

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

Earlier this year I caused a little consternation at a joint service in the parish I'm licensed to (five churches), preaching on the "I am the bread of life ..." passage in John. I argued that the traditional view that this is John's reference to the eucharist is a hindsight interpretation, rather than what John meant. His hearers / readers could only have understood the passage as referring to the eucharist if they were familiar with the other gospel accounts, or Paul's account in 1 Corinthians. If the eucharist was part of the life of John's group, it wasn't important as love.

The two stipendiaries in the team clearly didn't like this, though many in the congregation that day said my explanation made more sense than any other they'd heard.

It was no surprise that I immediately warmed to the premise underpinning Teresa Morgan's talks to and with us at the Conference a few weeks ago in Birmingham. I won't anticipate your enjoyment of her expert summary later in this edition; suffice it to say it delivers more on each reading.

Before that, a look back to the Worker Priest gathering at Pentecost, which we reported on in the July edition. The UK paper arising from it has since been compiled and makes interesting reading. I think it illustrates the tension between 'relevance to' and 'intelligible to'. Our calling is, at least in part, to be prophetic, speaking the truth to power, pointing to the consequences of actions or inactions – even where this is not popular. To do this our message needs to be intelligible, in language and terms that our hearers can understand. It also needs to be relevant to, but not conformed to, the meta-narrative we address. How are fellow prophets, the various worker priests in Europe, do this has much to teach us, and we in turn have insights for them.

The CHRISM AGM was chaired so efficiently by Wendy White that it was the shortest I can remember, but felt in no way rushed! Lyn Page completed her term as Moderator, and we much appreciate her thoughtful contribution in that role as well as her sterling work as

Membership Secretary. Welcome back to Pauline Pearson, and to 'new boy' Mike Harrison – good to have a Welsh member.

Also in this edition is an excellent article from David Clark about the Kingdom@Work project, which he and the Methodist Deacons group have been developing. For me there is a real contrast between the resource in this project and the 'Groups that work' consultation we both attended in April; I report further on it in this edition. Granted that the approaches are quite different, the latter seeking to coordinate rather than resource, but it is K@W that is providing a resource to help equip Christians to both make the connection between faith and work and to be ministers in their work. What those we met in April do have however is groups that can use and help refine the K@W resource book. We too can help here – if your church or local MSE group can use the resource book please do get in touch with David.

We return to Holland House, near Evesham, for our 2014 Reflective Weekend. It is a lovely and popular venue. I've known Margaret Whipp, who will lead us, since 1988, when we were on the Northern Ordination Course; now in Oxfordshire, she is a good communicator and sure to both inform and challenge. As I write we haven't quite booked a venue for the 2014 Conference, but we're looking at the weekend of 18-20 July.

There are a number of international events over the next few months, and the redoubtable Phil Aspinall expects to make at least some of them, though not this year the US Tentmakers weekend. We have been enormously enriched by the support, encouragement and debate with MSEs / Tentmakers / Worker Priests from many countries; long may it continue.

Finally here, I make an appeal later in this edition for members to check that they are both paying subscriptions and sending us the right amount! In order to maintain and develop our work in supporting you, not least through this journal, we need to collect what is due. Please support us by checking you are up to date.

Many thanks.

International Worker Priest Conference – London - Pentecost 2013

Growth – Austerity

These words appear very often in the political life of today. Our governments impose austerity in order to protect growth. But what do they mean?

1. Growth for some. For whom? Austerity for others. For whom?

Growth in the economy is the most important foundation for economic growth for individuals and communities - there are more resources to use. How it benefits people depends on how we, as a society, choose to use growth. If it benefits only shareholders, it is of little value to those who are not active in the economy (pensioners, unemployed, children, long term sick). But growth should mean increased tax revenue, therefore more resource to help the most needy. But our government is reducing taxes on business, so denying itself revenue to help the most needy.

Austerity: Imposed on those who are most in need of support, by our government choosing to cut taxes rather than maintain social welfare.

During Easter week changes were introduced for those who have to live on social security. The increases in these payments will only be 1% per year as the government says this matches the increases in salaries in private companies. Those who live in accommodation on housing benefits will be required to pay 14% more in local taxes if they have a spare room in their house or flat. The government have stated the importance of using all available rooms for those who need them. Everything is done effectively to force people to look for work for themselves.

On the other hand, many who work have lost much of their income – those who live on the minimum wage have only received small increases and other taxes have been increased. To help them, the minimum level at which all pay income tax has been raised.

2. For a new distribution of wealth.

n What struggles and what outcomes do we see?

The recent progress made on OECD guidelines for transfer pricing, and more countries agreeing to use these guidelines (such as the USA) is encouraging for reducing tax avoidance by multinational businesses. But are agreements on transfer pricing likely to achieve fair business taxation? An alternative approach is to look at multinationals profitability as a whole across all the countries in which they operate, then divide up the taxable profits between each country, to be taxed on allocation to each.

Fair taxation still does not guarantee that a country's tax resources will be used for the benefit of the most needy. Where a government needs to be changed, we should work to change it. But we also need to change minds. For example, a recent survey in the UK found that 72% of people favour more cuts in social welfare spending, and see many of the poor as undeserving of welfare. Such attitudes are encouraged by newspapers and television stations owned by rich, right wing, tax avoiders. The UK government is about to introduce a test for businesses that bid for government contracts - that they must not use tax avoidance schemes; this test should be added to the 'fit and proper' test for entrepreneurs who wish to own newspapers and television stations. It is time for the black propaganda these owners promote to be ended.

n How does our spirituality as worker priests/MSEs move us to participate in it?

In our own workplaces, we can and should show the image of the kingdom of God, valuing each person as a son or daughter loved by God.

In this time of austerity several MSEs in England have been made redundant. We speak in the UK of MSE where the Worker Priests would say Priests in Professional Activity. But what is a Minister in Secular Employment (or in Professional Activity) when they no longer are in work? They are in the same situation as their colleagues who are also being made redundant. This is in the concept of the

spirituality of the Worker Priest to be in their normal environment – “to be with”. But what should be the response of the Church – should it help those who are in financial difficulties?

Margaret [Joachim] remembered the story of a French Worker Priest who had been made redundant, and who had said that he could no longer continue as Priest, because he had lost his reason for being ordained.

But these periods without work can serve as a period of reflection and of spiritual development. To be in the desert can be a time of opportunity. Perhaps the church can grow through this experience of austerity.

n What criteria do we have for well-being?

For all people:

- Somewhere to live
- Dignity in work
- Health and safety
- Freedom to act for the well-being of all

For us as Worker-Priests / MSEs :

- What is valid for everyone else, is also the same for us

3. Our hope : Jesus promised “life in all its fullness” (John 10 v10)

How do we understand this fullness for all peoples?

“La vie en abundance”

Life in all its fullness is knowing God through Christ Jesus, with the change of heart and mind that this brings. The care we show for one another is the measure of this.

A just and equal participation of all people in all the goods of the world – of food and energy.....

Un partage juste et également de tout le monde avec toutes des biens de ce monde – de l'énergie, de la nourriture.....

The death of Margaret Thatcher - the "Iron Lady" - 8th April 2013. We remember the great changes to political and economic life in the 1980s. There are, without doubt, many in England who would say that they found a "life in all its fullness" through Thatcherism. But there are many other who have fallen and become the excluded – outside a society which she declared no longer exists.

2013 Conference

Rob Fox

An interesting selection of MSEs gathered at Carrs Lane Church on Saturday, 14 September, for the Conference and AGM. It is some years since we had a day, rather than weekend meet, but as we'd already had several events this year, and didn't want to put a strain on members' pockets, this seemed the best option. Given its central location, Birmingham was also a sensible location – even though we were here the previous year!

And what a day it was. Teresa Morgan was on scintillating form as she took us through her recent research into the meaning of *pistis* – faith – in the Paul's writings. Her excellent summary of the talks she gave are reproduced below.

A point well made early on was that to understand Paul – and all the New Testament writers – we should first understand how their hearers and readers would have understood them. (I know, that's a lot of understanding. But isn't that what we aim for?) I think this is at the heart of ministry in work: being able to express the Gospel in language and concepts that make sense to people because they are part of their daily lives. And as those we work alongside are increasingly unchurched, the importance of this is ever greater.

