

Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in
secular ministry

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

CHRISM is the National Association of CHRistians In Secular Ministry

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

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

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

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Editorial

Rob Fox

Well, what a spring that turned out to be. I know from past experience that hosting the gathering of European Worker Priests is challenging: the planning, the logistics, the funding. To run a parallel event in Southwark, alongside the celebrations of 50 years since the first ordinands to complete the Southwark Ordination Course, AND try to get as many CHRISM people as possible to the Ministry Division consultation on Self-Supporting Ministry, was a very big ask. But we did it. Extensive reports and reflections on all these form the greater part of this edition, and if it gives you a taste of how inspiring these events are, do join in the next ones!

It is always a pleasure to meet the worker priests. Pentecost is a delegate event (conducted in French), with each country sending 3 or 4 representatives. National events in Europe, attended by small numbers from CHRISM, can attract hundreds. The chief difference between UK MSEs and European Worker Priests is that they are usually ordained then called to work in a secular context, generally in menial jobs alongside the economically most vulnerable. We, on the other hand, tend to stay in the work where we are when God calls us, which is generally white collar. There are of course theological differences too, with our colleagues being heavily influenced by liberation theology.

Many of the conversations on Saturday evening were around the negative impacts of capitalism on many of the people they had encountered during the day. I had the pleasure of arranging the visit to 'Brigade', a social enterprise supported by my employer, PricewaterhouseCooper LLP (PwC). Those who went to Brigade were impressed with the work it does among those who find it hard to get a foot on the employment ladder. One remarked to me that, of course, PwC must support Brigade as a token of social conscience. I replied that it is only one of over a hundred social enterprises the firm supports across Britain, as well as supporting extensive work with charities.

Capitalism is not all bad. Indeed without wealth creation none of this would be possible. It is how it is created and how it is then used that is important. Babies and bath-water come to mind.

The consultation on Self Supporting Ministry arranged by MinDiv was also interesting, and the official outputs are available on its website. There were certainly aspects of this that the organisers didn't expect, not least the heavy MSE presence among the diocesan representatives. Whether more positive affirmation of MSE emerges as a result remains to be seen

Meanwhile, we have also been busy organising this year's CHRISM Conference and AGM, a day event in Birmingham on 14th September. Our speaker will be Teresa Morgan, whom readers will know from here recent report on the training, deployment and support of Self-Supporting Ministers. The enclosed flyer gives more details. Some of us are intending to go for a meal in central Birmingham after the event (so around 18.00); if you would like to join us, do let me know.

I have found room for some other articles, you'll be pleased to know. I liked Jon Bloom's piece on who undertakes most ministry and it is reproduced here by permission. Phil Aspinall would love others to accompany him to the autumn Tentmakers conference in the USA, and looking at the programme I can understand why. There are also some excellent links to resources included, and a book review that I really do hope encourages to read it!

As I wrote in the editorial for the last edition, it is almost 20 years since CHRISM was constituted as the operating arm of the charity CHRISSET. I well remember the first conference, at Salford University in summer 1993, organised by the venerable Stan Frost. I'd love therefore to pack the October edition with your memories of the last 20 years: our conferences, Reflective weekends (which have been going for nearly 30 years, publications, conversations and – above all – people. I've already descended on some folk to contribute, but my inbox – physical and virtual – is open. So let's have item flooding in, long or short, serious or amusing. We have much to celebrate!

I hope to see you in Birmingham.

Pentecost 2013

Over the weekend of 18-19 May there were no less than five events in London in which CHRISM was involved in some way. I have divided this – the main – part of the July edition into two: events at Southwark, and the European Worker Priests gathering at the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine, Limehouse. Quite how we managed to keep so many balls in the air the Lord only knows, which is probably a good thing.

Southwark

The Southwark events were around the theme “A New Pattern of Priesthood”, a phrase was used by Bishop Mervyn Stockwood in his address to the Diocesan Conference in 1959 introducing the SOC project.

Events on 18 May began with a Eucharist in Southwark Cathedral, organised by the Cathedral, SEITE, and Ministry Division of the Church of England, to celebrate 50 years since the ordination of the first self-supporting ministers from the Southwark Ordination Course. The address was given by Bishop Steven Croft (Sheffield) and can be found at <http://bishopofsheffield.blogspot.co.uk/2013/05/generosity-humility-liminality-new.html>

Four reflections by former SEITE students were read during the service, and one of the first ordinands from 1963 to be deaconed.

In the afternoon, this was followed by:

- a formal consultation, with invited delegates, led by Ministry Division and engaging with current challenges for ministry policy at national and diocesan level (each diocese was invited to send two delegates);
- a reception for all SOC and SEITE alumni, with opportunities to hear from current students, staff and members of the governing body;

- an ecumenical forum on self-supporting ministry, hosted by CHRISM, under the theme “Hearing our Voices”, exploring and sharing experiences of work as ministry.

This forum was chaired by Sue Cossey, who shares her experiences.

Hearing Our Voices

As part of the Pentecost weekend celebrations, CHRISM and SEITE arranged an ecumenical forum for MSEs and other SSMs to explore and share our experiences or our work as out ministry.

Around a dozen people came together to share both good, and also more challenging, experiences. The group included current CHRISM members and some who had just discovered CHRISM.

Many spoke of the difficulties of juggling work and church ministry, leading some to concentrate on parish work rather than attempting to continue to work. Others had now retired and joined the band of Ministers in Secular Retirement, and described the challenges of exercising ministry in the same way that they had done while in work.

All were happy to meet others who viewed the workplace as a place to minister as well as a source of funds to carry out self-supporting ministry for the church. It was an opportunity to share our experiences and offer mutual support.

Some wished that they had known of CHRISM earlier in their ministry or during training, and as a result we will be trying to strengthen our links with the various training courses to promote CHRISM and its aims to ordinands.

Ministry Division consultation

About 80 people, most being representatives from the majority of dioceses in the Church of England, gathered at a conference venue a few minutes' walk from Southwark cathedral for a consultation on

the future development of Self Supporting Ministry (SSM). At least a quarter of the representatives were CHRISM members.

Other's reflections are included below. As your editor was one on the Manchester diocese attendees, I hope you'll permit me to add a few comments of my own.

For the purposes of the consultation SSM was defined widely, to include all forms and NSM and OLM, and also House for Duty clergy. In my experience this reflects general practice across dioceses. While there is some commonality between SSMs and House for Duty clergy, the latter are largely retired stipendiary clergy and their concerns are closer to stipendiaries than to SSMs. It does no justice to either to lump us together.

We were spread across eight tables, each of about ten people, and mixed up so people from the same diocese were on different tables. This had the additional consequence of ensuring that CHRISM was well represented on each! There three short input sessions, each followed by group discussion and feedback in plenary. It was apparent from the comments made there are wide differences between dioceses in how SSMs are selected, supported, and deployed. Few dioceses appear to value, or even know about, the skills and expertise SSMs bring to ministry from their roles outside church structures. Many do not look beyond using SSMs to bolster the parishes.

My impression was that MinDiv were shocked and surprised at the strength of feeling from the representatives, and also confused as this feeling was not negative – rather a plea to 'use us for what we bring and offer', rather than try to fit SSMs into a stipendiary mould.

