

Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in
secular ministry

Number 113

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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 other members of the Committee

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Copy deadline for the next edition: Friday 9th July 2010

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Editorial

This is going to be a short editorial as this issue is already late. I've been too absorbed by the General Election (a bit of canvassing but a lot of radio listening and television watching) and too busy working at what I am paid to do (managing an academic research group) but also what I am not ('standing in' for my vicar who is on sabbatical). Such a life is, I expect, fairly normal for an MSE. But why is it that God does not seem to give us enough time to do anything properly?

Speaking of which: astute readers may have noticed that the 'forthcoming events' section of this journal has got shorter and shorter. If anyone would like to suggest how this section might be improved or, even better, write me a regular 'column', that would be great.

I hope that you'll find that this issue contains some interesting material. You'll note that my efforts to solicit articles on MSE training, which led to two items in the last issue, have also led to a contribution published in this - an interesting item about distance learning for pre-ordination training in the US. Thanks are due to CHRISM Member Bill Dodge for putting me in touch with the author.

I'm still interested in receiving articles on training for MSE – particularly post-ordination training which hasn't been covered in any of the contributions so far – but any sort of MSE training (or mentoring) really. This because I think we need to grow more MSEs (not just support the MSEs we already have – important as that is). Training in its various forms is surely crucial here. When we need more doctors we train more of them. Surely the same principle applies to MSEs, or is this just too simplistic? So please keep those articles on training coming.

Please also note the important notices of the CHRISM Annual Conference and AGM and the enclosed flyer. See you there!

Mike Rayner

CHRISM Annual General Meeting, 17th July 2010

Notice is hereby given that the 2010 Annual General Meeting of CHRISM will take place on Saturday 17th July, at 6.00 pm, at the Octagon, University of the West of England, Frenchay Campus, Bristol, BS16 1QY.

Agenda

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of AGM held on 27th September 2009
- 3 Matters arising
- 4 Presiding Moderator's report
- 5 Secretary's report
- 6 Membership report
- 7 CHRISSET financial report
 - Adoption of Accounts for 2009
 - Motion to continue the arrangement with the CHRISSET trustees
- 8 Subscriptions for 2011
- 9 Election of officers and Committee members
- 10 CHRISM nomination of a CHRISSET trustee
- 11 Date and place of next AGM
- 12 Remarks by the in-coming Presiding Moderator

The unaudited accounts for 2009 will be available for inspection at the meeting. Notice of any other business should be given to the CHRISM Secretary at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.

CHRISM Summer Conference 2010

16th - 18th July 2010,
University of the West of England in Bristol

Being human at work

**Is work a dehumanising experience for many?
Where do we find our humanity expressed at work?
How can we make our work more human?**

The weekend will be hosted by the Revd Dr Peter Johnson, the Head of The Living Centre in the Octagon on Frenchay Campus, and we shall work with a range of practitioners as we explore the essence of being human and see how it relates to our experiences of our work and workplaces. So here are some radical thoughts:

The work of a MSE is to get out of the way - to be human rather than Christian
Or to misquote St. Irenaeus - the glory of God is a man [sic] truly human

The Living Centre at the University of the West of England is a new service concept developed from the traditional model of chaplaincy. The service is based on the results of consultation with students and staff of the university. The concept is that of a service based on the word 'esse' - to be: the indispensable nature of something that gives it identity. The Living Centre therefore states as its aim - 'exploring the essence of being human'.

Eight aspects of human being have been identified and the service provides resources to explore the essence of each aspect:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Intellectual
- Spiritual
- Vocational
- Recreational
- Social
- Environmental

The Living Centre is hosted by the Octagon on Frenchay campus but the service is flexible enough to be delivered through any space. Other campuses have a focal space from which The Living Centre is advertised and some aspects delivered. The Octagon provides spaces for teaching and learning; prayer, meditation, reflection and wellbeing practices; rest, relaxation and socialising.

The University of the West of England (UWE) is a modern, growing university in the thriving harbourside city of Bristol. UWE is one of Britain's most popular universities, with around 30,000 students and 3,000 staff and is the largest provider of Higher Education in the South West of England. Students come to UWE from all parts of the UK, as well as a significant and growing number of international students from over 50 countries worldwide. Frenchay Campus, the main University Campus, was purpose-built in 1975 and lies about four miles north of Bristol city centre. It is linked to the city by a regular bus service as well as the nearby Bristol Parkway train station. You can find out more at <http://www.uwe.ac.uk/>

The weekend will incorporate the CHRISM AGM and visits to local places of interest and of work. The city contains much of interest from the cathedral to the historic port, from art galleries to the parks of Clifton. Accommodation on the UWE campus is in single-bedded ensuite study bedrooms. Partners are welcome – so why not make this part of a longer break?

The cost for the whole weekend, from dinner on Friday evening to lunch on Sunday, inclusive will be £170 (members) and £180 (non-members). Day visitors are also welcome and special rates can be arranged. If you have limited financial resources, a bursary from CHRISSET may be available on application to the Trustees.

We hope you will want to come. Space is limited, so please, book the date in your diary now, and return the enclosed registration form before 8th June 2010.



Letters to the Editor

From Rob Fox

Dropped in it?

Two topics have been bubbling up in MSE conversations in recent weeks that deserve to be opened up to wider contributions. They are at opposite ends of the MSE experience, but one or both has probably affected all of us. Time therefore to share our experiences, and tips!

Firstly: our local church ministry. Have you, as an MSE, found yourself expected to shoulder more of the burden when the stipendiary minister leaves? (I have; a two-year interregnum. I know many others have too). How did this affect you? What sort of issues arose? For example, around how much time had you to give and what you were responsible for? Perhaps most importantly, how reasonable were the expectations placed on you by the local and institutional church? What did you and others do to manage your role and the expectations?