Faith at the Roots of Christian Tradition

Teresa Morgan

The topic of this CHRISM conference arose from a book I have been writing, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, about the meaning of Christian faith at the very beginning of the tradition. The project began with a simple question: *why* is faith so important to Christians?

The Greek word we usually translate 'faith' or 'belief' is *pistis*, which (like its Latin equivalent *fides*) basically means 'trust'. It also has a wide range of other meanings, including 'trustworthiness', 'faithfulness', 'good faith', 'credibility', 'confidence', 'pledge', 'guarantee', 'credit', 'proof', and 'belief'.

In the New Testament, *pistis* usually means 'trust', 'trustworthiness', 'faithfulness' or 'belief'. Closely related to it are *pistos*, 'faithful' or 'trustworthy', and *pisteuein*, 'to trust' or 'believe'.

Pistis is central to Christianity as to no other religion: without it, it is impossible to do justice to Christian understandings of the relationship between God and humanity. Its importance, moreover, predates our earliest records. In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (probably the oldest book of the New Testament in its present form), followers of Christ are referred to as *hoi pisteuontes*, 'the faithful', as if it is already a familiar term. That letter uses *pistis*, *pistos* and *pisteuein* fourteen times in five short chapters, and after that, *pistis* or its relatives appear in every book of the New Testament except 2 John. The gospels put it repeatedly in the mouth of Jesus. It is integral to some of Paul's most creative and influential theological reflection. It is used of God and human beings, of individuals and groups, of conversion and life in worshipping communities. In the New Testament as a whole, *pistis* language occurs nearly twice as often as the language of love, more than twice as often as 'righteousness', and more than four times as often as 'salvation'. It is so important that at some point, the Jesus movement became known simply as *hē pistis*, 'the faith'.

That being the case, it is surprising how rarely scholars discuss *why* faith is so important. One reason may be that New Testament

scholars and theologians, who are mostly brought up in Christian cultures, take it for granted, while Greek and Roman historians, who study the way *pistis* and *fides* work in the world around the early churches, are not very interested in Christianity. But it is far from obvious why *pistis* should have become central to Christians. God is trustworthy and people put their trust in God in the Jewish scriptures – but not nearly as often as in the New Testament. Greek and Roman gods, too, can be called trustworthy, and people put their trust in them – but not very often.

To understand why *pistis* was so important to early Christians, we need to understand what it meant to them. This is harder than it sounds, because over the last 2000 years, the meaning of ‘faith/belief’ in Christian thinking has evolved significantly. To understand what it means in the first century, we have un-think much of what we think we know about it. For example: Augustine (350 years after Paul) divided faith into *fides quae*, ‘the faith which is believed’ (i.e. the body of doctrine) and *fides qua*, ‘the faith by which it is believed’ (i.e. what happens in the heart and mind of an individual believer). In the first century, however, faith is neither a body of doctrine nor a movement of the heart and mind: it is a *relationship* between God and humanity.

Augustine’s interest in what happens in the heart and mind combined with a wider Christian interest in the unknowability of God to produce the idea that faith is a yearning of the heart towards something that we can never fully understand. At the beginning of the tradition, though, there are few, if any, signs of this mystical view of faith. At some point in the early centuries, too, Christians began to call their cult ‘the faith’ in something like the modern sense of ‘the religion’. But in the first century, there is no word for ‘religion’ and arguably not even a concept of it, in the sense of a complex, bounded entity, distinct from the secular world, involving beliefs, rituals, scriptures, ethics, institutional organization, art etc. Last, but not least, in debates between Christians and scientists in the nineteenth century, some scientists argued that scientific truths are those that can be observed, tested experimentally and proven. Faith, in contrast, they argued, cannot be tested or proven: people simply make a non-rational choice to believe. In the first century, however, *pistis* was

not regarded as by any means irrational. Early Christians thought they had good reasons to believe what they did.

These are just some of the modern assumptions about faith which we have to dismantle to understand what *pistis* meant to very early Christians. Perhaps the most difficult assumption of all to un-think, is that Christian faith is unique, not like trust or belief in any other god or any other context. This assumption is very widespread, and it is not completely wrong, because in some ways, every relationship of trust is different, depending on who is involved. (If I am a Roman matron, my trust in my slaves is different from my trust in my husband, and both are different from my trust in God.) At the same time, Christian *pistis* cannot be completely unique, for simple but compelling historical reasons. New communities forming themselves within an existing culture do not typically take language in common use in the world around them, and immediately assign to it radical new meanings. New meanings may evolve, but they take time. This is all the more true where the new community is a missionary one. One does not communicate effectively with potential converts by using language in a way they will not understand. In its earliest years, we should not expect the meaning of Christian *pistis* to be completely unique: we should expect those who use it to understand it primarily within the range of meanings which are in play in the world around them.

My project, therefore, has been to try to understand what *pistis* and its relatives mean to the writers and the first audiences of the texts of the New Testament, in their context in the Roman world and the world of contemporary Judaism. I have drawn on several other disciplines where the study of trust and belief has been popular in recent years: mediaeval and early modern history, anthropology, sociology, and economics. In particular, I have made use of the idea, developed by historians and anthropologists, that the *shape* of trust/belief in every society is unique. Who trusts whom and what, and for what reasons, and what people find it easy or hard to trust, are slightly different in every culture.

What, then, is the 'shape' of *pistis* among the first followers of Jesus Christ?

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

If we begin with 1 Thessalonians, written in around AD 50/1, we find that the shape of Christian *pistis* there is already in some ways distinctive.

Trust, in this letter, operates almost exclusively between God and human beings. '[F]rom you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaëa, but in every place your *pistis* towards God has gone forth...' (1.8). For Paul, as for many writers of the Jewish scriptures, God is *pistos*, faithful or trustworthy: 'The one who calls you is faithful...' (5.24). Paul refers early in the letter (1.4) to his belief that the Thessalonians were 'chosen', by God and that they responded with *pistis*. Paul seems to be imagining a faithful God as reaching out to human beings and choosing them, before human beings respond with trust in him.

God did not call the Thessalonians directly, but through Paul, who was 'entrusted' with the gospel (2.4). Having received the gospel, the Thessalonians also became a model for other believers whose faith was less strong than their own (1.8). We can see here the beginnings of a what we might call a 'cascade' of *pistis*, from God, through his apostle, to those to whom the apostle preaches, and through them to others. When those who hear the gospel put their trust in God and become faithful to God, the cascade becomes a circle of trust running through creation, from heaven to earth and back to heaven. Paul did not invent this idea – it is already implicit, for instance, in the relationship between God, Moses, and the Israelites, which he often refers to in other letters – but it becomes more important for him than for any previous writer.

The Thessalonians are implicitly encouraged to trust Paul, since he has been entrusted with the gospel, but they are never told to trust one another as fellow community-members. This is highly unusual in the ancient world. In both Judaism and Graeco-Roman religions, one of the principal roles of the divine is to encourage and sponsor trust, good faith etc. between human beings. In 1 Thessalonians, *pistis* has an odd 'wigwam' structure. Christians are held together at the top, so to speak, by their shared trust in God and his apostles, but not by trust in each other. The quality and practice that holds them

together as a community, is *agape*, love: 'On the subject of mutual charity you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.' (4.9)

What is more, when Paul is entrusted with the gospel or the Thessalonians act as a model for others, Paul describes them as almost passive in the process. When he preached to the Thessalonians, he says that his words were not human words at all, but the word of God mediated through him, which now works in the Thessalonians (2.13-14). When the Thessalonians act as a model for others, Paul describes the word of God almost surreally as having been 'projected out of' them (1.8). When human beings say and do things that make them trustworthy, it seems, they are not speaking or acting for themselves, so any trust that is given to them is really being given, through them, to God.

One possible explanation for this 'wigwam' structure is that Paul sees followers of Christ as a pilgrim community, like that of the Exodus or those of the Graeco-Roman colonists who periodically left home to seek a better place to live. They travel through a potentially hostile world, keeping to themselves as much as possible (4.11-12), until they reach God's kingdom. Elsewhere in the ancient world, such groups typically trust their leader and God (or the god) who tells them to go, but we do not hear much about their trusting one another. Another, more practical explanation may be that since most early churches were composed of both Jews and gentiles, who did not always get on, asking them to trust one another was difficult; challenging them to love one another was, in some ways, easier.