A comment made to me by another MSE summed up the mood admirably. She had been asked to use her business and administrative experience to transform a diocesan office, only to meet resistance at every turn from career stipendiary clergy who objected that as she hadn't 'run a parish' she couldn't possibly know how to do what the bishop had asked her to do.

The overall message is that there is considerable work to be done.

MinDiv's official outcome documents can be found at:
http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/a_new_pattern_of_priesthood

Time spent reading and thinking about these is time well spent!

Margaret Yates represented Oxford diocese at the consultation and provided the following reflection.

I was and am delighted to have been able to share in the worship, celebrations and consultation of 'A new pattern of priesthood' as a representative of CHRISM. The day began with a Eucharist and it is always a joy to participate in excellent and appropriate liturgy and to be part of a community with a shared focus: SSM. In his sermon Bishop Steven was both thought-provoking and directive on how the wider church should be responding to the three characteristics of SSM as he sees them: generosity as the gift of our time and selves; humility in that offer of self; and our liminality through living and working on the edge. This, he suggests, calls for appreciation, recognition and security by the wider church. These ideas resonated with me, and many others, as they became recurring themes during the subsequent consultation discussions.

Altogether it was a fascinating day. On the one level it was very encouraging that MinDiv are engaging with the deployment of SSMS: but I was also saddened that, 50 years on, this remains an issue as the 'new' pattern of priesthood is still evolving. It was clear from people's experiences, and many stories were told on the day, that there remains much work to be done in recognising the value and contribution of SSMS.

I was particularly struck by the diversity of experience between dioceses as seen in the results of the diocesan surveys of the deployment of SSMS, the presentation by Margaret Wilkinson (Rochester), and in the comments of those in my small buzz group. Thus one's experience of being SSM will depend on location and small dioceses - such as Coventry - are able to be effective in their management of what is universally recognised as a crucial resource. Diversity of experience was also apparent in the biographies of those attending the consultation and it was clear that we provide a rich

source of skills and experience that have the potential for deployment.

It was also clear that there continues to be a need for good theological reflections on being SSM: something that CHRISM does particularly well. I found myself speaking passionately about the significance of MSE; the ontological role of the priest as one member within the ministry of the people of God; the importance of being where people are in the everyday; and helping to make connections so that all should fulfil their ministry and be fulfilled in their ministry. And finally, I became aware of the continuing need for prominent role models that reflect the rich diversity of SSM and celebrate our contribution to what it means to be the body of Christ.

Carlisle diocese was represented by David Simon, diocesan SSM officer, whose notes are particularly good on the valuable statistical information covered.

Over 70 delegates were present representing over 30 of the dioceses of the Church of England. The consultation used the designation Self-Supporting Minister (SSM) rather than the term Non-Stipendiary minister (NSM).

The *Experiences of Ministry Survey* carried out in 2011, to which nearly 3,000 clergy across the Church of England responded, was a valuable resource in planning the consultation. The intention is to repeat the survey in 2013 and 2015 to provide an inter-temporal comparison and to enable a cohort analysis to be carried out. A brief report of the findings may be viewed using the link:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/ministerial-education-and-development/continuing-ministerial-development/experiences-of-ministry-project-2011-2015/experiences-of-ministry-survey-2011.aspx>

Data from the 2011 Experiences of Ministry Survey were made available at the consultation. These demonstrated that:

- The average number of hours worked each week by Stipendiary Clergy was 45, for House for Duty Clergy 35, and for SSM 31.

- Nationally the proportion of ordained clergy who are self-supporting was 28%. In Carlisle Diocese the proportion is 26%.
- Notionally over 50% of SSMs were female – for SMs the figure is 25%. In Carlisle Diocese the figures are SSM 49%, SM 24%.
- Nationally nearly 60% of SSMs were age of 60 or over – for SMs the figure is 25%. In Carlisle Diocese the figures are SSM 69%, SM 26%. It is expected that 33% of SSM and 25% of SMs will retire in the next seven years.

Much of the discussion among delegates concerned the parochial ministry of SSMs, though it was suggested that those SSM who were Ministers in Secular Employment (MSE) would be ideally placed for pioneer ministry. It was argued that these ministers had experience that could be used to equip lay Christians for the role of witness at work, and that their own witness in the world of work should be given more recognition by the institutions of the church.

In the Carlisle Diocese there are very few MSEs. One implication is that we may need to find other approaches to equipping our congregations to witness in their places of work, and a second is that any vocations initiative might include an attempt to generate candidates for MSE as part of the approach to pioneering ministry.

The discussions suggested that few dioceses had specifically planned a strategy for SSM, though Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) was a route that had been identified by some as a way of safeguarding the future of the parochial system. While most dioceses continued to use the established model of selection and training for SSM and OLM, at least one diocese (Coventry) had with the agreement of the Ministry Division begun to exercise some structural exploration.

Another representative was long-standing MSE Adam Scott, to whom I am grateful to the following distillation of the copious notes he took. As an alumnus of the Southwark Ordination Course, I can think of no-one more fitting to have the last word here.

A New Pattern of Priesthood:

Celebrating, and Consulting on, Self-Supporting Ministry

Fifty years ago the first candidates were ordained from the Southwark Ordination Course (SOC) heralding the development of new forms of training and new patterns of ordained ministry. These new patterns of priesthood have been and are an immense blessing to the kingdom of God and to the Church. With the hindsight of fifty years, those ordinations stand out as a landmark in the development of the life of the Church of England. Like the Great Wall of China they are visible from space. The new patterns of priesthood which flowed from them continue to develop. We continue to explore and understand the gift we have been given. These new patterns are likely to be more not less significant in the fifty years to come.

From Dr Steven Croft's sermon on 18th May 2013

Qualification and History

This was an occasion to which no reporter can do justice for none could be at every event on the day, so, inevitably, this is a partial account by someone involved with this strand of kingdom life in Southwark for over forty years. The service sheet for the Thanksgiving Eucharist showed Christ the Worker by John Hayward (1929-2007) in the version that we saw each time we gathered at Wychcroft for the Southwark Ordination Course. Memories of the squash court turned chapel were filled with characters from my days there (1972-1975), not least Principal Gerald Hudson, the kindly staff, Bishop Mervyn Stockwood who took such personal care for the then Chapter of Priest-Workers and Bishop John Robinson who was still taking an interest though he had returned to Cambridge in 1969.

The Thanksgiving took place on 18th May 2013 between the consecration of Dr Chris Goldsmith as a Bishop in Southwark Cathedral on 14th May and his welcome in Truro as the Bishop of St Germans on 19th May - that was significant as Dr Goldsmith, having been licensed as a Reader in 1984, trained part-time on the North Thames Ministerial Training Course from 1997 to 2000, so he has experience as a self-supporting minister and ordinand on a course (rather than a college).

Gratitude and Apologies

I believe that I write for many if not all of us in being grateful to those in Christ, from SEITE, in the Ministry Division, at Southwark Cathedral and in so many dioceses whose combined efforts went into making the day. There was special music, including *Mass of the Bread of Life*, by Margaret Rizza; Bishop Mervyn's successor Christopher presided with Bob Vogt from the first cadre of SOC deacons at his side and seeming to gain in confidence as he reached the Dismissal and spoke of our gracious God, of being fed by His word and empowered by His life. My regret and therefore apology was for not having time to meet more people to look back on our lives after such an amazing gathering for the service but it was important to move on to the consultation and to look forward.