At the other end of our experience, many of us have at some time experienced a major re-organisation at work, often arising from a merger or takeover. Again, I'd like to know what issues you experienced and how you and others addressed them.

I intend to write up the experiences you share in two articles and invite your contributions, all of which will of course be anonymised. Please contact me, by the end of June, by email at rob.foxesbridge@tiscali.co.uk, or traditional mail at the address in the rear inside cover.

This is a great opportunity for us MSEs to support each other. Thank you in anticipation.

From Margaret Joachim

A very big thank-you

The last issue of Ministers-at-Work featured an appeal to support Ramiro Pampols, a Catalan worker-priest involved in welfare work and education for street children in Haiti, who found himself in the midst of the devastation caused by the earthquake. CHRISM members and their colleagues have been extraordinarily generous, raising almost £5,000 to help the people with whom he works to rebuild their lives. This, along with a further £2,000 from a special collection at my church, has been sent directly to the "earthquake account" set up by Fundação Entreculturas, the charity for which Ramiro works.

Perhaps the most encouraging donation was from a group of children in the North Wales parish of one of our members, who contributed £114 from a Junior Church collection and then persuaded their headmaster at the nearby church school to have a non-uniform day which produced another £332.

Ramiro is very grateful for our help, and also appreciates the concern and practical assistance shown by fellow worker-priests.

A mediation on distance education from the US

Lynn Kostecki Brown

It was mid-March, 2008. I left the car rental lot and drove out of the airport. Of all things, I was driving a snazzy little cherry-red car. I headed north. The road stretched out before me, sleepy snow-covered fields on either side. An occasional silo or farmhouse broke up the monotony, but that was all. Being born and bred in New England and living most of my adult life in Upstate New York, this was not familiar territory. I was in Iowa. What on earth was I doing in Iowa in March barrelling down the highway in a cherry-red car?



Call is a funny thing. We speak of call with reverence, in an almost mystical way. We listen for God's call; sometimes we dare to speak it aloud. We look for external confirmation that what we think we hear is real and valid and true and not simply our ego speaking its own desires. And if it is real and valid and true, and it is of God, then it cannot be ignored.

We are called to many things in our lives. We feel led in a whole host of ways into choices and decisions about how we live the handful of decades we are given on this earth. We establish patterns and commitments and connections; we root and we sow and we reap. If we have heard faithfully and well, we might be allowed to see good, healthy, whole fruit as we harvest.

I began to hear a call from God about a decade ago, a call toward some manner of ordained ministry. This is not an extraordinary

thing. People are called to ministry all of the time, often the most unlikely people. But I wasn't a 25-year-old single person who was free to set sail in whatever boat and on whatever sea and on whatever shore might catch my fancy. No, far from it! I was nearly 40, happily married, a mother of three boisterous boys. I had multiple college degrees and a part-time profession that was satisfying. We owned our home and were well-settled in our community. I was already living out a previous call that we were incarnating in the life we had built together: to raise our family and make the children our priority, to be a parent first and an employee only second and to give our children firm roots in one community through their high school years if possible. We were reaping good, good fruit in our lives. Now, God is God, and God's call is incontrovertible, but God is not capricious. The call I began to hear to prepare for ministry in a different way was not to supplant the previous call of God on my life. So, how would this work?

I do not live near a degree-granting seminary. The closest seminaries to me are two to three hours away. Now, many people, many mothers of small children even, will commute two or three days a week, possibly living away from home a night or two or three each week, while completing coursework for a Master of Divinity degree. I explored that option. I went to open houses and call to ministry conferences. I wrestled and worried and worked it over like a dog with an uncooperative bone. I prayed. And it was clear that for us, for me, this was not the path. This was not the time. This was not the call. I waited.

After a few more years had passed, I began to hear about a new program, a Distance Master of Divinity Program. It was located at the Presbyterian University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (UBDTS). More praying and more waiting followed, until I determined that I owed it to myself to look into this program further. Maybe the path was being made straight; maybe the waiting could be nearing an end. And so I found myself in a cherry-red car, driving toward Dubuque, Iowa and another Exploring a Call conference. I was pretty convinced that it was a certifiably lunatic thing to be doing. But, I would be staying in a lovely bed and breakfast for two nights and decided that I would view it as an adventure and a vacation.

I learned more about the Distance Program. The program is well-designed. It is a combination of 1/3 residential coursework and 2/3 distance coursework. The residential coursework is completed in two-week intensives, scheduled twice a year in August and January. Three to four credit hours of work are completed during each intensive, with a two-week “pre-load” period for reading and other preparatory work and a two-week “post-load” period for follow-up assignments. During the regular Fall and Spring semesters, six credit hours of work are completed through on-line courses. The program operates on a cohort model. The coursework is identical to the residential Master of Divinity program except the program is intentionally set up on a five-year paradigm; nine to ten credits per semester are still considered to be full-time graduate study and more than two online courses per semester would be considered an overload. The institutional commitment to the program is impressive. Every faculty member has committed to teaching courses on line. There is an administrative Director of Distance Education position. Time and thought are given to pedagogical considerations and how the distance environment impacts the formative nature of seminary education, and strategies are designed and implemented to address such concerns. The seminary has invested significant resources in the cutting-edge technology infrastructure necessary to support distance learning. This is no second-rate degree, but a viable and realistic option for those hearing a call but unable to follow it into a more traditional seminary program.

By the time the two-day conference drew to a close and I returned my cherry-red car to the airport and winged my way back to Albany, New York, it was becoming clearer why I had been in Iowa. This might in fact be the answer I had been seeking – a way to follow the new call I was hearing while still able to honor my previous call and the choices and commitments I had made to life in a particular context. I could continue to live in my community, work in my profession, participate in my local church and middle judicatory work, and maintain the established collegial relationships that have been so important and formative for me in recent years. Eventually, my field education placements would be located in my home Presbytery as well, and there might well be other ways in

which I could minister and serve that would benefit my Presbytery, which usually does not have its seminary students who are under its care living within its bounds.