Not only are the Thessalonians not taught to trust one another; in this letter, they are also not taught to trust Christ. This is probably a sign of the letter's early date. Christ is, of course, already central to Paul's faith and preaching. The letter opens with his greeting to the church, 'in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (1.1), and Jesus appears throughout the letter as Christ and Lord, the one who will come in glory on the day of wrath (1.3, 3.13, 4.17, 5.2-10). But Paul has not yet worked out where Christ, and his role in salvation, fit into the traditional relationship of *pistis* between God and humanity which he has inherited from Judaism. One of his great contributions to

Christianity is that in later letters, he does develop a distinctive understanding of the place of Christ in divine-human *pistis*.

As a community, the Thessalonians are described as children of God (1.3), slaves of God (1.9), and subjects of God's kingdom (2.12), while Paul's frequent references to Jesus Christ as *kyrios*, 'Lord', could refer to the master of a household, the ruler of a state, or a divinity. It is typical of New Testament writers to mix domestic and political language like this, and it is worth noting that *pistis*, together with *agapē*, is one of the very few concepts in Greek which is equally at home in the domestic and political spheres. This is no doubt not why it originally became so important to Christians, but it does make it possible for them to present the community of faith as both a household, intimate and loving, and a people, triumphant and world-conquering.

The Christian life of the Thessalonians is summed up at the start of the letter as, 'the work of faith and labour of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ...' (1.3). To call this life 'work' or 'labour', though, may exaggerate how active it is. The Thessalonians are to wait (1.10), to stay 'alert and sober' (5.6), to endure persecution (2.14-16), to mind their own affairs (4.12), and to love one another (3.12, 4.11). Towards the end of the letter (5.8), Paul says, 'let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet that is hope for salvation...' The breastplate and helmet are both pieces of defensive armour, appropriate for warding off the world's attacks, but not equipment with which to take the offensive. The work of the Thessalonians seems essentially to be not to do anything that will tell against them on the day of judgement: 'May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (5.23) Here we see signs of what will become an on-going tension in Christian thinking about *pistis*: can we work at faith and progress in it, or can we only try not to fail in it?

The rewards of *pistis* in this letter are clear. The Thessalonians will be delivered from the coming wrath (1.10), called into God's kingdom and glory (2.12), and taken up to meet the Lord (4.17). There is, strikingly, in this letter, no sense that putting one's *pistis* in

God in expectation of the coming wrath is particularly risky or difficult in itself, nor that the Thessalonians' trust in God is in serious danger of failing. Paul offers, moreover, no hint of how failures of trust might be punished by God. His picture of the divine-human relationship is strong and positive.

Reasons to believe

I mentioned above that in the New Testament, faith is not fideistic in the modern sense: it is never seen as a deliberately non-rational choice to put one's trust in God or Christ. First-century Christians thought they had good reasons to believe what they did, and Paul offers several to the Thessalonians. First, he tells them that their *pistis* was in fact a response to God, who had already chosen them to hear the good news (1.4). They can be sure that God chose them because Paul's gospel came to them not only in words (which themselves were 'not without effect' (2.1)), but also with power, the holy spirit and 'much conviction' (1.5). The reference to 'power' suggests that miracles or wonders of some kind (such as speaking in tongues) were involved. Elsewhere in the ancient world, such signs are seen as good evidence that what a prophet or teacher is teaching is true.

Paul says that he has worked hard on the Thessalonians' behalf, treating them like a nurse or a father (2.9-12). The implication is that Paul's own commitment helps to make his message more believable. In the wider Graeco-Roman world, family members, fellow members of a household, and professionals are all seen as highly trustworthy, so by describing himself as a relative or a nurse, Paul is presenting himself as trustworthy.

More than anything else in this letter, Paul appeals to the Thessalonians' own experience of how his preaching affected them and changed their lives, as a reason for *pistis*. They know, he says (1.5), how he behaved when he was with them. 'And you became imitators of us and of the Lord...' (1.6). The Thessalonians put their trust in God because they were persuaded by their own experience of Paul – and, Paul implies, they were justified. A few verses later, he says that it is known among the Macedonians and the Achaians that he was well received by the Thessalonians and that (as a result) they

turned to God from idols (1.9). Paul hammers the point home at the beginning of Chapter 2: 'For *you yourselves know*, brothers, that our reception among you was not without effect' (2.1), and he returns to it several times more: 'You are witnesses...' (2.10), 'As you know...' (2.11), 'For you yourselves know...' (5.2). The message is that the Thessalonians can trust themselves – their experience and judgement of Paul – in putting their trust in God. And they can go on doing it. 'Test everything; retain what is good,' Paul says (5.21) towards the end of the letter. In the Graeco-Roman world in general, the evidence of one's own senses and one's own judgement are very highly rated as foundations for trust, so Paul is appealing to a common argument for *pistis*, and one which he thinks the Thessalonians will find a compelling.

In the world of the first century, people are most often called to put their trust in others (divine or human) at moments of crisis or decision-making. In this letter, one of the most powerful incentives Paul offers the Thessalonians for trusting God is his proclamation of the approaching wrath (1.10) and the coming of the Lord. Paul appeals to both hope and fear in these passages: when the day comes, non-community members will be judged and punished, while the faithful will be saved (5.9) and taken up to be with God (4.17).

These add up to a substantial set of reasons to put one's trust in God. At the same time, we might think they are a little oddly balanced. Though Paul twice, briefly, mentions the death and resurrection of Jesus in this letter (1.10, 4.14), and appeals to it as a reason for believing that dead Christians will be raised at the coming of the Lord (4.14-15), he does not appeal to the resurrection as a reason for putting one's trust in God in the first place. There is no doubt that the apostles, including Paul, proclaimed that Jesus had died for the sins of others and been raised (cf. 1 Cor. 15.1-4), and expected their converts to believe it. In this book, though, I argue that believing in the resurrection as such is probably not the main focus of the earliest preaching: its focus is putting one's trust in God (and, later, in Christ). This is a good illustration of the difference between very early Christian faith and what Augustine, for instance, understands by faith. For Paul, *pistis* is not primarily about *believing that certain things about God and Christ are true*. *Pistis* is about *accepting a relationship with God and Christ – putting one's trust in them*.

It is also notable how little appeal Paul makes to his own preaching as a foundation for *pistis* in 1 Thessalonians. The good news, he says, came to the Thessalonians 'not in word alone' (1.5), while the converts have made such an impression on other communities that, 'we have no need to say anything.' (1.8) There is no sign in this letter (as there is, for instance, in 1 and 2 Corinthians) that this is because Paul's preaching did not impress the Thessalonians. When he talks about it, he emphasizes rather that he did not speak from 'impure motives' (2.3), he was not out for money (2.5) or praise (2.6), he did not persuade the Thessalonians by deception (2.4), and he did not flatter them (2.5).

These are the sorts of things that very successful Greek and Roman orators said to impress audiences with their honesty and reliability. Oratory was enormously important in the world of the first century: in politics, in the law, and as a multi-million-drachma entertainment industry. Orators were among the stars and celebrities of their day. The best travelled all round the Mediterranean, performing speeches on every possible topic to huge audiences in market-places, theatres, and palaces. They dressed flamboyantly in silk tunics and gold jewellery; they were highly-paid and fêted – and mistrusted for their power to manipulate people's minds and emotions. They were lionized, and criticized as sycophants, money-grubbers and publicity hounds. Even a non-celebrity speaker like Paul, therefore, had to be careful how he presented his preaching. He wanted to be persuasive without sounding manipulative; to tell an extraordinary story about Jesus Christ, and God's plans for humanity, without sounding as if he was trying to promote himself as their apostle. Hence his very mixed presentation of his preaching. Paul seems to have a shrewd idea of what the Thessalonians are likely to find easy or difficult to trust and believe.

The shape of a very early Pauline church as it emerges from 1 Thessalonians is distinctive in the world of the first century in several ways. It is, in spirit, a pilgrim community, travelling through dangerous times towards God's kingdom, held together by the members' trust in God and God's apostles, and their love for one another. The members of the community, who are both a family and a new people, have been chosen by God, but they are not a closed group; others can join them at any time. Most of them do not

actively evangelize, but they do let their visible trust in God inspire others. Their trust is based on Paul's preaching, on signs of power, but above all on their own experience of how receiving the Spirit changed their lives.