Dr Steven Croft, Chairman of the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council

Dr Croft's sermon is available in full on the Internet so I shall only extract some highlights. He reminded us of Bishop Mervyn who wrote of four benefits of SOC:

- It was revolutionary in taking us with our different persuasions and training us together not in a college catering for a single point of view;
- We learnt our theology in the context of everyday life and work;
- We were taught to work hard; and, as Bishop Kenneth Woolcombe, who had encouraged me to be a priest-worker, knew,
- Being self-supported, whether through training or in ministry is (and remains) sound economics.

If I may summarise the blessings of self-supporting ministry that Dr Croft highlighted, there were three:

Generosity - a sustained gift of love for Christ and service of His church with an experience of ministry coupled to a stability that the church should appreciate.

Humility - a servant leadership offering what we can, constrained by time and circumstances, and offering what is needed without some of the temptations to ambition that can afflict stipendiary clergy.

And **liminality** - Dr Croft spoke of our living permanently on the edge and between two or more worlds as a blessing. He acknowledged that such living is often complex and demanding. Yet it can be a precious gift to the wider church with lessons for a church in mission (and, I would add, for the work of the people of God in seeking first the Kingdom of God in their everyday lives away from church activities).

Dr Croft noted that we seldom exercise power and authority within the Church. He suggested that we need space to exercise influence and to enable the church to draw upon the wisdom we have to offer the wider body of Christ. Part of our role, as priest-workers, is, Dr Croft stressed, to reveal more clearly what it means to be a priest.

National Consultation

Dr Tim Ling and colleagues on the Ministry Division had done a wonderful job of organising the consultation in the splendid surroundings of Prospero House, a former Post Office building near Borough Station. We were fortified by a good lunch with congenial company, before being placed on one of the nine round tables. I observed that Dr Croft, Principal Jeremy Worthen of SEITE and those from the Ministry Division were on a table apart from the diocesan nominees and other attendees like me

I would also observe that the diocesan nominees represented a great range of personal situations. Their diversity of backgrounds and journeys did illustrate a distinction between being self-supporting through training, and maybe for a while thereafter, and remaining self-supporting throughout one's ministry. Over the years there have been many terms and acronyms to describe us: auxiliary pastoral ministers, house-for-duty priests, ministers in secular employment, non-stipendiary ministers, ordained local ministers, part time priests, priest-workers, tent-making ministers, workplace-focused ordained

ministers and I guess that between us we had been described by all of these terms.

Dr Croft also spoke at the start of the consultation. He talked about doing our theology of priesthood and ecclesiology; of how incumbency should not be the only template for ministry; he picked up the idea of - flexibility from Bishop Rowan's "being flexible with the structures that we already have", of exercising discernment in context, of starting at the edge, of thinking outside the boxes, and of how our range of new patterns of ministry could be discerned, nurtured and encouraged. He encouraged us: we needed to develop a network of good practice sending messages to bishops, to the Ministry Council and to the Ministry Division. We also heard from Julian Hubbard, Director of the Division, and from Dr Mark Hodge, grants secretary and formerly a researcher on SSM.

The Ministry Division has published quite a lot of material from the Consultation on their website and so I shall simply highlight some of the points that came to me during the afternoon from a variety of speakers.

Auxiliary Parish Ministry or Rooted Ministers of the Kingdom

Jonathan Croucher, now a stipendiary priest in charge in Southwark, but formerly a self-supporting ordinand and assistant curate, explained that this diocese has had a policy of not taking forward those who are not in a position to offer at least 10 hours per week in a parish. After SEITE and two SS curacies, Jonathan had to undertake a stipendiary training curacy before crossing the red line between SSM and SM. Jonathan also raised the question of engagement in parish teams which assumes that there is an incumbent interested in teamwork.

Implicit in this approach is a parochial connection. I have been rooted in the same parish for nigh on forty years - about half of that time with a team oriented incumbent and the other half with incumbents who have not found it easy to embrace, in their approach to collaboration, unpaid members who are at work in the week. As the afternoon wore on one theme on our table was the

difference between trainers and clergy, at whatever level in the hierarchy, whose model was monarchical and those whose model was collaborative.

When I was first ordained Southwark had a chapter of priest-workers that acknowledged, valued and supported the concept of ministers of the kingdom with a focus in the secular world though often with roots in the parochial system. Bishop Mervyn did have concerns about priest-workers becoming too detached from the church but, as I recall his experience, those who became too detached for his liking were often former or still stipendiary clergy.

In our group mention was made of academia as historically providing space for non-parochial clergy as have religious orders, particularly amongst our Roman brothers and sisters. What was implicit was a question of whether the current system was free to discern a calling from God to non-parochial priesthood and to provide training, support and connection in that context.

We discussed the danger of generalisation when self-supported individuals came in such a variety. We celebrated flexibility and freedom from too much bureaucracy, acknowledged being less dependent and making connections across boundaries. We talked of being ourselves and of the significance of integration with a parish. We emphasised being those who would be walking alongside others not just in parish settings but in a wider set of circumstances.

Dr Jill Tucker is Coventry's Dean of Self-Supported Ministry and she stressed that all should fulfil their ministry and be fulfilled. Jill spoke of the diversity of expectations both ways, of enormous range of roles (and implicitly of relationships) and of the snags that arose when expectations were mismatched. Jill spoke also of the danger of segregating the SSM's roles and, when thinking of deployment, being imaginative about diversity given the particular personal gifts of individuals.

That tied in well with Margaret Wilkinson, who trained on the Oxford & St Albans Ministry Course but who is now in Rochester and an

Archdeaconery convenor of MSE. She described waves of top down strategy:

- a) SSMs should be pioneer ministers,
- b) SSMs should be house for duty parish priests and now
- c) back to pioneer ministry.

However, amongst the grass roots, we are not all called to the same role, nor indeed to stay in the same role.

Harking back to Dr Croft's words, he used the word stability - a theme in Benedictine thought. We connected to the question of whether, on ordination, the trainee deacon remains in their parish of origin or is deliberately deployed elsewhere. We found it hard to discern and to make theological sense of a strategy here and difficult to regard a single approach as fitting the varied situations of all the individuals concerned.

The pre-occupation with parish brought us back to the place for a theology of the workplace for SSMs as well as for SSMs, and for clergy to understand vocation in terms of non-church roles. Perceptions might be different with a dose of Catholic Social Teaching, or if we started by thinking about SSM as having important strands of working alongside God in a kingdom that involves creating, sustaining and redeeming, as well as SSMs being alongside people, believers, unbelievers and those somewhere in the middle in their everyday lives.

In the last of the three sessions in the afternoon we were invited to consider how integrated SSMs are into the life of the dioceses. This was a church oriented question and raised a different one for our group: about the role SSMs are being encouraged and enabled to play in integrating dioceses into the life of the kingdom and into the everyday lives of those touched more or less directly by the extensive, often extra-parochial ministry of believers, ordained and lay.

SSMs have opportunities to be types of minister of the kingdom. It is as such priests that we can walk alongside others in finding ways of integrating the life of faith and our walk with Christ into seeking first

the kingdom of God. It is in such ways that we shall live New Patterns of Priesthood as Bishop Mervyn once envisaged.

