paul, a Roman citizen, took up tent making, apparently demeaning himself – 2 Corinthians 11:7 – because it was flexible, allowing him to support himself in varied places, but it also enabled him to hear and speak with the diverse people he wanted to meet. For Paul, tent making was a trade, possibly seen as demeaning because it involved manual labour, and certainly mixing with social inferiors – but offering flexibility – work could be picked up in almost any location – and since, in the style of the time, it was probably carried out in a workshop, it almost certainly offered opportunities to be part of the ebb and flow of business life and to talk with a variety of customers and passers by.

Among the MSEs I know today, their work ranges from teaching and nursing, through NHS management, revenue protection for customs and excise, being an actuary, to consultancy and being a judge. All of us were working in our particular fields when we responded to a call to ministry – so we did not choose these jobs expressly to facilitate the ministry to which God has called us – rather, we saw God's presence in those places – saw opportunities for accompanying, interpreting, acting as advocates – exploring and even teaching our companions along the way. Does it matter that all of us are professionals? Do we just in some ways reinforce the middle class Anglican stereotype?

It is perhaps important to reflect on our purpose in remaining part of God's people in these various occupations. For each of us there are connections to be made and built upon where we are. There we can continue to be a Christian presence – made, perhaps, more visible to colleagues over time – not necessarily by forms of dress but gradually, through casual conversation, the nature of our interpretation, our perceived passions (for justice, peace, etc.) We may accompany those around us through such events as organisational restructuring and may, on occasion speak out for those whose voices are unheard. In these things we are similar to those who went before. But, we are, most of us, embedded somewhere in the structures in which we work – whether as an academic or an IT specialist, a head teacher or an accountant. We have power, control over some aspects of our working lives – perhaps even over others'. In this we appear very different from our predecessors. But in a country in which far less work is now manual, we share the experience of many. Financial and business services now account for about one in five jobs in the UK, compared with about one in ten in 1981. Twenty years ago one in three jobs held by men was in manufacturing. By 2001 this had fallen to about one in five. Similar proportions of men and women work in 'associate professional and technical' occupations – computer programmers, technicians and nurses, for example – while only one in eight performs low-skilled jobs, such as those in farming, construction, hotels and restaurants<sup>3</sup>. In a context in which job insecurity, stress, bullying and exploitation are commonplace in almost every workplace, we live the same

experience as very many others from the inside – not set apart as a chaplain (independent and able to speak to all<sup>4</sup>). Instead our presence is still in some sense incarnational amongst our colleagues: we share absolutely and without the reservation of being an outsider, in their joys and sorrows, just as Christ shared absolutely in our humanity. We are their companions on the journey. We experience the same pressures, stresses and see the same opportunities as those around us – but we have a different lens through which to look – the lens of the kingdom. How our reflections are presented to those around us may be in our approach to day to day activity, conversations in the bar, or sometimes in other modes – as for example some poems which I wrote which helped me in making some sense of our restructuring – and when shared with colleagues seemed to help them too.

The second important dimension to consider is that of place or context in relation to ministry at work. Location and wider context contribute to the issues and challenges that must be faced by a particular worker. I have worked both in healthcare and in education – both public sector contexts in which the complexities of government policy can play a significant part in shaping work. Currently NHS budget cuts are one of many issues impacting on aspects of our work. What are we educating students for? Other dilemmas arise from financial pressures on higher education institutions. Colleagues at a neighbouring university are sourcing cadavers for anatomy teaching from China, much less regulated than using bodies from UK nationals – which for me raises questions about the implicit as well as explicit values that will be taught there. When my daughter worked for a while at Primark, I became more aware of some of the questions and issues confronting people working in retail: Is the supply chain ethical? How do you know? Are staff treated well? And of course what are the fads and fashions of current consumer culture? When I worked as a health visitor, I was made welcome in a wide variety of homes because the role which I fulfilled was, on the whole, seen as being of value to new parents and others. I regarded that access as privileged, providing me as it did with insights into people's passions and concerns. Of course that context is one shared with those in parish centred ministry, but perhaps access will not always

be to the same homes. Industry, business and government each offer further questions and issues – whether about the rights of asylum seekers, the ethics of arms manufacture or the demands made in corporate contracting.

Place and context also immediately give some sense of positioning, of insiders and outsiders. Crossing boundaries is an integral part of ministry – indeed Vanstone suggests that it is the role of the priest in a community to stand on the margins, between the possibilities of ‘triumph or tragedy’<sup>5</sup>. Vanstone’s picture relates to a parish setting in a mid twentieth century new town with a discrete geographical community. Ministry in the secular environments of our post-modern society requires negotiation of the margins between multiple groups and communities, as well as with the individuals within or beyond them. Individuals may find themselves inside or outside, comfortable or discomfited, perhaps labelled in ways which separate or devalue them. But we are all made in God’s image, and that that has implications for our behaviour.