Pistis in Galatians

In 1 Thessalonians, we come as close as we can to seeing the shape of faith at the beginnings of Christian tradition. In later letters, however, Paul developed his thinking about *pistis* in several directions. Some of these can be seen in his Letter to the Galatians, which was probably written in the mid- or the late-50s.

In Galatians Chapter 2, Paul finds himself needing to explain why, in his view, gentile Galatians do not need to keep the Jewish law. In the course of this argument, he makes a series of references to *pistis* which are unlike anything in 1 Thessalonians:

(15) We, who are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the gentiles, (16) yet who know that a person is not made righteous by works of the law unless through the *pistis* of Jesus Christ, even we have put our trust in Christ Jesus, so that we may be made righteous by the *pistis of Christ* and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one is made righteous. (17) But if, seeking to be made righteous in Christ, even we are sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? Of course not! (18) But if I am building up again those things that I tore down, then I show myself to be a transgressor. (19) For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ; (20) yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live *in [the] pistis of the Son of God* who loved me and gave himself up for me. (21) I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing. (2.15-21, transl. NAB, modified)

Paul's overall concern in this passage is how human beings are to achieve a relationship of righteousness with God. What enables

human beings to achieve righteousness, he says at 2.16, is *pistis Iēsou Christou*. In Greek, this phrase can mean either 'the trust/faith (of human beings) in Jesus Christ' or 'the trust/faithfulness of Jesus Christ (to God)'. Scholars have debated fiercely which of these translations is right, because it makes a big difference to our understanding of salvation whether we see it as something that is achieved for us by Christ, or something we achieve by putting our trust in God.

To tackle this question, it may help to refer back to the beginning of the letter, where Paul says that Christ, 'gave himself for our sins that he might rescue us from the present evil age.' (1.4) If *pistis Iēsou Christou* at 2.16 refers to this kind of self-giving, then it refers to Christ's faithfulness to God. On the other hand, later in verse 2.16, Paul definitely says that we do put our trust in Christ, and *pistis Iēsou Christou* could be meant to parallel that.

If *pistis Iēsou Christou* refers to human beings' trust in Christ, however, then in this passage, Paul says that a person cannot be made righteous by fulfilling the law, unless she or he also believes in Christ. We have believed in Christ, so that we may be made righteous by believing in Christ and not by fulfilling the law, because no fleshly being is made *dikaios* by keeping the law. If *pistis Iēsou Christou* means 'trust in Christ', that is, then Paul says that trust in Christ is what makes us righteous no fewer than three times in one short passage where his main point is that gentiles do not need to keep the law. This is not impossible, but it would be surprising and somewhat inelegant.

If, on the other hand, *pistis Iēsou Christou* is understood as the faithfulness of Christ to God, then this passage bears more meaning and is less repetitive. A person, it then says, is not made righteous by fulfilling the law, but by the *pistis* of Christ (leaving open for a moment exactly what that means). (Even) we (though we are good Jews) have put our trust in Christ so that we may be acquitted by Christ's *pistis* rather than by fulfilling the law. This train of thought fits Paul's views, expressed elsewhere, that (a) it is appropriate to put our trust in both God and Christ, (b) being Jewish is not enough for righteousness, and (c) Christ makes us righteous by something he

does. All that is new about it is that what Christ does is expressed by *pistis*.

If this is right, then what does Paul mean by the *pistis* of Christ when he says that it enables human beings to become righteous? If we confine ourselves to what he says about what Christ does at the beginning of this letter and in the rest of this passage, we find that Christ gives himself for human beings to rescue them from this evil age, in accordance with God's will (1.4). Christ loves Paul, has given himself up for him, and has died to achieve Paul's righteousness (2.20-21).

These passages show Christ facing two ways. He does God's will, which fits with what Paul elsewhere calls his obedience. He might therefore be appropriately said to be *pistos* (obedient in trust and faithfulness) towards God. At the same time, Christ loves and acts to save human beings. When God is described elsewhere as loving and acting to save human beings, he is called *pistos* towards humanity, and that term might also be applied Christ here. Christ might therefore be said to be *pistos* towards both God and human beings. God also trusts Christ to carry out his will, while the faithful trust him to enable them to become righteous. Christ is therefore at the centre of a nexus of divine-human *pistis*. His *pistis* is simultaneously his faithfulness or trustworthiness towards God and towards humanity, and his trustedness by God and by humanity.

Pistis, for Paul, is the word that captures his sense of the doubly reciprocal relationship of Christ with God and humanity. It also expresses his sense of the place of Christ in the overarching relationship between God and humanity, and his sense of the quality of Christ – his faithfulness, trustworthiness, and trustedness by God and human beings – which makes his saving activity possible. No other word in Greek could have captured the nature and complexity of this quality and relationship in the same way.

In 1 Thessalonians, we saw that Paul portrays God as faithful to human beings and human beings to God, while human beings can attract of measure of trust from others by acting as God's representatives. In Galatians, the divine-human relationship of trust has evolved. Christ has been placed firmly in the middle of it,

mediating God's new relationship with humanity and also their on-going relationship of trust. Except when Paul is talking about Abraham, human beings will not be said to put their trust directly in God again in Galatians, nor in Romans or Philippians (though no doubt Paul still thinks that they do put their trust in God). From now on, Paul will be more interested in his tripartite configuration of *pistis*.

Remarkable as this development is, it is not the only way Paul develops Christian understandings of *pistis* in this letter. The very first appearance of *pistis* in Galatians already has a slightly different feel from anything in 1 Thessalonians.

In Chapter 1, Paul tells the Galatians that during his early years as a missionary, he was not personally known to the churches of Judaea. '[T]hey only kept hearing that "the one who once was persecuting us is now preaching *tēn pistin* which he once tried to destroy, and they glorified God because of me.' (1.23-4) This is the first time *hē pistis* has appeared in a letter as the object of preaching, and it is tempting to read it as a synonym for 'the gospel' (cf. 1 Cor. 15.1). *Pistis* would then refer to the content of Paul's call to potential converts to put their trust in God and be freed from their sins in preparation for the end time. For *pistis* to mean something like 'the gospel' here, however, it would have to have shifted a long way in meaning from 'trust', 'trustworthiness', 'belief' etc. Such a shift is not impossible in theory, but it cannot be taken for granted either.

It seems clear that *pistis* does not simply mean 'trust' or 'belief' here: neither meaning makes sense unless one assumes that 'trust' is a shorthand for 'the message of trust in God which I [Paul] preach', which is simply a roundabout way of referring to the content of Paul's preaching. Among the other common meanings of *pistis*, 'argument' or 'proof' could act as the object of 'I preached', but make little sense in the context of Paul's understanding of his own mission, because he is proclaiming what he sees as a truth, not an argument.

Another interpretation is suggested by Paul's use of *porthein*, 'to destroy', the other verb in this sentence. *Porthein* is usually used of ravaging or destroying places or communities – towns, areas of country or groups of people. Paul has just used it himself in this

sense at 1.13, of his persecution of the 'assembly of God'. It would be an odd word to use of disputing a viewpoint or the content of a proclamation, but it could be used of destroying a relationship. Paul's reference to 'the *pistis* which he once tried to destroy' reads naturally as a reference to an attempt to destroy the trust, in the sense of 'the relationship of trust' or even 'the bond of trust' between God, Christ and Christ's followers. The latter part of 1.23 could then be translated: 'the one who was persecuting us is now proclaiming the trust-relationship [between God and human beings] which he once tried to destroy.'

On this interpretation, *pistis* in this passage has evolved from meaning 'trust', 'faithfulness' etc, to meaning 'the relationship (of trust)' or 'the bond' between God, Christ and the faithful. Paul returns to *pistis* in what looks like a similar sense at the end of the letter, when he exhorts the Galatians, 'while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to *tous oikeious tēs pisteōs*.' (6.10)

The final phrase in this verse is often translated, 'members of the household of (the) faith,' but that translation assumes that '(the) faith' is already understood as something very like a religion. This would involve a big shift of meaning, and we should be wary of assuming that it has taken place unless no other translation makes sense. Translating the phrase, 'members of the household of trust' sounds odd. But we could translate it 'members of the relationship (or perhaps better, 'the community') of trust (between God and the faithful)'. For *pistis* to refer to the community created by trust between God and the faithful is a shift in meaning but not a radical one. 6.10 would then run: 'While we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to fellow members of the community of trust (which exists between God, Christ and faithful human beings).'