International Conference of Worker Priests: Growth or Austerity

Pentecost 2013 - Royal Foundation of St Katherine, Limehouse

Meanwhile, a few miles away in Limehouse, Phil Aspinall and Margaret Joachim were being ably assisted at various times over the weekend by CHRISM colleagues who found that their French, German or Spanish wasn't as rusty as they thought!

If marshalling MSEs is like herding cats, organising assorted Worker Priests over the Pentecost weekend is doubly so. It was a memorable occasion,

First, Phil Aspinall's report.

"We spent the whole weekend in the shadow of Canary Wharf; it was there when we looked from many directions.

I was left with the question: is it a sign of the Kingdom of God, or of the Golden Calf?"

Some 18 international delegates (4 Germans, 3 French, 3 Flemish, 1 Catalan, 3 Italians and 4 English) met at The Royal Foundation of St Katherine, Limehouse, for the annual International Conference of Worker Priests over the Pentecost weekend. We were joined on Saturday evening by a further 10 CHRISM members for our Pentecost celebration – both Eucharistic and festive.

Prior to the weekend each country had prepared a paper on the subjects covered under the theme (these questions were published with the invitation in a previous edition of this journal). The papers contain a very rich resource on the theme of "Growth – Austerity". We each selected a phrase which stood out for us - and these formed the basis for further discussion in the four workshop groups

on the Sunday morning. The discussions were wide-reaching and varied, but these collected comments capture the flavour.

A way of Listening. How do we listen to those whose voices need to be heard - to be attentive to them? We need education in how to listen. There is a diversity of the things to which we must listen: to individuals; to the experiences of groups who choose to live differently; to the Earth. Our listening will lead us to put other people at the centre – we shall be changed – a metamorphosis.

A Common Culture. The dominant, universal, liberal culture destroys; to live together in a common culture is non-destructive. This will not be an instantaneous or sudden change - we need to search for a way of life with all, and to work towards it one step at a time.

Fullness of Life for all. There were many criteria of fullness in the papers. It is about Quality not Quantity – but quality is different for each. We find these needs by hearing the other and growing together – not to conquer, but to convince. Is fullness of life about Growth? (Growth as the cause of damage to the earth and communities – not the opposite of Austerity). We need to reduce consumption – a culture of giving and of service.

Resistance. The debate reduced to: to resist or Resistance? Depends on point of view and starting point. Examples given: a Union gets a car firm to avoid 1100 redundancies by agreeing to increases in productivity; food banks don't change anything, merely support capitalism. The poor vote for the parties that keep them poor.

We had also arranged a variety of visits. On Sunday afternoon we had a coach trip into the Olympic Park and a visit up the centre-piece sculpture – with the chance to see the relationship of the site to the older residential areas around it; “This was a wasteland, and I am pleased to see that it now has life brought back into it”. It is very much a building site again – “to become a resource for the whole community”. But someone sounded a note of caution: “I hope the dreams of the developers will come true, the facilities will be used – and it won't become a White Elephant.”

We made three separate visits on the Saturday afternoon.

The Olympic Park and Stratford. “We only saw shops and the market”. We asked who now lived in the buildings and were told it was migrant labour working on the building sites. But we sensed a great local pride “We have made the Olympics”. Although the Olympic site is so large, virtually no homes were destroyed to make way for it. We visited the Parish Worship centre – inter-religious and multi-faith. We remarked on the contrast between the new shopping centre (“like all the city centres of Europe”), where local people work but cannot afford to buy there, and the old centre of Stratford with “shops for the poor” and “like a souk” with most people not white.

Canary Wharf. “I had never been in such a place – so clean and empty. It was like a visit to the Vatican – a different world”. From the 30th floor people look very small – the people who work in this different world do not have the chance to understand the world of workers. The sense of the visit was captured in a poem written by Mario. But there was much discussion - the people who work here are a community, and it is the place of Worker Priests to be with people where they are, in the Significant Places. But we have a choice - to be with power or with the powerless.

Brigade. A restaurant supported by PricewaterhouseCoopers as a base for a social enterprise foundation to support apprentices training for the catering profession. Applicants come from the homeless or those at risk of being so, and there is a rigorous selection process – some thought it too much of a competition “with the prize for the winner”. Of the 11 who started this year only 8 remained – so some questioned the effectiveness of the training. But we met with one of the Apprentices who, 3 months in, had found it hard learning the discipline of the kitchen and of working life – but he now had a dream of owning three restaurants of his own! (a convert to capitalism!)

The delegates were very happy and much surprised by the final cost to them of the weekend. We had achieved subsidies of some €9,000 from various sources, and thank all those individuals and especially the German Bishop's Conference and the Diocese of Manheim. We also acknowledge the generosity of the Institution of Chemical

Engineers (shoulder bags) and Luxa Lighting (flame effect lamps). We are also very grateful for the helpfulness of responsiveness of the staff at St Katherine's, both in Admin and in the refectory, and our thanks go especially to the contacts who had organised the visits.

At the conclusion, we all shared the three most important things that had struck us during the three-day weekend, or that we would take away with us. Here are some examples of a rich and diverse tapestry.

Dreams (at Brigade, at the Olympic site) – signs of Hope. Beggars outside stations – no a sign of Hope.

Listening – learning to listen. Change our attitudes to relate to the excluded as subjects not objects.

Meeting with CHRISM colleagues. The worship, the prayers of Italy. The workshops and groups.

Living in recession – a drama and an opportunity. Opening new dimensions.

The need to be **informed**, to **reflect** together, to be **challenged** by others on the themes which touch our hearts.

There were many comments of thanks for the organisation and the hospitality and various comments received subsequently have said this would be remembered as a good Pentecost weekend.

Next year the conference will be held in Italy, near to Turin, over the Pentecost weekend, 6th – 9th June. More details of the theme will be agreed later this year. Do please put the date in your diary, and come and join in the debate.

My lasting reflection (particularly in the context of the meetings and conversations of Saturday evening) is that we in CHRISM spend too much time of our time being concerned about what the churches are doing to us; these people, the worker priests, are concerned about what the world is doing to people.

Margaret Trivasse attended both the CHRISM event at Southwark on the Saturday afternoon and the evening Eucharist and social gathering in Limehouse. She vividly captures the experiences here.

The flickering flames from a circle of lamps filled the chapel with a warm glow. The words of the Lord's Prayer spoken simultaneously in seven languages affirmed the faith which united us. We prayed and sang in French, Latin and English. This was a celebration which captured the essence of Pentecost.

For some, it came in the middle of the four-day Conference of European Worker Priests. For me, it was the highlight of a day packed with CHRISM-related events. When signing up to be part of a number of happenings on 18 May 2013, the one I had most been looking forward to was the *soirée* with the Worker Priests. Never more at home than when in multi-cultural gatherings, I was eager to meet the Europeans and find out more about their lifestyle and their understanding of priesthood. The Eucharist we shared at St Katharine's Foundation, Limehouse, was the culmination of this experience.

Had I been there for longer, and had my French been better (*it sounded pretty good to me! Ed.*), I would have learned more about how these pioneering Christians live out their faith. However, I was able to have some fascinating and inspiring conversations with priests from Belgium and France, some retired but who had worked as carers, one who made parts for aeroplanes, and one who worked in vineyards. Evidence of their discussions was displayed on cards on the walls of the room in which we met: powerful statements expressing the importance of Christians posing challenges to power and standing alongside the poor.