The third dimension I want to briefly consider is that of the people one meets – in essence the networks amongst whom one moves in a particular type or context of work. Each of us can probably identify a complex web of relationships – some weak, some strong, associated with the whole range of our day to day activity. For a care worker, the key relationship is likely to be with the person or people for whom they care. For a teacher in a primary school it might be with the children in their class and perhaps colleagues. For a shop assistant it may be with the people on neighbouring tills (and any regular customers). For some a key element of the work may be union activity, so that colleagues in the union may also be key people. These are the people with whom one builds the strongest relationships, the people through whom one sees and understands needs, the people alongside whom one travels. Jesus was pilloried by the authorities for the people he mixed with – for being alongside the dispossessed and engaging too much with the everyday – enjoying parties and talking with tax collectors and prostitutes (Matthew 9: 11-13; Mark 2: 14-17; Luke 15: 1-2). His stories and behaviour recognised the importance of these experiences in bringing about the kingdom.

The fourth area to touch on is support in relation to ministry at work. I am not sure whether this is the right term, but I am talking here primarily about the place of prayer, reflection and of engagement in a worshipping community. One of the things I think we need to explore further is how the interface between the day to day activity of the worshipping community of the parish and the apparently isolated work of the minister in secular employment (or secular environment perhaps) works. One way in which it does work for me is the engagement of following the daily office – knowing that each is praying for the other. That is helped by understanding more about the specific issues and concerns in each place – which requires some time to share. Sharing the Eucharist with a community of people who are all in different ways engaged in the same ‘beyond Sunday’ world is important. Space for reading and reflection is essential too, both time for regular jottings over coffee and longer periods of time away – on Holy Island or at Iona, where the regular rhythm of prayer can underpin deeper reflection.

So, in my work, where is the ministry? It is in the sacrament of the coffee break – shared with visitors and colleagues. It is in opportunities to stand up for the importance of humanity when everyone else is focusing on technologies. It is in advocating for genuine user involvement in structures and systems, in the development of trust and relationships in complex organisations and project teams. It is in the exercise of justice. It is in journeys and quiet moments. I believe that God accompanies me each day in my work as much as elsewhere – in the obvious and the less obvious places, in fellowship with colleagues, in students with problems, in teaching, in research. When life is busy and when it’s quiet.

Ministry at work is not an easy option. It has to be negotiated at the edge of traditional church parochial structures and the rest of the world. There seem to be few maps of the territory, and perhaps for that reason there is a continuing leakage back into traditional parish based ministry. The church (a body of Christian people) should be seeking to live as ‘Christ’s body’ - to relate to the people amongst whom it lives as yeast - a ‘raising agent’ - empowering them by living out and sharing the gospel. This

requires the church's people to have sufficient strength and confidence to live and act appropriately.

For many people, the place they call home may not be at the centre of a place they would call a 'community'. Instead, they themselves are at the hub of one of many complex webs of relationships. A lack of apparent 'community' may lead them to feel spiritually rootless, parched and to seek refreshment and rootedness. For some people, more traditional models of the church and of ministry can provide this - though they will not always be accessed in the place where people live. For others, the church needs to go and be where they are, supporting the Christians amongst them in living out the gospel, and offering those who are still searching ways of finding the inspiration and the security of Christ.

Effective ministry, at work or elsewhere, will exist when ministers are seen to be taking people and their issues seriously. Relationships of trust require visible commitment. In parish based communities, such relationships will be built around a day-to-day ministry presence, offering service to local people, listening to their needs. However, if we are serious about acting as kingdom yeast in this fast changing, often alienating and increasingly fragmented and secularised world in which we live, we need to enable and facilitate Christian people to see their own contexts through a 'gospel-centred lens', and to help them and their colleagues, clients and contacts to see and value the story of God's action in the world - to live out love for *all* our neighbours.

<sup>1</sup> Pritchard J (2007) *The Life and Work of a Priest*, SPCK

<sup>2</sup> from a Preparatory Paper by W A Visser T'Hooft (later, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches) and J H Oldham

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=11> (accessed 5/2/09)

<sup>4</sup> Though the pattern of chaplaincy funding is altering, so that such posts are less independent, and even, in the NHS for instance, equally if not more vulnerable than the jobs of those around them

<sup>5</sup> Vanstone W H (1977) *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense*, Darton, Longman, Todd

## 'Work as a spiritual activity' and the Rule of St Benedict

Chris Knights

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In 2008, for the first time in twenty years the General Synod of the Church of England passed a resolution about work. In the first part of the motion, Synod affirmed 'daily work be it paid or unpaid as essentially a spiritual activity'.