I matriculated into the Dubuque program in August of 2009. So far, I have been to Iowa two more times for intensives and have completed 12 credits of coursework. The depth of community and connection with the other students in my cohort as well as distance students in the other cohorts is real and meaningful and deep. Discussion board interactions are thoughtful and measured, respectful and substantive. The distance paradigm allows in some ways for deeper conversation and interaction since there is more time for thought in the posting process than there is in a real-time classroom discussion. The program has been all I hoped and dreamed of for so long. The coursework is rigorous and challenging. The seminary is intentional about including the distance community as full-fledged members of the seminary community, and this in turn is creating change in the residential program as well. My cohort-mates are equally committed people, all of whom have also been seeking a way to answer their calls for a long time. We hail from all corners of the United States, ten different states, and bring a diversity to the seminary community that was not there before. (A student in one of the other cohorts even travels twice a year from Lebanon for the intensives.) We are men and women, married and single, ages 30 to 60, some with children and grandchildren. Some of us work full-time, some part-time, some make their studies their primary work for now. We all live and work and minister in our own contexts and yet come together in the virtual world and twice a year in person to study God's word, enjoy Christian



UBDTS stained glass

community, and follow our call. We individually and collectively thank God for this opportunity, for this institution, for this program, and enthusiastically endorse this way of training for ministry.



Lynn's fellow students (first year cohort)

Lynn Kostecki Brown is a Presbyterian Elder and an Inquirer in the process of Preparation for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA). She is a first-year student in the Distance Master of Divinity Program at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. She lives in Albany, NY with her husband, three sons, four cats, and Wheaten terrier. More information about the Distance M.Div. program at Dubuque can be found on line at <http://udts.dbq.edu/>.

Daniel the Minister in Secular Employment

Rob Fox

The book of Daniel is one of the most hotly contested in the Old Testament. However, setting aside the debates over authorship, dating, historicity, prophecy and the differences between the Masoretic text and the Septuagint, the commentators have largely missed a central point: Daniel was an MSE. What is more, there is a cracking good MSE story in there.

Because of his status as prophet, Daniel is thought of as a primarily religious figure. A man of faith he certainly was, but he had no formal role within the religion of his people, the Jews in exile. He was a civil servant, and became a very senior one at that. What then makes him an MSE rather than simply a faithful Jew? It was that the kings he served, and the enemies he acquired, saw him as representing the God of Israel and acknowledged him as doing so (see Chapters 4 and 6 in particular).

We are familiar with the outline of the story. Judah is subject to a hostile takeover bid by Babylon. You could tell it was hostile by the large army camped outside Jerusalem; bit of a giveaway really. Jerusalem falls to the army of Babylon, and Judah is absorbed into its empire. Following a time-honoured approach, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, “recruits” talent from Judah into his own service, “young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the King’s palace” (1:4). These young men, including Daniel, are put through a three-year training course, including in the language they are to work in.

Daniel (“God is my judge”) is successively promoted until he is the King’s right-hand man, the Managing Director to the King’s Chairman. This comes about because Daniel is good at his job; very good. He shows wisdom, foresight, integrity and is, unusually in the circumstances, incorruptible. He sees faithful service to the King as part of his faithful service to God. So when the King introduces dietary rules that cut across his service to God, Daniel

sees this as an occasion to propose a practical solution, not as one for conflict and standing on principles. He respects the King's right to rule and works in that service, because it is also his service to God. He lives and works knowing that God judges what he does just as much as the King.

It is a common feature of hierarchical regimes, whether in government or business, that those in the structure seek to please their manager; that is the way to advancement. They also tend to adopt the management style and behaviour of their superior. If therefore a senior manager regularly berates staff for their perceived failings as a means of "improving" performance, junior managers will tend to do likewise. Pleasing the boss is seen as the route to advancement, and imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, as the saying goes. Similarly if the senior manager is ruthless at disposing of "under-performers", more junior managers will tend to follow suit. And if anyone is seen as an obstacle or competitor to promotion: neutralize the threat in any way possible, get your retaliation in first.

Daniel however is not out for self-aggrandizement. Indeed when (2:14) he learns from Arioch, commander of the King's guard, of the royal command to kill the wise men as they can't interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he acts corporately (the King and empire can only lose from the execution of the order) and out of concern for the welfare of his colleagues in the King's service by asking for time to come up with the interpretation. Not that this was reciprocated. When he asks the King for promotion, it is not for himself, but for three other exiles from Judah, with whom he prays, whose abilities he knows. He knows also that they too see service of the King as service of God (2:49).

Corporate culture depends heavily on the management style of those at the top, which may in practice be quite different to what they, and the company mission statement, espouse. Set a competitive tone by your actions, and you'll get competition. Set a collaborative tone and you'll get collaboration. The corporate culture Daniel worked in was decidedly the former. Successive kings were quite ready to impose the death penalty for failure to

deliver, whether interpreting a dream or bowing to a golden idol (Chapter 3). Many royal servants exploited this for their own ends, denouncing the foreign Judaeen civil servants at any opportunity.

Daniel and his three colleagues stood out because they did not fall in with the corporate culture. They were already outsiders because they were foreigners. Standing aside from the dog eat dog culture set them apart further. Daniel's concern is to serve the King faithfully, telling it like it is when necessary. Successive kings saw this and knew that they could rely on Daniel's integrity, even if they did not like what they heard. They would get the truth, not flattery.

Nor does Daniel come across as feeling morally superior. He does not turn round and thumb his nose at the king-pleasers when they can't deliver the goods. He does not smugly say, "I told you so" when he thrives on a vegetarian diet. He does not demand that those who engineered his stay in the pit of lions be thrown in themselves after the Persian takeover; it is the King who does that. There is a lesson here: we may be able to influence the corporate culture, but don't expect to change it completely, and learn to live with what we can't change.