Going to meet the worker priests followed on from a CHRISM-led discussion in a meeting room in Southwark Cathedral. As the Europeans were meeting in Limehouse, three other events were taking place in Southwark. One was a Ministry Division consultation (see other reports), another was a gathering of SOC and SEITE (Southwark Ordination Course and South East Institute for Theological Education) alumni, and the third was the CHRISM discussion.

Around a dozen of us, whose ministry was expressed in different ways, met to share our experiences. Not all those present were sure they had ended up at the right event, but joined in gamely! We shared information about our various contexts and very different experiences. For some, engaging in parish work after a career in secular employment felt like a culmination. For others, parish ministry did not feel right, and the heart of ministry was in the workplace. There was considerable discussion about the experience both of being trained, and of how various dioceses regarded SSM/MSE after ordination. Sadly, several people had encountered discrimination and misunderstanding and had felt ignored. Despite Sue Cossey's valiant efforts to encourage us to talk about what we celebrated about being MSE, the negative experience came over strongly.

Before the afternoon events, we had gathered in Southwark Cathedral for a Thanksgiving Eucharist entitled "A New Pattern of Priesthood". In general, it was billed as a celebration of SSM, to mark the 50th anniversary of the first ordinations to this form of ministry, and in particular it recognized the work of SOC and SEITE, whose past and present students participated in leading worship. This included one of the first cohort from 1963.

The liturgy included some apt and well-written prayers. The preacher was the Rt Revd Steven Croft, Bishop of Sheffield. (Personally, it was good to see him again – I was his PA eleven years ago and hadn't seen him since.) Based on John 21:12-25, Steve noted the pioneering work of the Rt Revd Mervyn Stockwood in establishing SSM (more recent ordinands noted with regret that Southwark Diocese had strayed from his original vision). He then identified three significant characteristics of SSM ministry: generosity (especially of time and skill), humility [perhaps too much so? – M], and liminality (that being on the edge which is both risky and exciting).

I always enjoy meeting others whose main focus for ministry is the workplace, and I am struck by how many variations there are in the expression of SSM/MSE. So often, though, the parish model not only casts such a shadow that it can be difficult to see other paths but also seems to draw people in like a huge magnet. For me, that is

why meeting the European Worker Priests was so interesting and inspiring, and I hope that other opportunities will arise.

Most of the work of Ministry is done by Christians who work in secular jobs

Jon Bloom

Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him... in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God. (1 Corinthians 7:17, 24)

Most Christians struggle at some point with the sense that ministry jobs are just more sacred than other jobs. You can see this reflected in our terminology: we tend to call non-ministry jobs 'secular jobs'. It can be hard not to see them as 'unspiritual' or 'less spiritual' jobs.

But God draws no such distinctions. He does call some (a relative few) to serve the church vocationally in a variety of ways. But these are not the spiritual elite or some kind of Christianized Brahmin caste, who get to do holy work while everyone else must soil their hands in the profane. Rather, God assigns them to serve and equip the vast majority of his saints who he deploys in the world to carry out 'the work of ministry' (Ephesians 4:12).

In other words, Christians who work in secular jobs do most of the work of ministry and it's the job of vocational ministers to equip them so they can do this effectively.

According to 1 Corinthians 7:17–24, your job (assuming it's not inherently unethical or immoral) is an assignment from God. That doesn't mean it's a permanent assignment, but it's today's assignment. And God wants you to carry out that assignment with dependent faith, diligence, and excellence.

In chapter eight of *Don't Waste Your Life*, titled 'Making Much of Christ from 8 to 5', John Piper explains why secular work is designed to be God-like work:

So if you go all the way back, before the origin of sin, there are no negative connotations about secular work. According to Genesis 2:2, God himself rested from his work of creation, implying that work is a good, God-like thing. And the capstone of that divine work was man, a creature in God's own image designed to carry on the work of ruling and shaping and designing creation. Therefore, at the heart of the meaning of work is creativity. If you are God, your work is to create out of nothing. If you are not God, but like God — that is, if you are human — your work is to take what God has made and shape it and use it to make him look great.

God may call you someday as a vocational minister. He may not. But wherever he assigns you, 'remain with God' (1 Corinthians 7:24). And make it your mission 'to take what God has made and shape it and use it to make him look great.'

Jon Bloom is the author of the forthcoming book 'Not by Sight: A Fresh Look at Old Stories of Walking by Faith', and serves as the President of Desiring God, which he and John Piper launched together in 1994. He lives in the Twin Cities with his wife, Pam, their five children, and one naughty dog.

Groups that work

Rob Fox

A sunny April afternoon in London (yes, there was one), and a half day 'consultation' on supporting Christians in the workplace, organised by LICC, Fresh Expressions and TransformWork UK. Input came from David Henderson, 'Groups That Work' Project Researcher, Charles Hipsley, LICC WorkForum Director, Michael Moynagh, Fresh Expressions Theological Consultant, Researcher and Author, and Michael Coveney, TWUK Operations Director, however much of the seminar was spent in group work and plenary sessions. About 40 people, a mixture of organisation reps and individuals, attended.

The objectives of the Consultation were:

- To share & learn what is happening in & through Christian workplace groups.
- To share & learn what is happening in whole-life discipleship.
- To share & learn what is happening in fresh expressions of church.
- To consider what existing practices and new ideas may have wider application.
- To identify what actions & next steps might be taken individually & collectively.
- To assess commitment to working together beyond this initial Consultation.

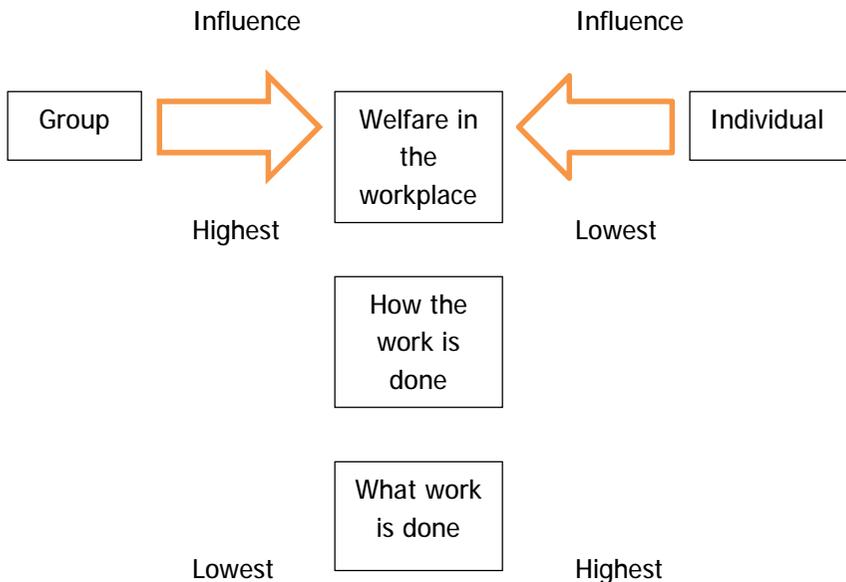
All laudable, though I am still waiting to receive any formal output, and the following assertion in the pre-event information amused me:

‘We anticipate that this event could be the first step in an important and exciting Christian journey in the workplace. We want to find out if others agree and if so to start to set an agenda and to take the first steps.’

As I pointed out, groups and networks such as the Industrial Mission Association, Methodist Faith and Work group and CHRISM have been active in this space for a long time and have done a lot of theology that the consultation sponsors appear not to have discovered - yet.