This is really quite radical, because Christians are often apt to equate 'spiritual activity' with explicitly religious activity - prayer, Bible reading/study, corporate worship, Church activities and so on. And, of course, for most Christians (other than stipendiary parochial clergy) these activities are in the strict sense *leisure* activities, that is, activities that are undertaken *outside* of the context of daily work. 'Work is not often seen as a part of the spiritual life', as one writer has put it.

I have to be honest here, and own up that I am a stipendiary parish priest – and there are those who imply that stipendiary parochial clergy are not really in touch with the 'real world' of work (e.g. in the recent General Synod report on Reader ministry, *Reader Upbeat*, paragraphs 4.2.2-4.2.4, p.50).

That notwithstanding, I believe that I can contribute something towards understanding the implications of the Synod's resolution that calls us to see work as a spiritual activity. The well-spring of my own personal spirituality is the Rule of St Benedict, and I have written elsewhere about the ways in which St Benedict's words illuminate my own current life and ministry (in 'The Rule of St Benedict, Scotswood and Me', *The Expository Times* forthcoming). And, perhaps surprisingly, what St Benedict has to say about the place of work in the *monastic* life offers us, I believe, a way in which *all* Christians can start to see 'daily work ... as essentially a spiritual activity'.

That the Rule of St Benedict is for all Christians, and not just for monks and nuns, is fundamental to my argument. I find myself standing alongside recent writers such as Esther de Waal (*Seeking God*, London, 1984), Christopher Jamison (*Finding Sanctuary*, London, 2007), Basil Hume (*Searching for God*, London, 1977), the contributors to *The Benedictine Handbook* (Norwich, 1997) and Dennis Okholm (*Monk Habits for Everyday People*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2007) in commending the wisdom of the Rule to all Christians today, not just to monastics - or even just to Catholics. (Benedict predates the great divisions of the Church, and he has a high regard for the authority of Scripture, so even out and out Protestants can make use of his writing!)

In what I say here about work as a spiritual activity, I am drawing extensively on two contemporary writers on the Rule of St Benedict and its contemporary relevance, writers who may not be well-known to readers of CHRISM: Lawrence McTaggart, who contributed the chapter on work to *The Benedictine Handbook* (pp.114-118) and Dennis Okholm (especially pp.102-107). If some readers of this journal are encouraged by my words to read these writers for themselves, I will be very pleased.

It is in Chapter 48 of his Rule that St Benedict lays down his instructions for the work of monks. He begins with a proverb, 'Idleness is the enemy of the soul', to which he adds the comment: 'Therefore all the community must be occupied at definite times in manual labour and at other times in *lectio divina*' (spiritual reading). (I am using the translation of Patrick Barry in *The Benedictine Handbook* for all quotes from the Rule in this article.) As Benedict also lays down rules about specific times for corporate prayer (which he calls the *Opus Dei*, the Work of God), for meals and for sleep, we can already see that, for Benedict, in the fullness of life as a monk, work (in due proportion) is no less key than these other things. 'Work is given a protected place in the monastic timetable, just as much as prayer and the *Opus Dei*.' As McTaggart goes on to rather modestly observe, 'this is quite a radical position'. He continues, 'there is something about work which sums up the goals of monastic, and hence of Christian life' (p.115).

This sense of balance and integration between all the various aspects of life pervades the whole of the Benedictine Rule, and

it is that balance between prayer and work (and everything else) that gives each its true significance for monastics, and for 'ordinary' Christians. It makes work important – but not over-important. We all know the truth of the statement, 'work can easily become bound up with judgements about status' (McTaggart p.116). 'The alternating rhythm [between prayer and work in the Rule] has a way of curtailing the inclination to use over-work as a means of self-congratulation. All of us have been guilty of responding to someone's litany of her job's demands with the comeback: "You think *you* are busy..." We create competition where there was no competition and we ensure our proud dominance. "Taking five" to pray ... also defeats our attempts at self-justification as we place more confidence in our work than in God's sustaining grace' (Okholm p.104).

By the same token, the Benedictine alternating rhythm between prayer and work also puts prayer in its proper perspective. As McTaggart (p.115) says, those 'who do not work well do not pray well', while Okholm (p.103) quotes from Bonhoeffer to make the same point:

Praying and working are two different things. Prayer should not be hindered by work, but neither should work be hindered by prayer. Just as it was God's will that man should work six days and rest and make holy day in His presence on the Sabbath, so it is also God's will that every day should be marked for the Christian by both prayer and work... Only when each receives its own specific due will it become clear that both belong inescapably together. Without the burden and the labor of the day, prayer is not prayer, and without prayer work is not work.