There is a particular lesson when it comes to mergers and acquisitions. Daniel was on the wrong end of two hostile takeovers: Judah by Babylon, Babylon by Persia. In both cases the CEO of the target had neglected the company's defences against predators. Jehoiakim, King of Judah, relied too heavily on the expectation that the King of Egypt would act as White Knight and come to the rescue should Judah be threatened. The CEO of Babylon, Belshazzar, was too busy partying, swigging from the goblets looted from Jerusalem, to notice the threat.

The range of counters to a threatened takeover makes entertaining reading: Bankmail, Greenmail, Whitemail, the Crown Jewel defence (flog off all the worthwhile assets), Scorched-earth defence (flog off everything), the similar Jonestown defence (so named after the mass suicide in Guyana in 1976), Lobster trap, Killer bees, Shark repellent, and my favourite: the Nancy Reagan defence ("Just say

no"). Whether they go through or not, the threat of a merger or acquisition is disruptive, especially for the staff of all the companies or organizations involved.

The reasons for wanting to take over a competitor vary, but usually include: increasing sales or revenue, venturing into new markets, the assets held by the target, economies of scale and organization, enlarged brand portfolio, and decreased competition. Babylon took over Judah to gain control of trade routes through the area; Persia took over Babylon to get rid of a competitor and control the Tigris and Euphrates valleys. But when a merger or takeover fails it is usually because of a failure to integrate the human resources.

Mergers and takeovers often also mean job cuts. Employees of the target fear they will lose out; those of the bidder that they will be replaced by cheaper or more efficient alternatives at the target. The knives come out; there is much jockeying for position; and some will be thrown to the lions. How organizations manage such upheavals says much of their priorities. Are staff told truthfully as much as they can be told? Is staff welfare and re-training among the highest priorities?

Business consultant Dan Stockdale puts it like this. "Rarely do those driving the process stop to think about the individuals within the company who make it run. Even when human resources departments are involved with the deal, they usually cease to think of the employees as individuals and look instead at the budget they've been given and think of people as numbers they have to place within the parameters of that budget: 'We are going to have 25 people in marketing and 50 in accounting. Who will it be? Or, who won't it be?'

"Often, when executives think the merger is going fine, the employees have an entirely different take on the situation. Employees who are aware a deal is taking place are naturally concerned about themselves and their futures At this point they have three primary questions: 'Will I have a job?' 'How much will I be paid?' 'What benefits will I have?'"

Daniel twice faced being seen as an obstacle by those who thought he had usurped their rightful place in the hierarchy. He also stood in the way of their “perks”. He was noted as being incorruptible, from which we can infer that he was not influenced by bribes, whether money or power, which was a threat to those who saw this as part of the job. How often has it been suggested to us that we might gain by smoothing the path for someone or something? Is there a culture of “you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours”? Or even of routinely taking back-handers? Are we seduced by it?

Daniel wasn’t, so his enemies conspired to remove him so “normal service” could be resumed. Bribes did not work, so they attacked him at the only point they could: his faith. Darius was engineered into passing a law that flattered him, and a trap was set. Inevitably Daniel fell into it and was condemned to the lions’ den (Chapter 6). That he walked out unscathed the following morning is testimony to God having watched over a faithful servant. It was not that God intervened to be there with Daniel, they were always with each other. Daniel lived in the presence of God, at work as at prayer.

A final point here is that the kings whom Daniel served not only recognized that this foreigner was an able and reliable servant; they realized that his faith was a major reason why (see Chapters 4 and 6). Do our employers, managers and colleagues see the same in us? Do we follow the crowd, unquestioning followers of our work-place culture? Or, by faith, do we seek to influence for good and God?

To see and tell the Christian story – financial haven or heaven?

Martin Dryden

On Friday 13th March 2009, representatives of a variety of European charities, non-governmental organisations and pressure groups gathered in Jersey to call on world leaders to end the use of tax havens which, they contended, contributed to world poverty because they enabled the rich and powerful to avoid paying taxes. This event preceded the City of London demonstrations which took place around the G20 summit on 2nd April, which had been called to discuss the world financial crisis. The Jersey event, which passed off peacefully, consisted of a public meeting followed by a march through the streets of St Helier, Jersey's capital. The demonstrators protested outside a number of banks before rallying in the Royal Square (outside the island's parliament building).

The initial media coverage (Jersey Evening Post, 13/03/2009) concentrated on the facts but also drew attention to the involvement of Christian Aid. The main United Kingdom organisation (CA UK) had supported the event while the local Christian Aid representatives (including myself) had been critical of CA UK's involvement, fearing that it would prejudice fund raising efforts in Jersey: around £60,000 had been raised from Lent Lunches and Christian Aid Week in 2008. The States of Jersey's Overseas Aid Committee had also planned to donate over £300,000 to CA UK in 2009. The article reported a spokesman for the protestors as saying that the demonstration did not apply to Jersey in particular but to all tax havens equally. The head of Jersey Finance Limited responded that Jersey was not only well-regulated in line with international standards but that it also had no secrecy legislation and actually cooperated with other jurisdictions to combat financial crime, including tax evasion.

Subsequently the local newspaper adopted a more thoughtful approach, stating that the 'outside world is all too often indifferent to nuances' in labelling Jersey a tax haven, whereas international agencies were aware that 'there were varying levels of probity and this island's reputation in this respect is second to none'.