LICC’s research in this field to date has determined that there are different dynamics in the workplace depending on the size and complexity of the organisation. So in larger organisations Christians have more significant influence when they are present at executive, middle management and grass roots level. In smaller organisations influence is greatest when they are in leadership positions.

In discussion, there appeared to be some uncertainty about whether Christians needed to be in a group to have influence. I proposed the following model, which seemed to get folk interested:



The extent to which an individual can influence the above depends on where there are in the organisation. For example, in order to influence what work is done the individual needs to be in a significant position, this may be board level, but may be regulatory, such as a Money Laundering Officer. An individual Christian at any level can influence how the work is done. Work organisations tend to see faith groups as most relevant to employee welfare – in some cases as complementary to the work of the HR team – and are therefore most open influence and action that enhance welfare and morale.

There was general agreement on two points:

- Local churches are generally not effective in equipping Christians for ministry in the workplace, and
- Workplace groups too often seek to replicate 'churchy' activities.

On the last point, a question posed in the final plenary session was: what should workplace groups be doing? As there was silence I ventured 'listen'. This brought confused looks so I explained: unless

we have heard what our workmates concerns, needs and joys are, how can we act to ease those concerns, meet those needs and celebrate the joys? If we want to be heard, we must first earn the right to be heard, and we do this by first listening.

Michael Moynagh's session on Fresh Expressions and the workplace was, for me, the most interesting. It is clear from the experience of industrial mission that church can emerge around a workplace group or network, not least as local churches often do not address the needs of or use the same language and concepts as working folk (and I don't just mean manual workers). This is reflected in the experience of Fresh Expressions, where churches have developed in and around activities and places (café churches in Costa, rather than a local church opening up the hall for coffee a couple of mornings a week).

Several examples of successful workplace churches were discussed, such as in Merseyside Police and 'River in the City' (Liverpool). Such churches meet a similar need to some of the home churches of longing standing: a place of refuge, renewal and refreshment away from the 'front line'. Michael noted that in Liverpool 10% of Sunday worshippers are found in Fresh Expression churches, comprising 30% of the number of churches in the city, and that most of these worshippers are previously unchurched.

He identified four marks of a Fresh Expression church: missional, contextual, formational, and ecclesial. If a workplace group is characterised by all four, it can be regarded as a church. As importantly, a church is primarily about relationships.

Michael also sought to answer the question of what a workplace group might do. One suggestion he made was contributing to CPD, by arranging CPD speakers and activities, and adding an option faith based session at the end. There are echoes here of what has been happening in Edinburgh for the last 10 years, but those present didn't seem to know about this.

Another finding from LICC's research also mirrors the experience of industrial mission: a shift away from ordained to lay leadership and influence, what it calls the emergence of 'post-industrial' chaplaincy.

LICC finds that industrial chaplaincy is now 'often ecumenical and team-based', noting that Chaplains 'could become the connectors and stimulants of the Christian workplace network. I have no doubt some industrial chaplains would greet this with dismay, pointing out that much industrial mission has been just so for decades. It again highlights that this initiative would benefit greatly from finding out what others – often of different theological traditions – have been doing.

What the sponsors of the consultation are doing is very welcome and is contributing to raising the awareness and preparedness of local churches and national church organisations to the needs and opportunities that exist in the workplace. They could certainly benefit by learning from what others have been doing for rather longer, including their mistakes, and those of different theological disposition could likewise benefit by engaging with the sponsors.

I'd like to conclude by answering one question we were asked: would your workplace group do anything differently if Jesus were a member? Jesus wasn't a member of a workplace group and never formed one. He challenged the presuppositions of the worker groups he encountered, such as the fishermen's cooperative and tax collectors guild. One of the callings of the MSE is to be similarly prophetic.

Resources

The range of resources available on the web supporting MSEs increases every year. The following are well worth visiting.

<http://www.businessmattersedinburgh.com/home/>

Business Matters has been operating in the financial district, central Edinburgh, since 2006, encouraging open and public dialogue on common business and life questions. It issues an e-newsletter and aims to:

- foster a sense of community through various kinds of events;

- provide lunchtime talks of a CPD standard on matters affecting work life but not already covered by HR departments or in-house training;
- offer a listening, trusted ear and signposting to expert help, both of a professional / work sort and of a personal / private nature (supplementing what HR departments offer);
- laying on opportunities for spiritual exploration, to help people make connections between work life and spirituality, such as the Business Alpha Edinburgh course.

<http://www.workingwithworkers.org.uk/>

... is a guide to Christian midweek meetings and lunchtime services in London. There is an interactive map to find out where the nearest meeting is.

<http://www.coventgardentalks.co.uk/mw/>

One such venue is Covent Garden Talks, which has developed the 'Missionaries @ Work' training scheme. This is a series of 3 sets of 6 studies which can be worked through by individuals or small groups together. It runs sessions around the Covent Garden area but would love the resource to be used more widely. Manual 1 is on work, and all the resources can be downloaded free.

<http://city.st-helens.org.uk/resources/truth-at-work-resources>

'Christians in the City' is a site run by St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, also London. Resources include:

- the City Wire – looking at common life and work questions;
- 'Truth at Work', a guided read through of John's Gospel; and
- 'Workplace Ministry'.

<http://www.with-intent.confiteor.org.uk/>

... is an initiative by Hugh Valentine, MSE at St. James in Piccadilly.

It aims to support MSEs / Worker Priests by:

- bringing together material and news that may be helpful to this minority group (material and news being thin on the ground);

- gathering information on (and maybe even map) who and where this merry band of exploring men and women are to be found;
- helping spread understanding of this particular expression of Christian ordained ministry, not least within the church itself.

There is an expanding summary of what each diocese in the Church of England says about MSE / NSM / SSM, a link to Bishop Steven Croft's Southwark sermon (see above), and links to a wide range of resources – including on discernment and selection.

<http://www.tekauri.com/fishing/089.html>

And don't forget our most far flung member's website. Richard Spence has assembled, in his New Zealand repository, a wealth of resources about MSE and faith / work.

Cursillo is a “world-wide movement of the Christian Church which aims to Christianise environments through small Christian communities committed to living and spreading the Gospel.” It is most widespread in Catholic churches, but is also in use in various parts of the Anglican Communion, such as New Zealand (see <http://cursillo.org.nz/introducing-cursillo/>).

Cursillo is intended to help Christians learn and live what is fundamental to being a Christian, and, having done that, to help these same Christians discover and live out a personal vocation. Put another way: helping them be saints and apostles.

Cursillo seeks to reach these goals by:

- Helping Christians plumb the depths of their faith to find its reality and richness;
- Inspiring Christians to get on with their mission in the world by hearing and heeding God's call;
- Connecting Christians to networks of other Christians that will enable them to carry out their mission;
- Holding up examples of everyday Christians who are acting as “apostles” in their ordinary life settings.

(Sounds tailor made for MSEs. Ed.)

<http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/views/shaping-vicars>

If you have not already seen this article, from the May Fresh Expressions e-newsletter, it is well worth reading. Tim Thornton, Bishop of Truro, was earlier in his career principal of the North Thames MTS and knows what he's talking about. Here he argues that we need a new concept of what a 'vicar' is: "I believe it's essential for us to deconstruct the understanding or definition of a vicar. Instead we need to reconstruct and permit new models of being deacons and priests so that they can be made 'real' and gain acceptance in the wider church and world." We're right with you there, Tim. How would you like to start using MSEs?