This is not to idealise or romanticise work, and Benedictines are as keenly aware as anyone else is that 'work' is full of ambiguities. 'For many, the word 'work' is synonymous with 'toil' (McTaggart p.115) – either toil that becomes all-consuming and the main purpose in life, or else toil that is only done to provide 'the means to survive and perhaps raise children' (*ibid*). In our society and sadly even within the Church, people can easily become valued solely by what sort of work they do and by how much they earn, as

well as by how busy they seem to be, while voluntary work and home-making can end up being seen as not counting as work at all.

McTaggart proposes an incarnational view of work: 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Everything is changed by this, including our work' (p.116). Jesus himself worked. 'The fact that it was God who was doing it changes everything; the apparently pointless drudge is given eternal value because God bothered to do it' (p.117). McTaggart reminds us that the key thing is that all types of work are done by human beings, created and loved by God, i.e. *who* is doing the work is of much more importance than *what* the work is. Okholm makes the same point: 'Who we *are* is more than the job we *do*' (p.104). Work is *both* a sharing in God's own creative activity (Genesis 1) *and* a consequence of the Fall (Genesis 3). The key to resolving this tension lies in the way we regard work: 'It is not our power to work which has resulted in today's sorry mess, but our tendency to use that power to do things other than love and serve the God who gave it' (McTaggart p.117).

This means that we have to start regarding all our daily work is somehow sharing in the life of Christ, and as somehow sharing in his redemptive work, and therefore as always having value – for God, for his kingdom and for our own sanctification and salvation (McTaggart p.117). All work has to be seen as service. This means that no work can ever be 'below' anyone. In Benedictine communities, *everyone* – even the Abbot or Prior – does the housekeeping chores. 'Any task, no matter how trivial, can have great significance' (Okholm p.106).

Ultimately, what St Benedict's Rule underlines so vividly for Christians is that our faith is about the *whole* of life, that there is no part of our life that is *not* part of our Christian life, that our life and our faith have to be one. Therefore, for Benedict, we have to think holistically, and resist compartmentalising our lives. Just as the monastery is a total entity, but is all a 'holy place', so we are total entities and we are never not Christians. In the end, work is a spiritual activity because life is a spiritual activity. And Benedict is one of those who can help us to see that very clearly. As Okholm

comments, 'because Benedictine spirituality wants no sectors of life to be isolated from God's presence, work becomes a means through which we can know and love God more deeply' (p.105ff).

Of course, when St Benedict's original monks engaged in their manual work (usually agriculture or in the scriptorium), they would have carried it out in almost complete silence – both in the sense that the monks themselves would talk as little as possible and in the sense that there would have been very little in the way of background noise – no radio blaring out, no chatter, not much in the way of noisy machinery. But many work contexts today are anything but quiet!

The prevalence of silence/quiet within a monastic community allows monastics to sense they are in the presence of God far more readily than a noisy environment does. The challenge for contemporary Christians in the 'secular' workplace is to create a inner silence within themselves, that 'practice of the presence of God' (to quote Brother Lawrence (who wasn't a Benedictine!)) that offers a place to hear the 'still, small voice' within, behind, below and above the noise and the busyness of the shop, the production line or the office. I often call this the 'spirituality of Sainsburys', because I try to do it when I do my weekly supermarket shop!

I trained for ordination at the now-closed Lincoln Theological College. Above the entrance to the College Chapel were the words *Orare est Labore* – 'To pray is to work'. Above the *other* side of the door, to be read as students left worship, was *Labore est Orare* – 'To work is to pray'. Both are true – but each is only true because the other is. They are true together, and only together, because we are whole human beings. As a Franciscan prayer puts it:

God of grace and goodness, who made us body and spirit that our work and faith may be one: may we, by our life and worship, join in your labour to bring forth a new creation in justice, love and truth; through Jesus, our Redeemer. Amen

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## Reports of past events

### CHRISM Reflective Weekend, 27th February - 1st March 2009, Morley, Derbyshire

#### Reflection 1

##### Liz Paxton

The purpose of the weekend was to retrieve the radical edge of CHRISM's ministry by focussing on the 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.' I was honoured to attend as a full participant, as I was exploring, not only the CHRISM group, but the possibility of becoming a MSE. I learned many things over the weekend, not least the more accurate use of several three letter acronyms. It was like being back in IT!