If this is right, then *pistis* has begun to evolve, in Paul's thinking, from meaning 'trust', 'faithfulness' etc. to meaning the *relationship*, the *bond*, and even the *community formed by trust* etc. This is interesting, not least because when we think about *pistis* as a bond or community formed by trust, we are getting close to the idea of a covenant and the community it creates. And, of course, another term for the new relationship between God and humanity which is

created by the death and resurrection of Christ is 'the new covenant', *hē kainē diathekē*.

This makes me wonder whether Paul is deliberately stretching the meaning of *pistis* to mean 'the new covenant'. He tends to avoid the phrase *hē kainē diathēkē*, using it only couple of times, in 1 and 2 Corinthians. I suspect the reason is that *diathēkē* is a rare word in Greek, except in Greek-speaking Judaism where it refers to the Mosaic covenant. In Asia Minor, where there were large Jewish communities and where Paul preached extensively, *diathēkē* probably had strongly Jewish associations. Paul, though, wanted his communities to be hospitable to gentiles, so he chose another word for the new bond between God and humanity, *pistis*, an everyday Greek word with no sectarian connotations. This may be how Christianity came to be called 'the faith': as another way of referring to the new covenant and the community it creates.

Does any of this have any relevance for Christians in secular ministry in the twenty-first century? That question was the subject of the second half of our meeting on September 14th, and I hope to return to it in a later issue of this journal. For now, I suggest that it is always important to try to understand the New Testament in its own terms. Because it is a pillar of the tradition, which we have read intensively for 2,000 years, our understanding of what it says has evolved extensively, so when we try to read it in its first-century context we are often surprised by what we find and stimulated to think about our faith afresh.

For me, one of the refreshing themes to emerge from my study has been the centrality of trust in God and Christ, rather than of propositional beliefs, for very early Christians. Another has been that early Christians did not see *pistis* as a deliberately non-rational commitment to a mystery, but as a reasonable commitment to a God whose life-changing power they could and did witness and experience for themselves. Yet another has been Paul's evocation of the 'cascade' of trust and faithfulness running from God through Christ and through creation. On the other hand, I have been surprised to find trust focused so strongly on God and Christ, and so little in play between community members. In some ways, I prefer the Jewish or Roman idea (which Christians later developed too) that

God sponsors and makes possible trust between human beings. It has also been fascinating to see something of how *pistis* evolved, even in the first two or three generations, helping to shape the community of Christ's followers socially as well as theologically. As I write, the project continues to excavate new aspects of this cornerstone of Christianity.

Faith and ministry today, in a secular environment

Notes from groups on the day, written up by Rob Fox

In our afternoon session, again introduced with a talk from Teresa before we did some work in groups, we looked at how we understand our faith and ministry in a secular environment, today.

Two of the questions we considered were: what are the reasons to believe, and what are those not to? The first suggestion for reasons not to believe was the Church, whatever our concept of it is. In short, it isn't seen to practise what it preaches. Many of those who claim to be Christians don't set an example others are attracted to. There is also the issue of faith being unscientific – you can't 'prove' or demonstrate it in the way you can a mathematical formula. Yet despite the meta-narrative that if it isn't scientifically provable it isn't real, we see an explosion of interest in spirituality around us. The downside of this is that the seeking going on is largely for therapy, what spirituality can do to make me feel less anomie.

We did come up with rather more reasons to believe, not least example: 'it works form me ...' For every story of deeds not matching words there is another of deeds demonstrating faith in ways no words can. Then there is the 'love thing'. As Teresa pointed out, the glue that bound the early Christian groups together was love, rather than faith. Faith is what they had in common; love is what they shared. Going back to the yearning for spirituality, there is a widespread incompleteness felt with the view that science has all the answers, a 'God-shaped hole', a half understood feeling that there are dimensions of life that we cannot experience through being rational alone. We are not the first age in human history to arrogantly assume that we know everything, or are about to.

Turning to minister / ministry – is it best understood as a noun, adjective, verb? We concluded that all three could validly be used, but the verb is the most important; ministry is something we do, whether or not we have a formal authorisation. To those ministered to, a title seldom makes a difference. Labels can sometimes be useful in opening doors, but don't in themselves add anything else. What we offer to others is space, time, valuing them as a person loved by God. We don't need a ring of confidence to do that.

Where we are in a ministry role authorised by our church, we are accountable. But we raised the question: what is counted? As noted in the item on Southwark Diocese's report on NSM deployment elsewhere in this edition, this is often limited to keeping the show on the road through services and pastoral work in a local church.

So what are we offering? Being visible and available in places where other authorised ministers rarely tread. In a typical week a local church minister will spend a few minutes in formal situations (arranging a baptism, leading a funeral) with the 'unchurched'. We work alongside them all week. We offer the experience and expertise of being able to speak the same language, drawing on the same experiences, as those we work alongside. We are more open to what people want, rather than what we think they need. We don't demand belief, but are open about where we stand. Because they know us, and have developed trust in us, we have permission to ask the deep questions. We offer a different perspective that most of our colleagues would otherwise never hear.

What of workplace Christian groups? Is it enough to draw people together in groups infused by Christian values? And who comes to them? Is a Christian group at work salt and light, or just another exclusive group meeting to affirm itself? This is not to imply of course that workplace groups are not effective in ministry, but too often they can be simply replicating church. Then there are virtual groups – is a Facebook community [*see the item on the CHRISM LinkedIn group. Ed*] a community?

Finally - how do we feed ourselves? Faithfulness in God is the starting point, our faith in God and God's in us. Then there are networks like CHRISM, affirming and informing ministry in everyday

life. And lest we forget: rootedness in a local church. Not as refuge from the world, but a platform where we may learn to love, and from where we may go forth and minister.

CHRISM AGM and Committee Elections

The CHRISM AGM took place at the Conference in Birmingham on Saturday, September 13th.

Moderators are elected for three years, Presiding (as Chair) in the second year. At the end of her presiding year, Wendy White gave the address reproduced in this edition. Sue Cossey became Presiding Moderator, and Ruth Brothwell was elected as Incoming Moderator.

The following were also elected:

Secretary:	Margaret Joachim
Journal Editor:	Rob Fox
Committee Members:	Mike Harrison, Pauline Pearson, Margaret Yates

The post of Treasurer is an appointment of the Trustees of CHRISSET, the charity that sits behind CHRISM and manages finances. At the subsequent committee meeting on 5th October, Phil Aspinall was co-opted to the committee, not least as our roving international ambassador.

Presiding Moderator's report, 2012/13

Wendy White

This has been an interesting year. In February we spent our annual retreat at Launde Abbey, a venue which received resounding approval, and the time to spend in a pause from our usual rushing around. Focussing on Thanksgiving and bread-making was appreciated and it has been lovely to hear over the following months the reports of seed corn literally growing and producing!

The highlight of the year, however, must be the European Worker Priest Conference at Pentecost, coinciding as it did with the day conference in Southwark where the Anglicans, at least, appear to be beginning to take the idea of MSE seriously.

The events give space to forge real friendships, both between members of CHRISM in this country and internationally. The issue of potential tension in interpretation of 'worker' and 'minister' or 'priest' surfaces whenever the European groups and CHRISM get together, it's an artificial tension but it does highlight, I believe, a potential tension within our own group. The worker priest movement on the continent identifies with those in the lowest level of employment, we make no similar commitment – but aim to engage with all who see the workplace as the main outworking of their faith rather than church structures. Yet an Anglican Church conference on the work of MSE, where so many representatives were not even ministers in secular employment, represents the lack of understanding, and honouring, of an Incarnational faith, even if it is a step in the right direction. Also, reflecting on our own membership, we seem to draw from a different pool of 'workers', those in professional occupations, and despite our openness the majority of our active members are ordained ministers of one denomination or another. Therefore I think there are further questions: where are those who are not ministers? And who is excluded?