'Swimming with the Fishes', Michael Johnson.

This is a self-published book available from Amazon. It costs £4.11 to download it to iPad or Kindle device, and about £6 as a paperback (about 200 pages).

It records the history of the volunteer ministry and includes theological reflection on it. Michael shares the story of his forty two years as a volunteer ministry as an example of how one may develop Christian ministry within one's place of work, at the same time combining this with looking after parish churches.

The chapters are:

- My personal journey;
- Churchgoing, going, gone;
- In the beginning;
- Going to church or being the church?
- Are our church buildings frustrating church mission?
- What has theology to say about our present ministry?
- How did the early church grow?
- The future of the voluntary ministry;
- NSM ministry – a rationale;
- Fifty years on how are NSMs received?
- and a conclusion.

Events

Faith and Faithfulness in Life and Work

CHRISM Conference and AGM, Carr's Lane URC, Birmingham,
Saturday, 14 September.

Guest speaker: Revd Dr Teresa Morgan

Faith is traditionally divided into 'the faith we believe in' (a body of doctrine) or 'the faith by which we believe' (in our hearts and minds). But in the world of the New Testament, *pistis* or *fides*, which we translate 'faith', is above all a relationship which creates a community.

In these sessions, we shall reflect on the distinctive shape of the communities which are created by Christian faith. In the morning, we shall look at some New Testament communities; in the afternoon, we shall reflect on the communities we create through faith today, in our lives and work.

Teresa will present some ideas based on a forthcoming book, offering some new ways of thinking about faith which I hope are especially relevant to contemporary secular ministry.

The day begins at 11.00 (tea and coffee on arrival from 10.30) and will finish at 17.00. A buffet lunch is provided, with mid-afternoon refreshments.

Carr's Lane URC is located in the heart of Birmingham, a 10 minute walk from both New Street and Moor Street rail stations. Detailed information can be found on the website, at <http://www.carrslane.co.uk>.

Cost: £30 (members); £35 (non-members).

Bookings to: Rob Fox, 36 Norman Road, Stalybridge, SK15 1LY.

Please ask CHRISM for a receipt, if required.

Prophetic Ministry in an Age of Change

A Conference for SSM/NSMs, to be held at Waddow Hall, nr Clitheroe, Lancashire, Friday 11th – Sat 12th October 2013.

The SS/NSM Officers of the Dioceses of Blackburn, Bradford, Carlisle, Chester, Liverpool, Manchester, and Ripon & Leeds invite SSMs in these areas to join them for fellowship, reflection and discussion. The Saturday afternoon session will explore current 'SSM issues'.

The Guest Speaker will be the **Revd Dr Jules Gomes**, Canon Theologian of St German Cathedral (Peel), Diocese of Sodor and Man. Jules recently held the same office at Liverpool Cathedral and had previously served in parishes in Bangalore and London. He earned his Doctorate in Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern History at Cambridge, and was MA Course Director at the London School of Theology. He is an excellent communicator of the Gospel. For more, visit www.journeyingwithjules.com.

Waddow Hall is a 17th Century Manor House (HQ of Girl Guiding UK), set in 178 acre grounds overlooking the River Ribble; all accommodation is en-suite, and will have been recently refurbished. To find out more go to www.waddow.org.uk.

The full cost of £95 (arrivals from 5.30pm Friday; depart Saturday at 4.00pm) includes Friday evening meal, bed, breakfast, lunch and refreshments. Please note that overnight accommodation may be limited. If you would prefer to attend on the Saturday only (lunch, refreshments) the cost is £30. The first session on Saturday is at 9.15am. It is likely that Diocesan training grants will be available (contact your appropriate officer).

If you would like to attend, please contact:

The Revd David Simon, 3 Kent's Bank House, Kentsford Rd, Grange over Sands, Cumbria, LA11 7BB, (as soon as possible please).

Annual Conference of US Tentmakers

Phil Aspinall

You are invited to come and join this year's conference of our American colleagues over the weekend of Friday, 1st to Sunday 3rd November 3 at the Austin Theological Seminary, Austin, Texas.

Under the title "Ellipses Conference ...faith...work...ministry...". The conference will aim *to bring us inspiration, encouragement and hope, recent and current bi-vocational pastors tell their stories of struggle, success, innovation and just plain ministry (if there is such a thing). Storytellers include those who lead congregations as well as those in ministry outside the congregation.* Contributions include:

Dr. David F. White will lead us in **telling our own stories** in authentic ways that spark energy and provoke curiosity about different ways of living ministry. Dr. White draws upon a variety of practices that give us insight and language to shape our own compelling narratives— new stories of ministry that link our own lives, the life of the church and the story of God's life in the world.

Rev. Ross Blount and Sarah Chancellor report on experiment in **discerning a call to bi-vocational ministry.** Miss Chancellor immersed herself in the community of Allerton, Iowa to explore the combination of pastoral ministry and social work in the rural mid-west. What can we learn from this model? How might we "try this at home?"

Rev. Jackie Saxon presents **bi-vocational seminary students** who weave together church ministry...family...school...work...to live out their callings. They have different kinds of jobs (from full time workers for the State of Texas to non-profit advocacy and more), and church employment or significant leadership responsibility. Some are single, some have children. But each one is committed to fitting the pieces together and has discovered what it takes to make it. We need this practical wisdom in our ministries of calling and supporting people called to serve as pastors—especially those who will not be full-time students only.

Rev. SanDawna Ashley and **Dr. Paul Hooker** bring us the perspective of The Presbyterian Church (USA) to encourage learning how to promote bi-vocational ministry as a viable form of service. Rev. Ashley will share her work of helping congregations move from full-time to bi-vocational ministry, of working with church structures to deal with compensation and expectations, of resourcing seminary students and pastors in planning for bi-vocational ministry and more.

But what about our secular jobs ? - you need to do some interpretation of your skills and preparation—both for yourself and for potential employers. **Mr. Ken Murdock**, founder of Murdock & Associates Recruiters and Austin Career Services, will show you how to mine your own life experience, training, and education for clues about work to pair with pastoral ministry. He will also address how to develop a plan to “market yourself”, that is to make yourself known and attractive to potential employers.

We hope you will be interested in joining in - this is a good setting, good organization, good time to come and tell your story... develop a new story ... It is also a great opportunity to meet the American Tentmakers, and the keen and engaged people at Austin Seminary.



...faith ... work ... ministry...

ellipses conference

..... a new/old story.....

In partnership with



November 1-3, 2013
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Austin, Texas

Build community with people who want to do pastoral ministry and... something else. Learn how to tell your vocational story so that other people will be inspired. Decode the structures that impact non-traditional ways of being in ministry. Meet people who are making it happen.

ELLIPSES is for long-time tentmakers, bi-vocational pastors, seminary students and all those who want to help create new stories of serving God in ministry.

To register: www.austinseminary.edu/ellipses

The typical cost for full registration (single occupancy) will be \$350 (with reductions for shared rooms). Details are in the panel but please contact Phil Aspinall for more information.

Save the date!