Using the mission statement as a framework for the weekend was an excellent model, as we were all challenged to go deeper and bolder in our ministries. The first evening was a recognition and acknowledgement of work, and sharing of how busy and diverse the work is within CHRISM, with a wide variety of the 'world of work' represented. After Night Prayer we maintained silence until the coffee break next morning. I could see that for many this was a welcome relief and much needed 'space' but for me it was the toughest challenge of the weekend! Being both extrovert and new, I was bursting to get to know everyone!

Saturday was a gradual build up of reflection on the presence of God, and preparing to celebrate His presence there. The day was beautiful and the skylarks were singing as we strolled the Derbyshire hills, talking and chatting of our life and work. We spent time preparing creating offerings for the Eucharist on Sunday morning which ranged from the thoughtful, spiritual, creative and quite dotty.

I could see that people were refreshed, relaxed and particularly re-engaged with the mission of CHRISM during the weekend, and everyone had their story to tell and ministry to share. I was particularly encouraged by people who were at pains to support my own journey, and have offered subsequent friendship and support.

As I left my head was spinning with the implications of the weekend; all these stories and how did they fit with my own story? What did the weekend give me personally?

Well, I now see CHRISM as a 'prism' through which believers and non-believers can observe (the MSE) as Christ's representative. I can see how difficult this must be; possibly misunderstood by your co-workers who may assume you have an agenda and are not like 'one of them'. Misunderstood by parish based clergy and chaplains as neither are you 'one of them'. Each model of ministry described on the weekend by the MSEs was different, unsurprisingly, as each has a quite different context. The only consensus was around the invisible or incognito nature of the ministry.

I think perhaps I understood the tentmaker model better. Work becomes merely the tool to support ministry so that you are not a 'burden'. In Paul's case, I can only imagine that his ministry in the synagogue, home church or public square did not stop him incessantly proclaiming the gospel while he was about his work. There is an aspect of the incognito ministry of an MSE that I find difficult for me to imagine. If I can't keep quiet from 10.00pm to 10.30 am how will I ever manage the necessarily thoughtful and reflective missiology of work? I remain listening to God about this.

Finally, I was reminded of 1 Thessalonians 5:13 for the quiet but strong model of CHRISM. I am sure some of you will object to the concept of leading 'a quiet life' but I would like to point out that Paul did not say that you would achieve a quiet life, but that it was a good ambition.

*Liz Paxton is a Management Consultant and Trainer, and a reader-in-training at St. Mellitus College, Chelmsford and London.*

## Reflection 2

### Alan Wearmouth

It's been more than a fortnight since I returned from my first experience of CHRISM charged with the task of writing an account of my impressions. Why wait so long? Well, on more than one level I found the experience quite profound and I wanted to enjoy a period of reflection before committing myself to print – and above all I wanted to make sure that nothing I had to say would embarrass any of the lovely people with whom I shared that weekend in Morley.

Embarrass? Well, one thing which I valued so much was the feeling from the outset that this was a group of people who, doubtless based upon their deep experiences of life, would welcome any exploration of ideas without prejudice or resentment. Here I could say things which I normally keep to myself in order to avoid disturbing others. Here I could probe others in a spirit of genuine inquiry. Here I felt that people were interested in what others had to say and to question what they themselves thought and felt. Such openness and generosity of spirit brings with it a sense of responsibility to respect the openness of others and to care for their sensitivities. I am therefore not going to record the things of which we spoke nor the confidence which at times we appeared to share. Even the deeply impressive personal contributions to the final Eucharist belong to that moment in time, I think, but they were greatly valued.

Another element of the occasion which mattered a great deal to me was a personal epiphany as I was shown that feelings which I had nurtured – and sometimes repressed or diverted – for some twenty years were in fact not unique but were shared and better understood by others who had themselves been ploughing the same, or similar, furrow for many years. My apparently disloyal feeling that I couldn't be what my Church (the C of E) seemed to expect me to be and my resentment that they didn't seem to understand what I actually was both faded over the course of the weekend. I feel (and this might amuse some who know me) that I

gained confidence over these few hours; I learnt things about myself and my expectations that I have seen affecting my attitudes and behaviour since I have returned to “normal” life – whatever that is!

An initial response to the opening session was amazement at the nature of the work undertaken by those present. When I look back at the group in which I trained for the ordained ministry every one of them had either become a stipendiary minister or had retired into some form of ministry within a few years; ten years ago I was the only one continuing to live the kind of life to which I had expressed a calling. I have been wondering whether the call to be MSE is one which attracts a certain type of person - not in any sense a superior person, but one with the type of personality which leads them in a certain way in their chosen career. Whatever the facts here, I soon realised that everybody there had something to teach me, something to give and something to say about being MSE. Far more significant than their present role, their past experience or their ordained or non-ordained status was the fact that they shared a belief in the importance of being Christian in, rather than outside, a non-believing world.

