

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.*

Contents	Page
<i>Editorial</i>	2
<i>Happy 21st birthday CHRISM!</i>	4
<i>In the beginning</i> <i>Michael Ranken (pun intended!)</i>	4
<i>CHRISM comes of age</i> <i>Stan Frost</i>	5
<i>Cupbearing</i> <i>Michael Powell</i>	8
<i>How CHRISM saved my life</i> <i>Sue Cossey</i>	9
<i>My first encounter with CHRISM</i> <i>Prue Dufour</i>	9
<i>They said I was mad ..</i> <i>Ruth Brothwell</i>	11
<i>What CHRISM has done for me</i> <i>Phil Aspinall</i>	12
<i>To be a farmer's boy</i> <i>Conversations with Jim Cummins</i>	13
<i>To change the world</i> <i>Dorrie Johnson</i>	15
<i>When is an MSE not an MSE?</i> <i>Wendy White</i>	17
<i>A question of balance</i> <i>Louisa Fox</i>	19
<i>2014 European Worker Priests – a reflection</i> <i>Sue Cossey</i>	21
<i>International Conference of European Worker Priests</i> <i>Phil Aspinall</i>	23
<i>Another anniversary</i> <i>Rob Fox</i>	24
<i>Resources</i>	29
<i>Events</i>	
<i>CHRISM Conference</i>	31
<i>CABE autumn events</i>	33
<i>The future of the Church of England</i>	33
<i>William Temple Foundation</i>	34
<i>Educating for Mission in the World of Work</i>	35

<i>2014 CHRISM Reflective weekend</i>	36
<i>CHRISM AGM notice</i>	36
<i>And finally ...</i>	38

Editorial

Rob Fox

Back in the summer of 1993, as a fresh-faced MSE, I joined what turned out to be a varied and interesting bunch of more experienced MSEs at a conference in Salford that formally established CHRISM. Many of those 'old originals' are still with us and it has been heartening to hear from some over the past few weeks, including veteran MSEs Jim Cummins and Douglas Banyard.

This edition is therefore a celebration of CHRISM's 'coming of age' and includes a number of reflections from MSEs old and more recent, plus a couple from the archives, including one by Michael Ranken. Given his key role in helping establish the identity and role of MSE, and in starting this journal back in 1982, this edition could not fail to include his distinctive voice!

Another distinctive and always challenging voice is that of Dorrie Johnson, from whom I took over as editor of the journal back in 2000. Dorrie has contributed a typically thought-provoking article on our role as MSEs, and I think she's right: we can change the world, a bit a time, but we can do it. Thank you, Dorrie, and long may your pen prod us.

Coming to the end of her three-stint as Moderator, Wendy White has recently moved from Bolton down to Southampton, now working as Co-ordinator of a Cancer Care Centre. Wendy too has contributed a thoughtful article reflecting on the scope of MSE. A good read indeed.

I have long thought that CHRISM should tap into a constituency in which many – if not most – share our experience of being authorised ministers but spending most of the time in the workplace. I'm thinking of Readers, in Anglican terms, and similar ministries in other churches. Readers have their own national officers, support network and magazine, and have a distinct identity fully supported by the

CofE, yet many of the issues they face are common to MSEs. Many Readers *are* MSEs. As it happens I am married to a Reader in training, so I prevailed upon her – with many bribes and much flattery – to contribute a reflection on training whilst working, and the interaction between the two. Much will be familiar!

At our last Committee meeting, Sue Cossey and Phil Aspinall reported on the annual conference of European Worker Priests, this year held near Turin. It made for a thoroughly entertaining meeting, which is reflected in their respective contributions to this edition. One feature of these conferences seems to be the consumption of copious quantities of wine; it certainly helps the multi-lingual conversations, and we experienced last year in London.

It will not have escaped our attention that another anniversary features prominently in our international consciousness: 100 years since the outbreak of World War One. I make no apology for including a reflection of my own on the events of June to August, 1914, and subsequently. The trauma of the ensuing years forms a key part of our national myth, what we understand about ourselves as a nation. Much of it is based on sound understanding, but some is imbalanced, and some downright wrong. I hope this short piece goes some way to explaining why. No doubt many of us will be asked to take part in commemorative events over the next four years; let's make sure that what we remember together is based on an informed understanding. I am of course open to challenge, so if you think I've got it wrong, do say so.