2014 CHRISM Reflective Weekend

Holland House, Cropthorne (near Evesham)

28 February to 2 March

Full details to follow in the October edition

Books review

To Change the World: the irony, tragedy, and possibility of Christianity in the late modern world

James Davison Hunter

Reviewed by Rob Fox

Oxford University Press, 2010 ISBN 978-0-19-973080-3

Resources and exhortations abound on how Christians can (or should) engage with the world around them. This is a welcome analysis, by someone who is both a theologian and sociologist, of what these public faces of our faith implicitly say about it and us.

James Davison Hunter is the Labrosse-Levinson Distinguished Professor of Religion, Culture, and Social Theory at the University of Virginia and, since 1995, Executive Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture. This is a university-based, interdisciplinary research centre concerned with understanding contemporary cultural change and its implications for individuals,

institutions, and society. In other words, he is well placed to undertake the critique this book maps out.

To Change the World is comprised of three essays. The first, *Christianity and World Changing*, examines the common view of "culture as ideas," espoused by thinkers such as Chuck Colson, and the corrective view of "culture as artefacts," as recently argued by Andy Crouch in his book *Culture Making*. Both views, argues Hunter, are characterized by idealism, individualism, and pietism. It is a penetrating appraisal of the most popular models of world-changing among Christians in the USA today, highlighting the ways in which they are inherently flawed and therefore incapable of generating the change to which they aspire. Because change implies power, these models eventually embrace strategies of political engagement as a means of achieving change.

In the second, *Rethinking power*, Hunter offers a powerful critique of the political theologies of the Christian Right ('conservatives') and Left ('progressives') and the Neo-Anabaptists ('pietists'), taking on many respected leaders, from Charles Colson and James Dobson to Jim Wallis and Stanley Hauerwas. He argues that all too often these political theologies worsen the very problems they are intended to solve, by subscribing to secular agendas and falling into the error of seeing political routes as solutions to problems. He observes that "the public witness of the church today has become a political witness." Hunter dismantles the political theologies of the Christian Right, Christian Left, and neo-Anabaptists, showing that unlikely bedfellows - James Dobson, Jim Wallis, and Stanley Hauerwas - are all "functional Nietzscheans" in that their resentment fuels a will to power, which perpetuates rather than heals "the dark nihilisms of the modern age."

What is really needed, Hunter argues, is a different paradigm of Christian engagement with the world, what Hunter calls "faithful presence" - an ideal of Christian practice that is not only individual but institutional; a model that plays out not only in our relationships but in our work and all spheres of social life. He offers real-life examples, large and small, of what can be accomplished through the practice of "faithful presence." Such practices will be more fruitful,

more exemplary, and more deeply transfiguring than any more overtly ambitious attempts can ever be.

In the third essay, *Toward a New City Commons: Reflections on a Theology of Faithful Presence*, Hunter develops this different paradigm of "faithful presence" for cultural engagement. It is not about changing culture, let alone the world, but rather emphasizes cooperation between individuals *and* institutions in order to make disciples and serve the common good. "If there are benevolent consequences of our engagement with the world," Hunter writes, "it is precisely because it is *not* rooted in a desire to change the world for the better but rather because it is an expression of a desire to honor the creator of all goodness, beauty, and truth, a manifestation of our loving obedience to God, and a fulfillment of God's command to love our neighbor."

Hunter also develops an alternative view of culture, one that assigns roles not only to ideas and artefacts but also to "elites, networks, technology, and new institutions." Christians - mainline Protestant, Catholic, and evangelical - will not and *cannot* change the world through evangelism, political action, and social reform because of the working theory that undergirds their strategies. This theory says that "the essence of culture is found in the *hearts and minds of individuals* - in what are typically called 'values.' "According to Hunter, social science and history prove that many popular ideas, such as "transformed people transform cultures" (Colson) and "in one generation, you change the whole culture" (James Dobson), are "deeply flawed."

This is one of the most rewarding books I have read in a long time. It is challenging on two levels: firstly, the soil Hunter turns over is the USA, where the churches are a much more prominent part of many aspects of life, and Christians much more politically active, which makes it demanding to engage with on occasion. (In particular, readers may find it difficult to get beyond chapter 2 of the first essay; but do press on – it is well worth it!) Nonetheless the analysis and critique he offers is just as applicable in the UK, where the faith is similarly divided between conservatives, liberals and pietists.

Secondly, no matter where you sit in this spectrum, it will challenge cherished beliefs and assumptions, while at the same time offering an effective toolkit to help us learn from the challenge. There are passages when the praxis of the European Worker Priests comes to mind. I also found that the “faithful presence” he proposes sits very well with the mission and ministry of MSEs; I hope you will too.

Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the **2013 Annual General Meeting of CHRISM** will take place on Saturday, 14 September, 2013, at 16.00, at Carr’s Lane URC Church, Birmingham.

Agenda:

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the 2012 AGM
- 3 Matters Arising
- 4 Presiding Moderator’s report
- 5 Hon. Secretary’s Report
- 6 Membership Report
- 7 CHRISSET Financial Report
 - Adoption of Accounts for 2012
 - Motion to continue the financial arrangement with CHRISSET
- 8 Subscription for 2014
- 9 Election of Officers and Committee members
- 10 CHRISM Nomination of a CHRISSET Trustee
- 11 Date and Place of next Annual General Meeting
- 12 Remarks by the in-coming Presiding Moderator

Margaret Joachim, Hon. Secretary.

If you would like to stand for election, or nominate someone else (with their permission), please contact Margaret (details on inside cover).

After the AGM some of us propose to go for a meal in central Birmingham. Please contact Rob Fox if you would like to come.

And finally ...

Did you guess where you may have heard the Chartist hymn in the April edition before? It stumped quite a few, not least as words without tune aren't always easy to place.

The answer is Godspell. 'Oh, yes!' I hear you say. So, altogether now: "When wilt thou save the people ..."

Keeping on the Chartist theme, here's another hymn, written by Thomas Cooper, a prolific poet and writer. It is of course a product of its time, and not entirely 'PC' today, but the sentiments seem just as relevant now.

The time shall come when wrong shall end,
When peasant to peer no more shall bend;
When the lordly Few shall lose their sway,
And the Many no more their frown obey.
 Toil, brothers, toil, till the work is done,
 Till the struggle is o'er, and the Charter won!

The time shall come when the artisan
Shall homage no more the titled man;
When the moiling men who delve the mine
By Mammon's decree no more shall pine.
 Toil, brothers, toil, till the work is done,
 Till the struggle is o'er, and the Charter won.

The time shall come when the weavers' band
Shall hunger no more in their fatherland;

When the factory-child can sleep till day,
And smile while it dreams of sport and play.
Toil, brothers, toil, till the work is done,
Till the struggle is o'er, and the Charter won.

The time shall come when Man shall hold
His brother more dear than sordid gold;
When the negro's stain his freeborn mind
Shall sever no more from human-kind.

Toil, brothers, toil, till the world is free,
Till Justice and Love hold jubilee.

The time shall come when kingly crown
And mitre for toys of the past are shown;
When the fierce and false alike shall fall,
And mercy and truth encircle all.

Toil, brothers, toil, till the world is free,
Till Mercy and Truth hold jubilee!

The time shall come when earth shall be
A garden of joy, from sea to sea,
When the slaughterous sword is drawn to more,
And goodness exults from shore to shore.

Toil, brothers, toil, till the world is free,
Till goodness shall hold high jubilee!

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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