On 17th March, a Jersey Evening Post columnist drew attention to the name-calling hypocrisy of the G20 countries in criticising tax havens by pointing out how they too acted as tax havens. Their version of events, of 'offshore' tax havens draining wealth away from the industrialised countries and thereby depriving them of much-needed revenue, failed to describe how they themselves use taxation as a way of competing against other countries. By 21st March, the Jersey Evening Post had adopted a more domestic focus, noting how the protestors had intimidated and frightened 'ordinary' people by their demonstration, and how around 13,000 would be put out of work if financial services firms were to withdraw from Jersey as the result of international pressure. On 3rd April the Jersey Evening Post expressed a sigh of relief as the G20 reported that it had placed Jersey on a 'white list' of cooperative jurisdictions including Australia, France and the UK. The immediate threat appeared to have passed, although the campaigners continued to insist that the steps taken by Jersey were insufficient.

A number of the assumptions underlying the stance against international financial centres ('IFCs', a more neutral term than 'tax haven') have been criticised by some economists, who believe that they actually contribute to global prosperity by 'oiling the cogs' of the machine that is international trade and investment. The axiom, that when two economists meet there will be three opinions, also seems to apply to Christians, who have aligned themselves with the critics of IFCs as well as with their advocates.

In May 2008 Christian Aid UK produced a report entitled Death and taxes: the true toll of tax dodging which drew heavily on the work of Tax Justice Network, a pressure group which 'oppose(s) tax havens and offshore finance'. This view is perhaps unsurprisingly not shared by many Christians in Jersey who, no matter who they are or what they do, have a stake in the prosperity of the financial services industry.

Christians in Jersey may wish to describe the events in Jersey in different terms to both the secular media and CA UK, not only because they are personally implicated but also because they are

called to live lives of Christian integrity. The intense international criticism from both Christian and secular quarters has contributed to an anxiety that the churches in Jersey may be judged in future as the churches of the past were judged for supporting slavery or apartheid. These churches justified their attitudes and actions from scripture. While the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10), proof texts can and have been misapplied throughout most of Christian history.

On what basis should Christians in Jersey be judged? Stanley Hauerwas commends what he calls the 'narrative displays of God's holiness' in Scripture as the surest foundation for Christian life (Hauerwas 1983:67). Stories resist the extraction of abstract principles or propositional truths. Individual biblical commandments should be treated as aspects of the overarching call to be holy because God is holy (Leviticus 19:1). The question therefore becomes 'which story?' rather than 'which proof text?' However, this question turns out to be only marginally less difficult to answer as the Bible contains multiple narratives, and we risk identifying with the one that best suits our own ends rather than the one that conforms with how God rules. Hauerwas' solution is to view the narrative thrust of the whole Bible through the perspective of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The end that Jesus came to announce 'while not yet final, ... provide[s] a necessary perspective for our continuing life in the world' as the Israel of God (Hauerwas 1983:82-83). It has to be said that even this principle is not perfect given that differing emphases are to be found within the New Testament.

If Christians in Jersey are indeed formed by the holy narratives to which they seek to be faithful, they have reacted against the aggressive narrative that is being imposed from without by the secular media. It is seen as commercially-driven and concerned with quick fixes to black and white problems rather than promoting thoughtful recommendations based on careful evaluation. Jeremiah, in contrast, was called to proclaim judgement on Judah not as a stranger but from within his own community, a judgement which included loving and serving his people. God also proclaimed judgement from within in Christ the incarnate Word.

Christians in Jersey keenly feel what Nicholas Adams refers to as the power of those who describe the world for us: whoever's description is accepted as fact is more important than who has the best arguments. Arguments make heavy demands on air time and listeners' energy. Descriptions can be achieved with sound bites. Descriptions count (Adams 1999:5).

We do not intuitively recognise ourselves in an angry narrative in which industrialised countries such as the UK and the USA are blameless and the people in Jersey are 'nothing more than a hive of tax evaders' (Jersey Evening Post 21/03/2009). Perhaps this is because such a dualistic perspective sits uneasily with the biblical view of the whole of creation as having fallen through sin (which according to Hauerwas means that humanity has sought to live as principle in its own story rather than as agent in God's story (Hauerwas 1983:38-44)).

According to Adams, 'most of [Jesus'] ethical teaching in the gospels is not advice on making decisions but surprising descriptions of the world.' (Adams 1999:6). If this is so, what descriptions might Christians in Jersey use to describe a fallen world in which people (including themselves) nevertheless struggle to live good lives?

I have chosen the story of Joseph in Egypt for a number of reasons. Firstly, it expresses the tension between free will and providence that many feel to be implicit in life. As Robert Alter puts it: 'The characters act as free agents out of the impulses of a memorable and often fiercely assertive individuality, but the actions they perform all ultimately fall into the symmetries and recurrences of God's comprehensive design.' (Alter 1981:112-113). Secondly, the 'international' scale of the narrative engages our attention: powerful and wealthy Egypt, dominating the surrounding lands, can be a dangerous place for those who are misguided or unfortunate enough to transgress its laws.

However, people rather than nations are the 'ultimates' in God's kingdom: Joseph provided for people well beyond Egypt's boundaries during the seven lean years. Christians (not just those

in Jersey) need to hear the challenge to be good stewards as well as to work for a world in which the hungry are filled with good things (Luke 1:53). While Joseph, a man of good character, rises to a position of power, his position is entirely dependent upon the will of Pharaoh. Tiny Jersey also suffers from the occasional delusion of grandeur and needs reminding that, like Joseph, its place in the world is subject to the good will of others: its behaviour matters.

Finally, Joseph is an exile/sojourner in Egypt: narratives of exile are particularly powerful in Jersey given its experience of occupation in World War II. Joseph's story, then, is far removed from the prescriptive regulation of international agencies and the angry criticism of pressure groups: it is more a call to identity than to action, a narrative full of ethical possibility in an imperfect and uncertain world.

It is not nice to be cast as the villain by the press. The events that took place in St Helier in March 2009 were picked up and reported round the world, and judging by most of the coverage you could be forgiven for thinking that the island was one of the main reasons for the world's financial woes. The fact that Jersey was placed on the G20 White List of countries because they thought we are as cooperative and transparent as Australia, France and the UK doesn't seem to have made much difference: inconvenient facts should never be allowed to get in the way of a good story!