There is still time to book your place at this year's CHRISM Conference, re-visiting Luther King House, Manchester, familiar to many. Full details are later in this edition. If you can only come for part of the time, you are still welcome – Margaret Joachim will happily give you a price for the part you can make.

I'm also looking forward to our most northerly yet Reflective weekend, at Shepherd's Dene, Riding Mill, Northumberland, 20-22 February. It is a lovely part of the country and more accessible than you might think. Full details will be in the October journal, but if you'd like to say 'I'm coming!', do let me know.

Happy 21st birthday CHRISM!

21 years ago this month, the CHRISM was constituted at a Conference held in a hall of Salford University. Some of those there are still involved! Much of this edition of the journal is dedicated to celebrating that event and the achievements since.

The charity sitting behind CHRISM, Christians in Secular Employment Trust, was set up following the first national conference to discuss the role of the still relatively new Non-Stipendiary Ministry in 1984 at Nottingham University, so we are also celebrating 30 years since that landmark.

It seems only fitting to give the first word to one of the founding fathers, Michael Ranken, who started what was to become this journal as long ago as 1982. This was his explanation of the origins, from the 20th anniversary edition, July, 2002.

In the beginning

Michael Ranken

In my round robin of Michaelmas 1981, sent to as many NSM's as I had addresses for, suggesting that a Newsletter among ourselves might be a good thing, I quoted Gamaliel:

"If this idea or its execution are of human origin it will collapse, but if it is from God you will never be able to put it down."

Well, it started immediately after and it hasn't collapsed yet, though it has changed in a number of ways.

At first there was the simple paper newsletter which I edited and published for seven years with no shortage of either copy or funds, and which then was taken forward by others. Now it is a substantial and much better looking Journal. The constituency has moved, from predominantly parish-based NSMs to the smaller group within them

who see our ministry predominantly as MSEs. And with that change I believe there has come also a greater theological and intellectual seriousness (though no loss of fun) in the content.

Those changes, mostly after my time, are all in the direction I had hoped for in the beginning. Long may the whole enterprise continue, and continue to develop.

Maybe we should be patient still in supposing that it truly is from God" and will not collapse - after all, it was some 40 or 50 years, so they say, 'til the Gospel writers felt confident enough to put their understanding of the activities of God in ordinary human life, into writing.

CHRISM comes of age!

Stan Frost

21 years on - after an inaugural meeting at Salford University - at the time I was a warden in one of the 3 Halls of Residence. Since then there have been major changes and the buildings we visited are no more - replaced with modern housing which have taken the view shared by hundreds of students who had lived in the Halls of Residence.

So, in 21 years there have been major changes on the ground where CHRISM was inaugurated - and enormous changes in the society which CHRISM members serve. These have influenced the church, particularly through the ordination of women and the movement to appoint women bishops. 21 years ago we could not imagine that same sex marriages and civil partnerships could be possible - or how the internet would have developed to enable emailing and provide instant information on whatever subject! In those days, well before UKIP, there was no texting and how could we have imagined 'smart phones' and iPads, which you can carry in your pocket and which do so much. Twitter, Face book and social media had not yet entered the vocabulary and there was no way we could have anticipated the changes in communication which we are now offered.

The New York happening of 9/11 has transformed the political landscape and the 'War on Terror' has taken us into Iraq and Afghanistan leaving us with issues that will probably need addressing over the next 20 years.

The past 20 years have also provided opportunity to learn from new theological authors who have addressed the scriptures from new perspectives. In 1992 we were just 30 years after John Robinson published 'Honest to God', and subsequently we had access to publications by Jack Spong, who encourages us to have radical perspectives on what we have received in the Bible. Such influences have helped us develop our ministries and currently we can benefit from the insights of Martin Percy, who defines implicit theology in the context of everyday experiences - inside and outside the church. All helpful in enabling us to relate to those we meet during our work based ministry and in whatever it becomes after we retire.