For those at the lower end of the income scale even coming for one day to this event, careful as we are about costs, represents 1-2 days wages. A weekend conference is beyond thought. If you work in retail, or similar low-status jobs, then weekends are not automatically free. Most people do not have Synod or church grants to tap into.

Added to that there seems to be dwindling free time (I must confess that I've haven't read the last CHRISM journal), and this is especially true if there are family commitments. One group I was with a few months ago commented sarcastically, apropos of a suggested grouping – 'oh that's just what we need, another meeting'. This is not a criticism of what we do – but it is an observation about how we may be unintentionally running the risk of becoming a group of, mainly, ministers who are working at senior levels in their professions.

Reflecting on the year I believe we need a few priorities:

- Our annual retreat and then summer conference are part of what sustains us. We need, as ever, to reach those people who do not know we exist.
- We need to find out from people of faith, in our workplaces and through conversations, what else may be helpful.
- As part of that we need to explore, perhaps using contemporary media, additional and alternative modes of support.

When I first discovered CHRISM it was like coming home, and it has continued to feel like that. The conversations I have at work show me that there is a real interest in the engagement of faith and work, and people of faith who share my workplace tell me they rarely, if ever, hear anything in their church which helps, nurtures or guides them at work in the week.

CHRISM has a role to play, in encouraging, supporting, acting as a forum and enabling people to see God at work ahead of us in the marketplace.

So, 2013 has indeed been an interesting year; I pray we might find 2014 even more so!

Groups that work

Rob Fox

In the last edition I reported on a conference arranged by LICC, Transforming Work UK and Fresh Expressions on workplace groups. At the time the outcomes of the event hadn't been published. As they now have it is worth including a summary here. I've added a number of parenthetic observations and comments.

The high level findings of the event were:

- Lots of Christian workplace groups exist, in many shapes and forms.
- The majority of them focus on supporting one another and evangelism.
- There is a feeling that lots of Christians in the workplace still don't understand the kingdom purpose of their work. (Though many in CHRISM might express this differently, I think we can recognise and agree with the point being made).
- Groups feel isolated from both the church and other workplace groups. (Regrettably this really isn't a surprise).
- Leaders of groups would like to share ideas, experiences and resources with other groups.
- It is often difficult for people to find a group, or even to know that they exist.

Of the 30 people who submitted comments in advance of the event, half work for Christian organisations and half in a secular workplace. Of the latter, 9 were involved in workplace or professional Christian groups, which included Barclays, HSBC, BT, the Christian Police Association, the Librarians', Lawyers, and Agricultural Christian Fellowships.

As part of the registration process, attendees were asked:

- What would be helpful for the workplace groups to know?
- What resources could you offer beyond this consultation, to this and wider networks?

The responses can be summarised as: ideas, experience, resources, theology, support, encouragement and networking. They also indicated a mismatch between what the groups would like and what is available – there is too little of the latter.

A number of obstacles were identified, under the following heads:

- Theological – Christians are not making the connection between the gospel and the workplace (no surprise there!), and there is little sense of calling or purpose in their work.

- Practical – lack of funding, lack of sponsorship from the upper echelons of the organisation and from the churches, lack of time and resources, flexible working patterns – difficult to arrange meetings, hierarchy of grades within the group (read 1 Corinthians on that one), and the workplace culture of work.
- Attitudes – lack of confidence, fear, the view that ‘faith should be private’ – especially in US owned companies, previous history / disappointments, not prioritising the group.
- The group itself – random collection of individuals, not looking beyond mutual support, lack of vision, becoming just another business meeting.

Shortly before going to press I received more detailed feedback from LICC. The document is available at: <https://db.tt/Eke9YO9W>.

In summary, the Consultation was seen by the organisers as hugely helpful in formulating immediate next steps. The three organisations that undertook the original research and organised the Consultation have agreed to continue to work together. These are London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC), Fresh Expressions (FE) and Transform Work UK (TWUK). They have agreed the following areas of focus:

- LICC –encouraging workplace groups & individuals to develop a more transformational focus, alongside their existing strength in mutual support, through provision of training and group study material; continuing primary focus on education and training on the ‘frontline’ agenda with home churches and church leaders.
- FE –primarily evangelistic focus around making disciples, producing material to be distributed through LICC & TWUK; strong alignment with wide range of church denomination leadership.
- TWUK – encouraging/supporting the formations of workplace groups, facilitating those groups achieving recognition from

management, and working with management and directly themselves to transform the culture of the organisation; growing number and coverage of ambassadors.

This continuing collaboration will start with two specific areas of activity:

- FE will work with LICC to provide material for workplace groups through their existing programmes, with TWUK involvement.
- LICC will work with TWUK to channel material to workplace groups and individuals with TWUK's personal contact with groups through ambassadors being used to encourage groups in the use of this material.

The organisers will call on those who have expressed an interest to get more involved with this initiative in due course.

What happens next remains to be seen, as I'm not convinced there was a clear vision for the kingdom of God in the workplace. But another attendee at the event does have one, so read on.

CHRISM and the Kingdom at Work Project A personal appraisal

David Clark

Dear Friends.

Formerly as a Methodist presbyter and now as a Methodist Deacon (retired), I have been a member of CHRISM for longer than I can remember! In the 1980s, as convenor of the Methodist Sector Ministries Group, I explored with Michael Ranken whether we might amalgamate our two groups but, though that did not materialise, I have always had excellent relationships with many members of CHRISM. Thus what I write here is an attempt to express strong convictions in the context of considerable empathy with 'ministry in secular employment' (in Anglican terms) and with 'sector ministry' (in Methodist terms). I write this because I believe our particular expression of ordained ministry has for too long been stuck in

something of a cul-de-sac and is thus failing to realise what I see as its considerable potential.

David

The church's neglect of the world of work

Throughout the whole of my ministry the church, with a few notable but short-lived exceptions, has failed to address ministry and mission within the world of work in any clearly committed and effective way. As MSEs (and here I use that term to include those exercising this form of ministry in all denominations) we have for decades wrung our hands at this neglect. However, I believe that - together with many in chaplaincy who often feel the same - we have failed to realise that we may be as much part of the problem as of the answer. Let me try and explain.

The church's inability to engage effectively with the working world has a number of deep-seated causes which I can only touch on here. First and foremost, as I see it, is the problem that as the church in the UK we remain captive to a Christendom model shaped over many centuries by a largely rural, immobile and autocratic society, now well past its sell-by date¹. This captivity has many facets but includes the almost total domination of the parochial/gathered form of church, the suffocating influence of clericalism and a theology which has for long treated the gospel according to the kingdom as of secondary importance. All these factors have strangled our understanding and ham-strung our practice of mission within the (modern) world of work.

The primacy of lay ministry within the world of work

At the heart of the inability of a church moulded by Christendom to engage effectively with the working world is its myopia concerning the primacy of the ministry and mission of the laity therein. It beggars belief that when the massive majority of Christians involved in the world of work are lay people, many of us as MSEs or as chaplains pursue our ministries as if we were the only Christian 'presence' in the workplace that really counts. So John Breadon can speak of chaplaincy being 'par excellence the church in the world'² and Malcolm Torry claim that with the closing down of many

chaplains in the Diocese of London, 'the church was... left with no voice in (London's) economy and workplaces'. From this perspective, it follows that the answer to the church's neglect of the world of work must be, as Torry puts it, 'more workplace chaplains' ³ and, by inference, more MSEs. I believe that nothing could be more misguided.

Clericalism of this kind, implicit if not explicit, has dogged the ministry of MSEs and chaplains for many decades. I would contend that one consequence of the side-lining of the ministry of lay people in the workplace has led many of us as MSEs, as well as many chaplains (I shall from hereon put the role of chaplains to one side), to experience a long-term identity crisis. Thus in reflections on the research undertaken by Teresa Morgan on self-supporting ministries⁴ (unless things have changed very recently) most of the emphasis seems to be on how MSEs can become a resource to the leadership of the gathered church - how they can be an informed and effective resource to lay people dispersed in the world of work is barely mentioned. I have little doubt that such views are one of the reasons why over, recent decades, interest in the role of MSEs has decreased, the membership of CHRISM has become more nominal and attendance at its annual conference steadily declined.

Where do we go from here?