The popular press loves to cast people in the role of heroes and villains even if the world is seldom black and white. But if we buy into their black and white story, if we tell this story to ourselves and believe it, it becomes nothing less than a counsel of despair. Is this really how we see ourselves? I believe that the story of Joseph, a man with a coat of many colours who went down to Egypt and became a blessing to many people, can give us real hope at a time of intense international criticism, at a time when our own years of plenty seem to have come to an abrupt end.

Joseph was a man who was despised by his brothers and cast out into exile in Egypt, a dangerous place where it was easy to fall foul

of the law: Joseph became the head of Potiphar's household, the captain of pharaoh's guard, and ended up in prison with pharaoh's butler and baker. But Joseph was not destined for destruction. Pharaoh gave him the task of creating a system to collect, store and distribute grain during the seven years of plenty and penury. It involved a nationwide level of management and accounting. It must have been a massive undertaking. It is hardly surprising that Pharaoh gave Joseph so much power.

But Joseph must have had his critics. I can hear those Egyptian economists looking at Joseph's long term forecast and saying 'seven years of famine? Look at the growth within our economy. We have grain coming out of our ears! We have abolished the economic cycle. We have entered a new paradigm. Who does he think he is?' But when the famine did begin to bite, those who had not made provision for themselves came to Joseph and he sold them grain; and because the famine was so widespread, the system operated for foreigners as well as for Egyptians: God's goodness knows no national boundaries, and neither should ours. Jersey folk are amazingly generous on an individual basis but if we do not want to be discriminated against internationally by being put on black lists and having our reputation blackened, we should be prepared to be good neighbours. Jersey's overseas aid budget was a mere 0.17% of GNI in 2007. The OECD recommended target for international aid is 0.7%...

Joseph must have been a good administrator even though he didn't have any formal qualifications to do the job: no MBA, no Certificate in Offshore Administration, no continuing professional development. St Paul, when he lists the fruits of the Spirit, says that one of them is administration. It is not the most spectacular of gifts, but it certainly is quite useful when you have to run Egypt.

And then there is trust. Pharaoh chose Joseph because he trusted him, and Joseph succeeded because he didn't abuse that trust. He was surrounded by wealth. He wore Pharaoh's signet ring and robes of fine linen. I expect they were designer label (although they were probably Nefertiti rather than Armani). If watches had been invented I feel sure he would have worn a Rolex. And of

course he drove round in a chariot. I can imagine it now: leather seats and alloy wheels; 2.5 litre V6. And yet Joseph didn't let it enter into his soul. In Jersey we live in an island of conspicuous wealth and consumption (or at least, we did) and it is so easy to be seduced by it - Christian or not - but Joseph was a man of integrity in a foreign land full of alien gods. He loved God and his neighbour and he used his gifts of stewardship and administration to the benefit of many nations.

I am sure that Joseph didn't have an easy time of it. As a Hebrew in Egypt he must have been treated like one of Jersey's much derided 'UK experts'. If the IMF had existed it would have blasted Joseph for Egypt's lack of policies and procedures in times of famine: this was clearly a major control weakness! But he remained true to his faith in God and he started out on his 14-year project with honesty and integrity as his guide. What better example for working in the Jersey finance industry, and for a world that has forgotten that there are more important things than material wealth?

The story of Joseph is ultimately not about Joseph at all, but about God and what he is like. It is the story of a grace-full God who loves and provides: a God who uses the things of this world such as international trade and investment; wealth management; administration and finance; to bring about his good purposes. How distasteful; how shocking! But how does he provide? We have no sense that any of the characters in this narrative are mere puppets in a drama where an invisible author is pulling the strings. All of them have free will. And yet we have a sneaking suspicion that free will alone is insufficient to explain the outcome of this story. There has to be something else: call it a subtle interplay between free will and providence. Saint Paul puts it well: 'We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.' (Romans 8:28).

God has an endgame. He has proclaimed it in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus; the one who gave bread to the hungry, not just for seven years but for all eternity. If we really do take the story of Joseph seriously as an early chapter in God's plan for the

redemption of creation, we shouldn't get too worried about weighing up the consequences of this or that course of action, because God has an endgame. I'm not saying that the way in which we live our lives is unimportant because Jesus called us to love God and love our neighbour as ourselves. I believe that God can and will use us for his own good purposes, even in an imperfect world. If you were to trust the popular press you would find it hard to believe that anything good could ever come out of Jersey. Funnily enough, that's exactly what the Jews thought about Egypt...

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Martin Dryden works as a Non-Executive Director for Mourant, an international financial services company, and unlike Rob Fox is not in Jersey for tax purposes as he was born and brought up there! Martin was a Reader for 10 years until July 2009 when he was ordained deacon in Winchester Cathedral.

Just a world.

Dorrie Johnson

Just a cockerel
crowing
over his hens.
Just a kiss,
soft, silent,
resting
on a bearded cheek.
Just a garden
dark-shadowed,
concealing
thoughts and fears.
Just soldiers,
doing their duty
sent to arrest
a troublemaker.
Just wood,
a tree cut down,
the rings of its growth
made clear in the mark
of the axe.
Just nails,
their metal bright,
sharp pointed.
Just flesh,
a man
willing to go
where his conscience took him.
Just a world
freed from law
by love.

**CHRISM Reflective Weekend 26th – 28th February
2010, St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, North Wales:
My life, my ministry**

Reflection 1

Nancy White

An e-mail appeared in my inbox from my diocesan CME officer. Now if your diocese is anything like mine you get too many emails, most of which, as an MSE, are irrelevant because they are usually for events that, because you have a 'real' job, you can't go to! However on this occasion it was worth opening because it was a flyer for the CHRISM Reflective Weekend. The mention of MSE's caught my eye immediately - at last a retreat that would speak my ministry's language! Even though I knew virtually nothing about CHRISM, other than there was journal by that name, I booked myself in and waited to see if it would change my life!