The most significant thing though, despite varied influences, is that CHRISM is still here and thriving through the enthusiasm and commitment of a core team of MSEs. Some of the names are the same as were there at the beginning, though - 21 years on - there have been inevitable changes in personalities and the energy levels shared by the group. However, the infectious enthusiasm expressed in the 1990s continues to inspire others who have joined over the years and who participate as members of the committee, discussing and formulating plans for the future. The thinking, involvement and commitment have collectively brought the organisation to a level of maturity which makes it a credible enabling body to which members are proud to belong.

The Newsletter, which was first produced well before 1993 by Michael Ranken and addressed to 'Ministers at work and others concerned' has evolved into a reputable professionally produced Journal - 'Ministers at Work - for Christians in secular ministry'. Thanks to erudite editorial skill and committed support it continues to provide not only notices of what is happening in the world of ministry at work in Britain and elsewhere but gives considered reports on the excellent conferences and weekend retreats that CHRISM has consistently arranged throughout the years. The Journal is a flagship which attracts an increasing range of contributors and finds

its way onto the desks of church officers across the dioceses alerting those who choose to read it, to the significance of MSE both to the Church and the world of work.

The 1993 AGM happened during a conference entitled 'Danger! God at Work.' The key speaker was John Moses, who was the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in 1992. He referred to his book 'The Sacrifice of God: A holistic theory of Atonement' (1992). (What follows is a paraphrase of notes prepared by Rob Fox after the conference).

The book identifies 4 principles which need to be at the heart of Christian Theology:

- Interdependence of all things.
- Necessity and Chance.
- Recurring life-death-life.
- The promise of new life.

These separate principles were discussed by workshop groups, which concluded on each principle:

1. This is a broadly political concept which challenges us to be alongside those for whom interdependence is a weakness.
2. Is God in control - or not? Christ made himself vulnerable and subject to chance, showing both powerlessness and power. He has been where we are.
3. A cycle of positive and negative changes - hope, despair and new hope.
4. The basis of Christian hope - something to look forward to, someone/something to love - declare what God has done and work for the realisation of God's Kingdom.

The principles are a set of tools to help us recognise the relationship between our faith and the world in which we live and work – a starting point for sharing the Gospel - tools to enable MSEs to understand and work within our ministries.

So, with this 21 year old advice, we go forwards building upon our collective CHRISM experience and hopefully devising innovative plans and activities for the future.

May God be with us as we enter the next Epoch with confidence to face its challenges and its opportunities.

Cupbearing

Michael Powell

Although I have been retired for a while now, my CHRISM/MSE antennae still work!

Yesterday I was in the Essex Record Office thumbing through the early 1800's diary of a man whose 'hobby' was making notes of sermons he had heard in Great Dunmow Congregational Church and occasionally at City of London chapels.

On October 23rd 1808, he recorded, 'Nehemiah 1:11 O Lord, I beseech thee hear the prayers of thy servants who desire to fear thy name.' Although not recorded by the diarist, the verse continues, 'For I [Nehemiah] was the king's cupbearer'.

The diarist records the preacher as having said, 'We observe in the text first that in all the walks of human life God has his servants. This should teach us not to condemn bodies and professions of others indiscriminately. It teaches us, too, the power of divine grace which can accommodate itself to all the exigencies of the people of God and secure them in circumstances of the greatest danger...'

Further down the page the record continues, 'The profits we derive from a necessary connection with the world of business should in part be carried out for the cause of God again our connections with others in business should lead us when an opportunity occurs to converse with them upon the things of the soul'.

Making allowances for the theology of those times, I say 'yes' to this unknown duo of preacher and diarist. In CHRISM we are in the workplaces of all cupbearers, understanding their organisations and professions, and facing the same dangers and dilemmas. As insiders, we encourage business people who can afford to fund voluntary causes to do so generously, and we respect everyone, king or cupbearer, boss or worker, because each has a dimension that we can still call 'soul'.