I'm sorry if it was hoped that I would provide some deep theological insight into the weekend or some long awaited



*Dorothy Peyton Jones, Alan Wearmouth, Felicity Smith and Jim Cummins at the Reflective Weekend*

refreshing new angle on what is needed within CHRISM. I'm not a great one for answers but I love asking questions and so, in a real spirit of gratitude for the weekend and especially the people with whom I shared it, I'll end with a few questions. If any seem impertinent please forgive me.

- Gurus belong to Sikhism; is Michael Ranken's place within CHRISM in any way obstructing its development? (He must have been a remarkable man.)
- Is the age profile of CHRISM as reflected at this weekend? If so, what is being done to attract a larger number of younger people? (I so wish I'd first experienced CHRISM twenty years ago.)
- Is the leadership model adopted by CHRISM the most appropriate for its purposes? Is a person's organisational role within CHRISM relevant to, for example, the leading of worship? What leadership is needed and why?

Thank you very much for the opportunity to meet you all, participants in CHRISM 2009 – Morley. Thank you for your warmth and openness. Thank you for your willingness and your breadth of vision. Thank you for the activities and the worship. Thank you even for the card sort!

*Alan Wearmouth is a secondary school teacher of 33 years' experience who was ordained in 1989; he has lived and worked for his entire career in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire on the same site.*

### 3. Thoughts at the final Eucharist: Telling the story and living the incarnation

#### Bill Dodge

*We were joined on the CHRISM Reflective Weekend by Bill Dodge, an old friend from the US Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (APT), who made the trip from upper New York State. Bill entertained us with his wit, prompted us by his thoughtful questions, and left us the following thoughts during the final Eucharist.*

The Bible is the story we know and tell about God. I start my story by saying, "Faith begins when we meet Christ. This meeting most often takes place when we meet him in the life of another person in whom he is already alive." What is CHRISM's story?

I want to bring before us four thoughts as we prepare to go back to tell the story and live the incarnation.

1. Paul starts several of his letters with the assertion that: "There is indeed no single gift you lack, while you wait expectantly for our Lord Jesus Christ to reveal himself."

2 Samuel 6.12-16: It was told King David, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; and when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. David danced before the LORD with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

Do you feel as though Saul's daughter is spoiling your dance? Who is Michal for you?

2. Mark 2.1-12: When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - he said to the paralytic - "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Jesus heals the paralytic because of the faith of the four who carried him to Jesus. Are we carrying paralytics to Jesus? How do the life, death and resurrection of Jesus affect your work? How do we live out incarnation in our work?

3. 1 Corinthians 1.4-9: I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind - just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you - so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

How does your remunerative employment feed the community of faith?

4. Colossians 1.3-14: In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit. For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

How do you interact with each other the rest of the year? How do you support one another as part of the family of faith?

In a time of unemployment, where is the community for the unemployed?

You are much more centered on your interior life of faith than I have experienced at APT. I find this interesting because you are much more centered on being MSEs than we are. APT folks are more involved in ministering to the local congregations and to the larger Church. There is a balance to be found between the two; have you found it, and how to you maintain it?

A final thought:

Gathered or scattered - GOD IS WITH US

In suffering and hope - GOD IS WITH US

Now and always - GOD IS WITH US

#### **4. The CHRISM Beatitudes or "Blessed are you ministers in the world"**

**Adrian Holdstock**

*This was composed at the Reflective Weekend in response to being invited to reflect on the many ways in which our everyday lives are our ministry*

Blessed are you who reflect,  
for you shall understand God's view of the world

Blessed are you who bring others to CHRISM,  
for you multiply Godly insights across the face of the earth

Blessed are you who bring new meaning to work for others,  
for you participate in God's continuing work of creation

Blessed are you who celebrate the presence of God,  
for you know the true causes of joy and sorrow in the world

Blessed are you who celebrate the holiness of life in work,  
for you delight in so much of your waking lives

Blessed are you who see the Christian story in your work,  
for you see God's love, justice, mercy and truth in the everyday

Blessed are you who live the Christian story in your work,  
for the more you sow, the more you may glimpse the harvest

## The Coventry area local group: 'Sacraments in Work'

Felicity Smith

"I hadn't thought of connecting work with sacraments but this was a very useful exercise. It helped me look at my work in a different way – to realise God present in it – to realise more deeply the holiness in it – to see the sacramental nature – and things that may be ordinary but are important."

A group from the Coventry area met again on a Sunday afternoon in March for another session on "Ministry where you work", but this time we focused on the theme of 'Sacraments in Work'. We were a mixture of four ordained MSEs and six Readers, and we engaged enthusiastically with our theme - "So much came out of a short time it was surprising and inspiring."