So it was with some trepidation that I arrived at St Deiniol's Library on 26th February after a day at a very gruelling job interview. I was certainly ready to reflect as I was coming to the end of my curacy and in an uncertain work situation. I had many questions for God and was feeling quite lonely and misunderstood in my ministry.

As I thought I knew no one on the weekend it was with great joy that I spied a friend whom I had trained with. Catherine it turned out had been the CHRISM rep on my course but I somehow had never caught on! There was also another figure in the room who looked familiar but who I could not quite place. Anyway everyone else seemed to be friendly which was a good start.

As is usual at these events we all introduced ourselves in the first session. The person who looked familiar was Mike from St Matthew's, Oxford, and the penny dropped, I knew why I knew him. When we moved into small groups we were in the same group so I was able to say "I know you, my family used to go to St Matthews." He looked at me and exclaimed: "You can't be one of those Whites!" I was and the last time he had seen me I had been

11 years old. My siblings and I had in fact been so awful when he and Nicky, his wife, babysat us that we had made them think very seriously about whether having kids was a good idea at all!

Now 28 years later here we were both coming to the end of our curacies and both MSE's, God had guided our journeys in the intervening years so that we would meet again. Each of us on that weekend had been drawn together in our complex lives to share with each other, in old friendships and new, on this part of our journey.

I know the theme of journeys is one that is often overplayed in current society and churches. However it was used as an effective reflective tool for the weekend to help us to look at the past, present and future in the context of 'My Life, My Ministry'. Questions such as 'Where am I now?' were made more challenging by being asked to list; 'the five most important things I do' and 'what I'm not doing and miss'. Being challenged to reflect so specifically is an excellent tool for those of us, like me, with busy lives where we are pulled in so many directions. Being in the relative safety of our small groups made it easier to share with each other and as the weekend progressed our trust in each other grew, as did our openness.

For others and me this 'journey' of reflection was quite painful. The question 'How did I get here?' brought out quite raw emotions in some of us, as we thought of painful as well as joyful events that had brought us to this point and place. In our sharing we discovered common themes of reaching changing points, struggles with our relationship to the church as MSE's and the drive to be Christ in the work place.

These themes continued as we moved on to looking at 'Where am I going?' Most of us hit a brick wall when we were asked to look five years ahead. However we all rejoiced in the 'hope' we had that God would work in and through our lives over those five years. For some there was the excitement of the unknown and for others a desire for the status quo to continue. For us all there was an awareness of the uncertainty many of us face in our working lives

that makes it hard to look so far forward. However in this uncertainty we felt that our role was to bring hope to our colleagues and communities. We are after all bearers of Good News.

The joy in this weekend was finding we were able to support each other in our struggles and uncertainties as we reflected on the issues each of us faced. This then gave us the strength to look out to the world we would be returning to and see how God was to use us as messengers of hope to each person we meet on our journey.

So did I return to the real world a changed person? No probably not but I did return knowing that I was not on my own. God had woven Mike, Catherine and my lives together again, just when each of us needed it. For me it meant finding a camaraderie that I had been missing since being ordained, I now knew that I was not alone as an MSE and that the things I struggled with as an MSE were not unique. I also have continued to hold onto the concept of being a messenger of hope. I am privileged in my ministry to not be stipendiary, to live my life out there in the real world, with real struggles (no I didn't get the job I'd applied for) and real people. The past is the past we learn from it and let it go, the present is in the

small joys, like meeting old friends and making new ones, rejoicing our successes and mourning our failures, and finally in knowing the future is in God's hands we just move towards it in hope.



Nancy (third from right) at the final session

Reflection 2

Stan Frost

It's OK to make mistakes or err, and err and err again on the way to wisdom (with apologies to.... (see last issue of Ministers-at-Work))

About 20 of us joined together for this event. The CHRISM Committee had shared in the planning and Canon Michael Williams had been invited to lead the weekend. Some of us see Mike as an old friend who several knew when they were students on the Northern Ordination Course which was based in Manchester.

I attended the retreat after some heart searching and with the moral support of my wife Eileen. The evening before it started we were at the local theatre attending 'Bedroom Farce' by Alan Ayckbourn. This is a chaotic romp through three bedrooms with assorted characters seeking to impress one another and finding themselves in the process. So imagine my delight and surprise when we were invited during the first session to define what we were – just as we are told God is 'I am' what does it mean for us and what we are?

After the general introduction – both to ourselves and the programme we did group work (with 20 people we managed three groups) considering the five most important things that we individually do and considering what we miss not doing, resent or are thankful that we don't have to do. There were a range of 'I am' descriptions from being human to being a woman to being frustrated and vulnerable. We were then invited to describe what we are not: 'I am not...' Of course it wasn't possible to review all the responses but I think that we each found the exercise both revealing to ourselves and helpful in enabling us recognize that we share common issues on identity and this affects who we are and how we function. Susannah in Alan Ayckbourn's play has a mantra which she shared several times – to affirm the character despite the complicated and frustrating experiences she has lived through in her marriage and other experiences in the play. So "I am happy, I am confident, I am not afraid, there is nothing to fear" was the

finale of the final scene as she shouted this standing up in bed. Our group didn't need to go to the same extreme but the cathartic opportunity to address aspects of life which we would not normally explore collectively proved therapeutic. It prepared us to go on to consider 'Now Moments' – significant experiences which might be so easily missed or ignored. Once gone there is no way to recapture the opportunity or to be there again.