CHRISM may have reached 21 but the underlying ideas are much older- certainly a couple of centuries, perhaps even a couple of millennia!

How CHRISM saved my life ...

Sue Cossey

16 years ago, I moved to Bristol for work. I started at a new church, and gradually got more involved. Eventually, I was persuaded to lead worship for the first time, after our secretary said she could not find anyone else on a particular day. One thing led to another and a year later I'd started a course of study for lay preaching. It was during a course weekend that the director of the course was describing how he'd felt called to being a minister in the world of work that I heard the same calling.

Time passed, I was approved for training, and started at STETS, trying to explain on various occasions how I felt called to workplace ministry rather than church.

At our Easter School, Phil Aspinall from CHRISM came along to talk about workplace ministry, and I discovered I was not the only one – there were other people out there with similar callings, and even an organisation. I joined up straightaway!

A few years further on and I eventually attended a CHRISM event, and discovered the joy of fellowship with others who saw the world of work as important to God and his disciples.

CHRISM has been a literal godsend in my struggles to find a way of expressing my ministry and in organising reflective weekends and conferences where we can explore God's calling and share fellowship.

My first encounter with CHRISM

Prue Dufour

This article first appeared in the April 2001 edition of the journal. Prue's experience is one we can echo. (Sadly Prue, who was a

leading figure in establishing the hospice movement, is no longer with us; this is a small reminder of her).

The Holy Spirit said to them, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Acts 13.2

My background is nursing and for over 25 years I have been involved in the delivery and development of hospice care in this country and overseas. I was ordained deacon last Michaelmas and my ministry is amongst those who care for the dying as the Director of St Columba's Fellowship. It was a source of wonder to me that the Lord should lead me to seek ordination, but His call, specific in its context, has been unmistakable to myself and others for many years now.

It presented a challenge, but there was nothing ambiguous about it. I saw it in terms of the verse quoted above. Only gradually did I recognise that a MSE vocation is not understood by the majority of the Church. When I declined to be categorised as pursuing a sector ministry such as chaplaincy based at a hospice (not an option anyway until one has *served a title* in Anglican terms), a NSM retaining a secular job whilst offering restricted hours to the parish nor an OLM involved in local parochial ministry, then I was largely dismissed as 'difficult'.

The first lifeline was a CHRISM leaflet that appeared on a Course evening through which I discovered I was not alone. Others believed they were called to be a priest in their workplace – not as a means to be self-supporting, but as the actual place of their ministry. I was linked with a member who could help and guide me in drafting the Working Agreement with my future parish and received much personal support and encouragement. I resolved to attend the CHRISM Reflective Weekend to be held in February at Holland House, Pershore, Worcs.

On arrival I was welcomed warmly. As conversations developed I shared the experience of the ugly duckling who found he was a swan! As the sessions progressed the concept of a MSE vocation clarified and I knew I had not made a mistake. We began by acknowledging the insecurities of working life and the precariousness

of our position on the edges of church life. 'Living on the Edges' was the theme given to the Weekend. We divided into small groups to design a self-learning training pack suitable for introducing MSE to Anglican bishops and other church leaders. This encouraged focused sharing and we set about each task in the business-like style of the secular workplace, forming a close-knit team. The vision grew...

The programme was punctuated by worship that reflected the sessions, by delicious and plentiful feasting and fellowship in the comfortable hospitality of Holland House, by opportunity to relax and re-charge. We placed a symbol of our work before the altar in the chapel at a time of offering ourselves afresh to God and, before we parted, we each committed ourselves to another's shared prayer request over the next 12 months. I will always be grateful for this timely support and resolved to make CHRISM better known, especially amongst those training for ordained ministry.

They said I was mad, but, with CHRISM's help ..

Ruth Brothwell

A call to ministry had been going on in my life since childhood. So, following all the meetings and discussions with vocational advisors and the DDO I found myself at a Bishops Appraisal Panel (BAP). I was therefore thrown into a total devastated confusion when the call came to say that I had not been successful. "Go and see Margaret", they said to me. (Thank God for Margaret!). So, a supper in Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese in Fleet Street was followed by an invitation to join a Chrism reflective weekend. I have adored them ever since.