I believe that if MSEs (and Teresa Morgan states that there could be nearly 400 within the Church of England alone, whatever their formal designation) are to make their real contribution to the mission of the church, a Copernican revolution will be required in the thinking of the church as a whole, of us as MSEs and of CHRISM too. What might give impetus to such a revolution?

First, there needs to be a return to the centrality of a kingdom theology in order to begin to break the mould of Christendom. The church and its ordained ministry need to be seen as servants of that kingdom. The early years of ministry in secular employment saw some commendable attempts to wrestle with the priority of a kingdom theology, led by such thinkers as Peter Baelz, William Jacob,

John Fuller and Patrick Vaughan⁵. However, they acknowledged that they struggled to produce a theology of the kingdom which could offer MSEs a working model to help shape their ministries. Unfortunately, with a few notable exceptions⁶, the quest for an adequate theology of the kingdom to inform and guide the role of MSEs has since then gone off the boil leaving all ministries within a Christendom church, with their inherent clericalism, still dominant.

Second, any theology of the kingdom must be cashed out in ways which put lay people at the forefront of mission. It is lay people above all who are the church's eyes and ears, hands and feet within the world of work. The mission statement of CHRISM reads 'To help ourselves *and others* (my italics) to celebrate the presence of God and the holiness of life in our work, and to see and tell the Christian story there'. However, the phrase *and others* does not seem to have received a great deal of attention by MSEs over the years. The reality is that no cohort of MSEs, however large, can replace the witness of lay people in the workplace. At present lay ministry in that context lacks affirmation and nurture through the life and worship of the gathered church. Thus many lay people are ill-equipped, through no fault of their own, for mission in a context which frequently negates Christian values and is normatively hostile to Christian language⁷ and symbols.

Thirdly, and following on directly from all this, there is an urgent need for 'mentors', with the relevant knowledge and experience to support, encourage and equip lay people for mission within the workplace. At present no such role exists within the life of any denomination and no one is being trained in our theological colleges or through in-service courses to undertake it. Who better placed to fulfil this mentoring role than MSEs? Who is in a stronger position than any other form of ordained ministry, including chaplains, to undertake this vital animating, educational and enabling task? I am convinced that such a change of stance would give us as MSEs a far deeper sense of collective identity and enable even a Christendom church to appreciate much more fully the importance of our role.

The Kingdom at Work Project

Over the past three years I have been seeking to hammer out a project which takes all that I have written above on board. It is an attempt to meet head on our apathy towards and neglect of the ministry of lay people in the world of work. The project offers a model of Christian engagement with the workplace through what I term an 'audit and action' process. The 'audit' offers tools - through critical incidents and signs - for discerning the hall-marks of the kingdom in the workplace. The 'action' aspect suggests a range of interventions that Christians might take to respond to how fully or inadequately the signs of the kingdom are present within their places of work. The audit and action process is underpinned by a communal theology and spirituality of the kingdom, economic principles derived from the latter and institutional structures, ecclesiological and secular, based on a kingdom perspective.

The final part of the project deals with the task of equipping lay people for an audit and action approach to mission, the training of mentors (and the part that MSEs and chaplains might play in this) and practical ways in which the gathered church can be involved in supporting its lay people at work. The project could be of use not only to individual Christians at work but to bodies, such as church schools and other Christian (or indeed, secular) agencies, wanting to identify what might be the hall-marks of the kingdom embodied within their organisation, and respond accordingly.

The project is not meant to be a blue-print for mission in the workplace. It is offered as one potential tool to address our failure to give adequate attention to this vital sphere of ministry and, because there is no quick fix, will inevitably remain a work in progress. We are now looking for those who would themselves and/or enable others to test out the usefulness of the audit and action process offered and to let us have their comments. A short leaflet describing the project, a Handbook containing the more practical aspects of the project and full draft of the project are available to CHRISM members [*the leaflet will be on the CHRISM website by the time this edition goes out. Ed*].

At present we are not going fully public concerning the project as negotiations for publishing the material are pending. If you are interested to learn more about the project please contact me on 01629 810172 or at david@clark58.eclipse.co.uk.

¹ See: Clark, D (2005) *Breaking the Mould of Christendom: Kingdom community, diaconal church and the liberation of the laity*. Peterborough: Epworth

² Breadon, J. 'Reflections on Chaplaincy in Further Education' in *Epworth Review* (2010), p.21

³ Torry, M. (2010) *Bridgebuilders - Workplace Chaplaincy - a History*. Norwich: Canterbury Press, pps. 165 and 185

⁴ Morgan, T. in the *Church Times* (1/4/11; 8/4/11; 1/2/13). London: Church Times

⁵ Baelz, P. and Jacob, W. (eds.) (1985) *Ministers of the Kingdom. Exploration in Non-Stipendiary Ministry*. London: CIO Publishing, and Fuller, J. and Vaughan, P. (eds.) (1986) *Working for the Kingdom. The Story of Ministers in Secular Employment*. London: SPCK

⁶ For example: *Ministers-at-Work: Theology Resource Book* (1999) CHRISM, and *Reflections on Ministry in Secular Employment* (2010) (second edition - first published 2000). Diocese of Coventry: Coventry MSE Group

⁷ One of the most insightful papers in this connection is: Whipp, M. J. (2008) *Speaking of Faith at Work: towards a Trinitarian hermeneutic*. (Unpublished Ph. D. thesis). Glasgow: University of Glasgow

Resources

Joined up living – about my real life

Are you still looking for something to do for Lent 2014? Well, here is a Lent Course with a difference! Starting from the day-to-day events of life, it is designed for use by small groups during 5 sessions in Lent.

The course follows a pattern used by many of us in reflecting on our daily work (paid or unpaid), and consists of five sessions:

Week 1 What's happening for me?

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

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

Week 4 What about God in our work situations?

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

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

- Good to look closely at situations and see what is really going on - bringing out the positive and finding God in that situation.
- It really changed the way I look at things.
- The sessions have given me the courage to carry on.
- The starting point for the course was grounded in our own experience - in everyday life outside the church.
- Somebody was concerned about where I spend 60% of my waking life i.e. at/doing paid work and saw it as an opportunity for ministry to both me and the people I work with.

- Small group, helpful workbook, supportive and listening 'co-workers' - an opportunity to share my real issues.
- Fellowship with others in the course was good - the discussions, the atmosphere and the leadership.

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

We offer it for use in Parishes and workplaces, to enable those who take part to:

- learn more of what they each do in their day to day work
- understand and support each other in their daily work
- articulate more fully the connections with their faith
- understand how the Gospel relates to what they do day by day
- appreciate how their work may truly be their ministry

For more information, please contact Phil Aspinall (details inside back cover).

Local Christian groups

Business Matters (an Edinburgh charity that organises lunchtime get-togethers for working Christians from around the city):

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

If you're in London: <http://www.workingwithworkers.org.uk/> shows all the lunchtime talks that go on around the city

Bible study notes and other materials/resources

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

Leaflets/tracts for Christmas/Easter talks:

<http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au/outreach/evangelistic-resources>

Always a useful resource: <http://www.biblegateway.com/>

(for those who've not come across it, this website has pretty much every Bible translation you can think of)

Missionaries@work, (Bible study series looking at what it means to be a Christian at work): <http://www.coventgardentalks.co.uk/mw/>

Other

London Institute for Contemporary Christianity ("LICC")

encouragements to prayer:

<http://www.licc.org.uk/prayerworks/prayer-journeys/pray4life/>

A great source for answers to 'tough' questions your friends/colleagues may have about the Christian faith:
<http://www.christchurchcentralsheffield.co.uk/toughquestions/>

US site with a great deal on being a minister in the workplace. Good if you aren't put off by the transatlanticisms.

<http://www.marketplace-ministers.com/>

With-intent is the website run by Hugh Valentine about MSE. It has many resources, and profiles of MSEs in different work, such as:

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

SSM in the Thames valley

The Diocese of Oxford published a guide to encourage SSM ministry earlier this year, and it can be downloaded at:

<http://www.oxford.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/final-version.pdf>

Most of the 24 pages are taken up with stories, including from Teresa Morgan. Attractive, easy to read, lots of photos, and a great resource!