We began the afternoon in groups talking about the events of our week at work – the mundane routine activities, the on-going major projects, and the exciting and challenging one-off occurrences. The balance between thinking and discussion and individual/small group/whole group work worked well and kept the discussion moving along.

"It was good to talk. The afternoon gave the opportunity to talk to other people who have a ministry in their workplace, especially another teacher. Listening to other people's stories gave new ideas to adapt to my particular situation. It was encouraging to find others doing very similar things within the work place, although their work places are so very different."

We then moved on to think about how we might see sacraments taking place in these activities, beginning from the traditional definition: "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace". We thought it might be useful to give a couple of examples of sacraments we recognised at work – although with caution, as it is difficult to capture the individual's particular situation and the depth of discussion which surrounded these suggestions.

The shared lunch time and particularly the shared communal weekly or monthly lunch in the office or department resonated with ideas of communion. Another more telling example was of a cake sale for money raising which not only benefited others through the money raised but also brought people together, working communally to make the cakes and organise the sale.

We found several examples with echoes of the sacrament of extreme unction – although we decided it could more helpfully be called “anointing for New Life” – involving a step in faith into the unknown. We thought of major life changes such as retirement or redundancy, but also the change in a pupil’s home life (for example, when parents separate).

“I found very interesting the discussion on the sacraments. We could spend a lot more time on this theme, perhaps exploring the question of making it explicit – but the first step is recognising what we are doing. Maybe we could take one of the themes that emerged this time and explore it further. It would be interesting to turn the question around – to ponder how what we do in Church is relevant to what we do in the workplace.”

What was valuable was actually stepping back to look at a normal working week and seeing what stood out as important. It was good to have time to reflect on what was happening and, having identified those tasks within the working week, to be aware of them as they happen, not just retrospectively. We often worry that our contribution is too small – when we should be saying, “Let us recognise what is going on in what does take place and value it.”

However what we did here was just a beginning: “I shall continue to think and maybe I can see the themes emerging in the coming weeks”.

“Most of the people in my church have no concept of work as a place where you can minister (ministry is for professionals!) so it is refreshing just to explore these ideas. Anything like this that helps with closing the church/“real world” gap is good”.

The group was enthusiastic to meet again, so we are aiming at three times a year, and hoping to plan another meeting before the summer holidays. More importantly, we would encourage you to organise something similar in your area – you can help other people discover their MSE.

## Forthcoming events

**Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers: Tentmaking in the Big Tent, 12-13th June, Atlanta, Georgia**

### Phil Aspinall

In my report of the Annual Conference of the Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (APT) in the last Journal, I talked of their proposal to contribute to the “Big Tent” – an event being planned for June 2009 in Atlanta, Georgia to bring together 10 different specialist sectors of the Presbyterian Church of the USA, including New Immigrants and Tentmakers. Many of you will have learnt considerably more about APT through meeting Bill Dodge at the February Weekend

They now plan to include two parallel workshops to be led by APT members on Friday 12th June:

#### *“Feeling the Call” to Tentmaking*

*Both a newly minted and retired tentmaker will share the benefits and blessings of the call to bi-vocational ministry from a variety of perspectives. Come share your passion and questions about this model of ministry with one who has recently structured a call with church and Presbytery and a veteran who has seen it all!*

#### *“The Coat of Many Colours of Bi-Vocational Ministry - Everything You Wanted to Know about Tentmaking and are Not Afraid to Ask”*

*Three tentmaking pastors will share over 30 years of insight and more than 10 reasons why tentmaking models make sense and embrace a bright future, particularly in a multi-cultural and racial/ethnic setting. Come hear the story of tentmaking, share your story, and let's collaborate!*

In addition to these presentations, they intend to network widely and share the news of tentmaking throughout the conference with anyone who will listen. The links with the representatives of New Immigrant churches are particularly important, as many of the churches cannot afford to pay their pastors, who therefore have to be tentmakers.

These two presentations raise some challenging questions for us: Where do we have opportunities to do something similar, locally or nationally? Who is out there “feeling a call to MSE” but not knowing where to begin?

APT has dropped the idea of holding their annual conference in conjunction with the June event, as it was proving unworkable and too expensive. So plans are now being made for a conference in the autumn, probably back in the Chicago area where we last met some four years ago with a significant number of Episcopalians from the Diocese. We hope to have more details for you in the July Journal.