So I arrived ... but wait a minute! What is this I hear? Conversation! But these people are talking about the same things I have been thinking for years. What is being talked about is exactly what I have been trying to say. Could it be that I am not alone? That I am not the only Christian in the world to think this way?

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gifts. Gifts of the love and care of God to a world of people who do not come to church each Sunday. For the people I meet each day: across the conference table, on the 'plane, in the pubs and coffee shops. For the people

whose needs are so evident but who cannot find their way through. CHRISM folk know this too, and the experiences are shared by so many!

With the support of so many individual members - just knowing the group is there to hand with their support, urging, convincing and love I found the words which expressed my calling. With a deep breath, I put myself forward once again. BAP round 2. People said I was mad to put myself through it all again but this time I knew my calling, like so many others, was as an MSE. The selectors agreed and I was recommended for training.

The journey has not been easy and continues to challenge. As a priest I find myself in all sorts of situations and conversations. Each CHRISM reflective weekend is an oasis, each conference an opportunity to share and to think and experience how others see and do things as priests in the world. CHRISM has kept me sane and inspired my ministry. Thank you.

What CHRISM has done for me

Phil Aspinall

My first visit to a CHRISM reflective weekend was a significant moment in my life and ministry which has remained with me ever since (although in those days, it was before we became CHRISM).

It was early 1991 and the reflective weekend was being held at The Abbey in Sutton Courtney. I recall Nicholas von Benzon coordinating it, but the speaker and Leader was Bishop Stephen Verney, who led us gently through the theme of the weekend. I had been invited to attend, I think, by one of my contacts in Coventry, Felicity Smith or Dorrie Johnson, although I had first met Michael Ranken a couple of years earlier with David Clark in Birmingham.

I had recently been ordained an Anglican priest and found that with other MSEs you didn't have to keep explaining why you do what you do.

As well as the many opportunities and challenges of developing event and conference organising skills, the other significant thing

that CHRISM has done for me is to open me to the range and diversity of forms of Ministry on the boundaries and outside the walls of church buildings. This is certainly true of the many people I have met in the UK who continue in the certain belief that doing their work is their ministry. But CHRISM has also introduced me to the rich spectrum of international contacts from the Worker Priests of Europe, the working brothers and sisters of Germany, the MSEs of the Old Catholic Church of Germany, and the Presbyterian Tentmakers and Episcopalian MSEs in the USA.

As Phil says, CHRISM international links ...

.. have always been highly valued. We learn much from our colleagues across the world. Bill Dodge recently emailed me 3 photographs of CHRISM folk at past Tentmaker conferences in the USA. Readers will have no difficulty in identifying Phil holding forth in 1995!



'To be a farmer's boy ...'

Conversations between the Editor and Jim Cummins, about as veteran MSE as one can get!

Ordained in 1959, Jim is about as veteran as MSEs come. His story is an inspiration.

After 3 years in Stafford, Jim moved to Norwich diocese, where the Bishop, Lancelot Fleming was looking at new ways of ministering to the scattered congregations in the least densely populated diocese in England. Aply backed by his suffragans, Fleming tackled the problems he faced with resolution and imagination, developing rural group ministries and again attracting good clergy, one of whom was Jim.

Fleming also realised that the diocese could learn from the experience of the Mission de France, and Jim was one of a group despatched to Pontigny to come back with good ideas. It was there that hem met Marc Laurent, who became a lifelong friend to Jim and CHRISM, visiting almost annually.

Fired by the vision of the Worker Priests, Jim started working on local farms during the summer months, a role greeted at first with some suspicion: what was this vicar up to? Better watch your language boys. Jim relates a tail of how he was at the top of an elevator passing hay to a worker who was sitting on the top of the stack they were building. Unexpectedly the vicar didn't drop any clangers and his work-mate noted, "You've done this before!" The result of a farm upbringing on the Shropshire – Wales border. He was accepted; first step to an effective Worker Priest ministry.