SSM in Southwark

Also published earlier this year was the outcome of a survey by the Diocese of Southwark into how its NSMs are deployed. The full report (8 pages) can be downloaded at

http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Research_Conult/Southwark_NSM_Survey_Report_5.13.pdf

The headlines can be summarised as:

- there are 185 non-stipendiary ministers licensed in the diocese;
- numbers of vocations to NSM have fallen significantly in recent years;
- pressure on finances means 30 stipendiary posts will have to go, so the diocese wants to make greater use of NSMs in parish ministry [*sounds familiar! Ed*];
- 64% of NSMs replied to a questionnaire, and a third of these were in full time secular employment;

- of these the great majority said they had a ministry in the workplace and that it was important;
- support for this ministry from diocese and parish was reported as generally not strong;
- the diocese has set up a focus group.

Theos Think Tank - <http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/> -

is a think tank which believes you can't understand the modern world without understanding religion. "We seek to inform the debate about the place of religion in society, challenging ill-informed thinking through our research, events and media comment." Lots of relevant comments on current affairs, articles and resources. Well worth a visit.

Journal matters

Rob Fox

In this my second stint as Editor, I'm enormously grateful to Mike Rayner for continuing as 'Distribution Manager', and to his willing team of helpers, Christiana and Giles Payne who, respectively, folded the flyers and stuck the label on the envelopes for the last mail-out.

It really is a relief that once I've sent the files for each edition to Mike, I know it will be printed, packaged and despatched efficiently.

Mike has also emailed a **request**. He writes, "I have been reading Bonhoeffer's *Letters from Prison* recently and am struck by their relevance to MSE. I am sure someone has made this connection before and was wondering whether any of you know of an MSE who has written about Bonhoeffer?" If you can help, please get in touch with Mike or me.

Finance matters

Rob Fox

This has been an unusually expensive year for CHRISM, not least with us hosting the annual gathering of European Worker priests. However thanks largely to the generosity of a number of donors helping to cover these costs, we should just about break even over

the year. With this in mind the AGM, confirmed at the subsequent Committee meeting, has held the level of subscriptions for 2014.

This is though based on our finances improving through two measures.

The enclosed flyer sets the rates out, but as a reminder they are:

- standard rate - £35;
- for those who don't pay Income Tax - £15;
- for students, including in ministry training - £15.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please complete the enclosed **Gift Aid** declaration – even if you think you may have completed one before. It enables us to reclaim tax on your subscription, an extra 25%.

It also helps us if you can pay by **standing order**, so please complete the enclosed mandate form – even if you've completed one in the past. Quite a number of members are still paying at old, lower, rates, so a new mandate will make sure the correct amount comes to CHRISM.

I've also set up CHRISM to receive donations through **Easyfundraising**, which is a really good way for charities and voluntary bodies to receive a donation that costs you nothing when you shop on line. The retailer you buy from makes the donation!

Full details of how it works are at:

<http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/how-it-works/>

In summary:

- Go to easyfundraising.org.uk.
- Create an account for yourself.
- Select 'CHRISM' as your 'good cause'.
- When you shop on line, go to easyfundraising.org.uk, enter the retailer / business you want to buy from or browse in the 'search' box, and hit 'enter'.
- This takes you to the website you've selected and, when you buy through it, the supplier will automatically send CHRISM a

donation. (I've seldom found a UK supplier I wanted to buy from that isn't available through easyfundraising).

- This is usually a percentage of the purchase price, for example 2.5%. So if you buy an item for £10, CHRISM gets 25p. This may not sound much, but if you spent £500 on line during the year, CHRISM would receive £12.50. And if you book your holiday on line – don't forget to do it this way!

Diary

Monday, 28 October

Annual Lecture and AGM (the 135th!) of the Industrial Christian Fellowship, at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London. The speaker is Revd Dr Simon Woodman, on ***Bringing down the Empire: the Book of Revelation, Politics and Economics***. More details at www.icf-inline.org.

Saturday, 2 November

One day seminar by Faith in Business to discuss themes from Richard Higginson's book, ***Faith, Hope & the Global Economy***. At Ridley Hall, Cambridge; £65 (including lunch and a copy of the book). Booking details at www.ridley.cam.ac.

Thursday, 7 November

The annual ***Hugh Kay Lecture***, organised by CABE, at 20.30, to be delivered by Clive Mather, Chairman of TEAR Fund, and formerly Chairman of Shell. Full details at: www.cabe-online.org/events.php.

Wednesday, 13 November

Quaker Business Conference at Friends Meeting House, 173-177 Euston Road, London, on the new Quaker Bank. This is the first public discussion of the new venture and invitation to others to help refine the business plan. Cost: £30, including lunch. Booking details are at <http://qandb.org>.

Monday, 25 November

London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC), ***Sharing your Faith at Work: Embarrassing, Inappropriate and Unprofessional?*** A special event for 18-30s, 18.30 to 21.00, at LICC, St. Peter's, Vere Street, London. Cost: £7 (or £12 for two, including a light supper). To book ring 0207 399 9555.

28 February – 2 March, 2014 - CHRISM Reflective weekend.

Compassion – the heart of workplace ministry

Come and join us for a weekend of reflection, good food and good company at Holland House, Cropthorne, Worcestershire.

Revd Dr Margaret Whipp will be leading us in various approaches to compassion and looking at both the Christian and Buddhist approaches.

As usual there will be time for silence and also free time on Saturday to walk, chat or sleep! We have also arranged access from Friday after lunch for those who like to arrive earlier and relax for a little longer, though our programme will start with dinner on Friday, as usual, and finish with lunch on Sunday.

Holland House is set on the south bank of the river Avon and is a familiar venue to CHRISM members. Details can be seen at <http://www.hollandhouse.org/index.html>. The nearest railway station is at Evesham, about 4 miles east, and Cropthorne is just off the B4084, with good road links to the M40 and M5. If you are coming by public transport, please let Sue know and we will see if we can arrange a lift for you, at least from Evesham

The weekend costs £165 for member and spouses (£175 for non-members). A few double rooms are available, so spouses are most welcome. (Your church may be able to make a grant towards this cost).

We look forward to being with you then – book early to reserve your place (flyer and booking form enclosed). Contact Sue Cossey, 1 Bye Mead, Emerson's Green, Bristol, BS16 7DL Tel: 0117 957 4267 if you want any more details. Email: sue.cossey@yahoo.co.uk.

Hold the dates – 18-20 July, 2014 ...

.. is the provisional slot for the **2014 CHRISM Conference** – subject to confirmation we can use our preferred venue.

(Almost) finally – a cat goes to heaven

A cat dies and goes to Heaven. God meets it at the gate and says, 'you have been a good cat all of these years. Anything you desire is yours; all you have to do is ask.' The cat replies, 'Well, I lived all my life with a poor family on a farm and had to sleep outside.' God says, 'Say no more.' And instantly, a fluffy pillow appears. The cat quickly curls up on it and purrs to sleep.

A few days later, 6 mice are killed in a tragic accident and they too go to Heaven. God meets them at the gate with the same offer that he made the cat. The mice replied, 'All our lives we've had to run. Cats, dogs and even women with brooms have chased us. If we could only have a pair of roller skates, we wouldn't have to run anymore.' God says, 'Say no more.' And instantly, each mouse is fitted with a beautiful pair of tiny roller skates.

About a week later, God decides to check and see how the cat is doing. The cat is sound asleep on his new pillow. God gently wakes it and asks, 'How are you doing? Are you happy here?' The cat yawns and stretches and says, 'Oh, I've never been happier in my life. And those Meals on Wheels you've been sending over are the best!'

Discussion Forum for Ministry in Secular Employment

Are you connected to **LinkedIn**? You might already have discovered the **CHRISM Group** which has been set up as a forum for discussion of issues relevant to MSE.

Maybe the digital on-line world is not your preferred way of working, but for many people this is an important way of communicating and networking. And the point was well made at the September AGM, in Wendy White's Moderator's report, that "we need to explore, perhaps using contemporary media, additional and alternative modes of support".

The LinkedIn group is a first step - please join! And do give us your feedback on whether or not you think this is a useful site to have to stimulate discussion of MSE and to promote CHRISM.

You can find the CHRISM Group directly at:

<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?viewMembers=&gid=3756477&sik=1381052706530>

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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