Using 2 Corinthians 6:2 and the story of Jesus at the well with the woman of Samaria – a unique moment enabling something special to happen – we thought about how something good could come out of a situation which in all other ways seemed to be wrong and inappropriate. In working situations we are aware of how difficult and awkward moments can be used for the benefit of self and others – sometimes, something positive emerges from circumstances which seem totally inappropriate.

We moved on to consider how we have got to where we are and discussed the idea of pilgrimage and liminality – those situations where nothing seems right and we and others risk being dysfunctional. This provoked some significant reflections – all this being encouraged to come off the 'tops of our heads' before then dealing with the hard questions of where we expect to be in five years time and what needs to be done to be where we hope to be in five years time.

This was under the theme of 'Where am I going?' We were then brought together again to consider four Pauline texts on 'hope', with Matthew 6:33. This



Another picture from the final session

led onto a general consideration of what hope is and some disagreement over Romans 8.24 when some pointed out that we don't necessarily wait in patience for what we hope for – in that way things needed might never arrive – there often has to be some interference to get things done!

As a finale each group was invited to make a presentation on the Sunday morning around the theme of Luke 4:18ff – three imaginative interpretations, each differently using simple materials and ourselves to express the poverty of the worlds we occupy and what needs to be done to change what we do and escape from the chains which bind us. The mobile phone is an example of self obsession which persistently ignores our neighbours and what community should be; forming circles we can look both inward and outward and the staccato phrases emphasized for observers the polarization demonstrated by a display of flip chart sketches which defined the complexity and variety of situations that ministers at work have to deal with. These were later arranged into the form of a cross around which we shared the Eucharist.

In this way the weekend was drawn to a close and after a good lunch we found our way back to the car park and returned to our several destinations feeling different and hopefully better for having been in each other's company and that of the ever present WE Gladstone (arguably the most effective Prime Minister?) whose images looked down on us wherever we were (see below) – although some escaped the glares by taking a trip to visit Ewloe Castle on the Saturday afternoon and others tried but failed in the Fox and Grapes as the sombre images were there also. No doubt it was Mr Gladstone's local as well – just across the road from the library: not far from where he felled trees for relaxation, even in his 80's.



Forthcoming events

Christian Association of Business Executives (CABE)

26th May 2010: CABE AGM. All are welcome to discuss CABE's new development initiatives: Mentoring, Events and Networks, Principles for Business, Media and Publicity as well as hear from CABE chair John Ripley and trustees. Papers will be sent to members in advance of the meeting; 6.30pm at: St Ethelburga's Centre, 78 Bishopsgate, London, EC2N 4AG. Please RSVP to events@principlesforbusiness.com by 21st May .

16th June 2010: CABE Guildford Network event. Integrating work and life - inspiring you to make the right choices; speaker: Paul Valler, writer, speaker, former HR and Finance Director, Hewlett Packard; 7.15pm at Guildford YMCA Conference Centre, Bridge Street, Guildford, GU1 4SB. Please RSVP to events@principlesforbusiness.com by 11th June. Refreshments will be served and a contribution of £10 would be welcomed towards the cost of the event.

23rd June 2010: CABE Forum: Sustainable Business in the Developing World; speakers include: Shona Passfield (CMS), Jyoti Banerjee (KiteBlue), Andrew Tanswell (Tough Stuff), Sally Reith (Shared Interest), Tom Sanderson (Five Talents); 6.15pm at a venue tbc.

22nd September 2010: CABE London Event with Andreas Whittam Smith.

9th November 2010: CABE Hugh Kay Annual Lecture with Chris Stephens, Chairman, Traidcraft plc.

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

The Modern Churchpeople's Union

13th – 16th July 2010: Shifting paradigms: theology and economics in the 21st Century. MCU Conference. Speakers include: Stephen Green, Philip Goodchild, Catherine Cowley, Michael Northcott, Valpy Fitzgerald and Kathryn Tanner. At High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 8SG. Cost: £245 (full conference fee, reductions available). Download a booking form at: <http://www.modchurchunion.org/events/conference/index.htm> or write to Elizabeth Darlington, Conference bookings secretary, 1 The Woods, Grotton, Oldham, OL4 4LP.

And finally

The true origin of the Internet

In ancient Israel, it came to pass that a trader called Abraham of Com did take unto himself a young wife by the name of Dot. And Dot of Com was a comely woman, broad of shoulder and long of leg. Indeed, she has been called 'Amazon Dot Com'.

And she said unto Abraham, her husband, 'Why dost thou travel far from town to town with thy goods when thou can trade without ever leaving thy tent?'

And Abraham did look at her as though she were several saddle bags short of a camel load, but simply said, 'How, dear?' And Dot replied, 'I will place drums in all the towns and drums in between to send messages saying what you have for sale and they will reply telling you which hath the best price. And the sale can be made on the drums and delivery made by Uriah's Pony Stable (UPS).'

Abraham thought long and decided he would let Dot have her way with the drums. And the drums rang out and were an immediate success. Abraham sold all the goods he had at the top price, without ever moving from his tent. But this success did arouse

envy. A man named Maccabia did secrete himself inside Abraham's drum and was accused of insider trading. And the young men did take to Dot Com's trading as doth the greedy horsefly take to camel dung. They were called Nomadic Ecclesiastical Rich Dominican Siderites, or NERDS for short.

And lo, the land was so feverish with joy at the new riches and the deafening sound of drums that no one noticed that the real riches were going to the drum maker, one Brother William of Gates, who bought up every drum company in the land. And indeed did insist on making drums that would work only with Brother Gates' drumheads and drumsticks.

And Dot did say, 'Oh, Abraham, what we have started is being taken over by others.' And as Abraham looked out over the Bay of Ezekiel, or as it came to be known 'eBay' he said, 'We need a name that reflects what we are.' And Dot replied, 'Young Ambitious Hebrew Owner Operators. 'YAHOO!' exclaimed Abraham.

And that is how it all began.

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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