Jim subsequently moved out of conventional parish ministry, back to his boyhood home, running a small garage cum shop in the lovely village of Clun, an MSE ministry at the heart of the community.

He also met Michael Ranken and was one of those who set up the Christians in Secular Employment Trust (CHRISSET), following a national conference on Non-Stipendiary Ministry at Nottingham in 1984. His words of wisdom, wry humour and sense of perspective have been a regular and much appreciated feature of CHRISM weekends and articles in this journal ever since.

If you are ever near Knighton, in the Welsh borders, do drop in on Jim – his farm is just down the hill from Offa's Dyke. The kettle is always on.

To change the world

Dorrie Johnson

I have just become one of those exalted people who have had a letter published in the Guardian. I had responded to an article by Eben Morgan. He wished us to find technological solutions to end the mass espionage revealed by Edward Snowden. Snowden was concerned about use and misuse of power at a global level. My concern is at a more personal level. I said that, as a minister in secular employment for many years, I had seen the costs paid by whistle blowers - those who could not live with their consciences without speaking up against something they considered to be wrong.

I remember, at an MSE weekend years ago, a conversation with a prison officer who worried himself sick about conditions for the prisoners. I cannot remember the details but what I do remember vividly is the dilemma that man faced. He could continue to work as he did and know that injustice was perpetrated daily or speak up and risk losing his job, his house, his financial security and bringing all that worry and fear to his family. A surgeon we know was suspended for years because he spoke up for patient safety against management practice. These are just two of hundreds of ordinary people trying to put their faith (or no faith just humanitarian principles) into their work.

Other conversations concerned the practice of bribery, widespread in some countries. Do you go along with this unfair and sometimes dangerous practice when your employers expect it, or do you refuse - when the outcome for you is potentially devastating? This is far beyond the theft of paperclips or saying prayers before work - this is picking up the cross stuff - a real involvement with kingdom values. I have been retired for some years now but those principles continue to underpin what I do.

There were many weekends in those early days of MSE when we tried to hammer out what we really meant by the term MSE. How could we find a common denominator that served in any profession? Did that include voluntary work? Did it include home working? Did it include fulltime parenting? Maybe those questions continue, I don't know. What I do know is that we wanted people in those different occupations to try to work out what ministry meant in those situations. If we begin with the ideal of kingdom values being the hoped-for ethos what do *we* need to do to bring our neighbourhood, our working culture, our society, as close as possible to that paradigm? We have to be able to apply that precept, whatever it demands, across the spectrum from cleaner to executive, environmentalist to farmer, pharmaceutical company to funders of the NHS.

Of course we didn't succeed. No small group can change the world - especially one seen by many as a splinter group of the church (whatever the denomination) or an easy way (in the CofE, at least) of playing at vicars without the commitment or a jolly useful stand-in when the real minister wants a holiday. It remains a worthwhile hope and intent.

Aim: change the world

Objective: evaluate my bit of it and do what I can to change that.

If I apply my long held working principle - *what is the most loving thing I can do in this situation?* - then some of the dilemmas find, at least, some solution. Nothing is perfect, but it is as good as it can be - for now.

So I wrote two articles around this thinking, one in *Theology* and one in *Modern Believing* (what higher echelons are there?) What I hadn't expected was to write to the Guardian (once an MSE always an MSE?), or write this article - now I've really made it! - but thank you for the opportunity.

My heartfelt thanks and good wishes to all of you still practising as MsSE and, for us older people, as Dave Allen used to say, 'may your God go with you'.

When is an MSE not an MSE?

Wendy White

The title 'Minister in Secular Employment' implies employment – and what happens when that's not the case?

I've had a variety of jobs as over the past few years we have moved house across the country for my partner's work. Having moved from a fairly well-paid professional job the first time and enjoyed being part of a (more lowly paid), social enterprise for the past few years we have finally arrived at our last, and probably final, working destination. I was exploring working either in the third sector or, following the example of our European brothers and sisters, taking work beside those at the bottom of the employment heap.

Not so easy, as multiple job applications have shown, because first I have to get the job.