## **Other dates for your diary**

### **United Kingdom**

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

**19th May 2009:** CABE Paper: ‘Purpose fuels performance’ with Jill Garrett, Assistant CEO, LT Consulting, 6.30pm (6.00pm CABE AGM), at St Peter’s, Vere Street, London W1G 0DQ. Please RSVP to: [events@principlesforbusiness.com](mailto:events@principlesforbusiness.com)

**10th June 2009:** Network event with Peter Shaw, CB, Partner at Praesta Partners, 6.30pm, at the Hoop and Grapes 80 Farringdon Street, London EC4B 4AL.

**8th July 2009:** Network talk with Richard Higginson, Lecturer in Ethics and Leadership, Director of Faith in Business project, Ridley Hall, 6.30pm, at the Hoop and Grapes (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, 10.30am, at The Independent Chapel, Spicer Street, St Albans. 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**

**23rd - 27th November 2009** (Teaching week); **26th - 30th April 2010** (Reading week): Mission and the World of Work Programme: Master of Arts, Postgraduate Diploma, and Postgraduate Certificate. The purpose of this programme is to enable participants to explore, clarify, develop strategies for and access resources to further mission in the world of work. Course leader: Deacon Dr. David Clark. At Cliff College (accredited by the University of Manchester). Further information from the Postgraduate Administrator, Cliff College, Calver, Hope Valley, Derbyshire, S32 3XG, tel: 01246 584216, email: [postgrad@cliffcollege.ac.uk](mailto:postgrad@cliffcollege.ac.uk). (See: [www.cliffcollege.ac.uk](http://www.cliffcollege.ac.uk))

## **London Institute for Contemporary Christianity**

**4th June 2009:** Beyond Thanking God for Monday, Mainstream North Leaders Day with Mark Greene and Neil Hudson, 10.00am - 3.00pm, at Blackley Centre, Blackley Road, Blackley (Nr Huddersfield), HX5 0TD. Cost: £15 (including refreshments and lunch). To book your place, please contact Hazel Gilbert on 01244 312037, or email [hazel.gilbert@hbc.org.uk](mailto:hazel.gilbert@hbc.org.uk).

**12th June 2009:** What's the Time? An LICC Training and Formation Day on Discernment and Whole-life Disciplemaking for Today's World, with Adrian Chatfield, Ridley Hall Cambridge, and Tracy Cotterell, Neil Hudson, and Ben Care, LICC, 1.00pm - 5.00pm, at St Cuthbert's Church in Cheadle ([www.stcuthberts.org](http://www.stcuthberts.org))  
Cost: £10. Booking is essential for this day. Call LICC on 0207 399 9555 or email [mail@licc.org.uk](mailto:mail@licc.org.uk) (See [www.licc.org.uk/about-licc/events](http://www.licc.org.uk/about-licc/events) for more details of these events)

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

**27th May 2009:** One of a series of talks on 'The "Spiritual Architecture" for the good workplace of the future' with Richard Matthews, Group MD, Freshbaked; **23rd June 2009:** with Alistair Neil, CE Merthyr Tydfil County Council. Both at 11.30am - 3.30pm, at 39 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9XF. Cost: free. Booking: contact [lismartin@churchinwales.org.uk](mailto:lismartin@churchinwales.org.uk) or 02920 348252. (See <http://telosspirituality.org.uk> for more details of these and other events.)

### **International**

**8th - 10th May 2009:** German Working Brothers and Sisters, at Ilbenstadt near Frankfurt

**29th May - 1st June 2009:** International Worker Priests: "Migration in this globalised world", at Bergamo, Italy

**16th - 18th October 2009:** Ministers in Secular Employment of the Old Catholic Church of Germany: "Spirituality in Work", at Speyer, Germany

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

## And finally...

A Professor stood before his philosophy class with some items on the desk in front of him. When the students had taken their seats, without saying anything, he picked up a large, empty jar and filled it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

The Professor then took a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar, which he shook lightly, the pebbles settled in the gaps between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They responded with a unanimous "Yes". The Professor then picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar, again shaking it gently. The sand filled up all the space between the pebbles. He once again asked the students if the jar was full. Again they responded with a unanimous "Yes". The Professor then produced two glasses of wine from under the table and poured them into the jar. The wine sank into the sand. The students laughed.

"Now," the Professor said as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognise that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things: family, children, health, friends and the things you are passionate about. The things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter, like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else - the small stuff. If you put the sand in the jar first there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you never have room for the good things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to you and your happiness - the golf balls. Play with your children. Take care of your health. Take your spouse out to dinner. There is always time to clean the house or play a computer game. Set your priorities to take care of the golf balls first. The rest is just sand."

One student raised her hand and asked what the wine represented. The Professor smiled. "I'm glad you asked me that. It goes to show that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of glasses of wine."

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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