For starters there's the old chestnut of 'over-qualified' or, if I'm looking at the lower end of the qualifications/experience – scale do I ask my referees to fudge what I have been doing previously?

Secondly there comes the 'too-old', not in so many words, but from basic administration jobs, fetching and carrying jobs, even many sales jobs through to professional appointments it is made clear that either this is 'an apprenticeship' in approach if not in words, or they are clearly not interested in someone entering their last five(ish) years of employment. (I might lie but the lines on my face won't!)

In a time of high unemployment, even if we are told it's getting better, should I even be thinking of taking work that for some would be the only work they can do, to which they may be uniquely called?

And the third sector? The majority of the jobs are now about fund-raising, and being perfectly honest I don't know if I would have the patience or skill for that.

Finally I've cracked it. I'm about to start a job in the charity sector in a post where my experience counts but where the funding wouldn't allow for paying the current market-rate salary. And is that ethical?

However, as an employed person once again, it is important that I don't forget the black days when I had to struggle, and pray, not to accept the apparent judgement which came from application rejections and long silences.

And so, more questions:

I would be interested to know if the current economic climate across so much of the European world is limiting the work available for those within the worker-priest movement. How do we discover what we are uniquely called to in these times? If we are working at the lower end of the pay scale do we, possibly, jeopardise our work by challenging minimum wage in favour of living wage?

Should we (both as individuals and as the body of the church) involve ourselves more in using our gifts and experience to create work, build social enterprise, not simply promote the living wage but create living wage opportunities.

How do engage with those who are unemployed, currently caught up the system with its lack of care and dignity? I can't remember when I even heard prayers for the unemployed let alone practical help, other than food-banks.

And the invisible unemployed, often those with a working partner, which ensures they are, just, managing, but where loss of income, contact with colleagues, the ability to stand your round or entertain is lost – over a long period or for ever.

A few years ago I was approached by a member of a congregation who asked for prayer for her family as her son-in-law had been made redundant. There was a young family, and her parting words – 'but please don't tell anyone in church', haunt me. Do we still, even in

church, judge people, however subconsciously, by economic power? Do we profoundly ensure that people know they are loved and valued whatever their status?

There is a whole issue about honesty and re-envisioning our economic reality. Back in 2008 Rowan Williams called for us all to be less materialistic, to be less acquisitive. Around the same time shops started to close – remember the loss of Woolworths? Rosebys? Ethel Austin? People who knew I was in retail lamented their loss to me – but it hadn't occurred to them that if we truly followed 'acquiring less' then shops would close.

Back as a working MSE I feel even more strongly that we, who are deeply engaged in economic and workplace reality, need to call attention to, and bridge, that gap. Then the church ceases to be simply part of the band-aid brigade and begins to offer an alternative vision that restores hope and dignity in more than words. We should take seriously MSU (ministry in secular unemployment).

***A question of balance –
thoughts from a Reader in Training***

*Louisa Fox
(and yes, I am married to the Editor – edit my words if you dare)
(I did! But I'm not telling you! Ed.)*

Eighteen months ago I arranged to meet the Rector of my Parish. It was only afterwards that it struck me that though I knew why I had gone to see him I hadn't given him any warning. I had decided to explore the possibility of becoming a Lay Reader. Six months before my life had taken an unexpected turn when I decided to resign as a teacher and return to my former job of being an IT technician. The result being that I suddenly got my evenings and weekends back and I could consider something new!

My visit to the Rector was followed by an email to the Warden of Readers, two meetings with examining chaplains and finally a selection day. On that day I met 3 other candidates and I remember, later, on my first induction day, it feeling a bit like the

Apprentice - waiting to see who would walk through the door. All of us had to be selected which was good! Yet more induction followed as we were introduced to the delights of the course online system – Moodle, met others on the course and wondered what we had let ourselves in for!

We are training on the All Saints course, which trains ordinands and lay readers from all over the North West and beyond! (Manchester, Chester, Blackburn, Liverpool, Derby, Southall Dioceses, and the Isle of Man). Suddenly I found myself writing essays again and completing assignments. Life has moved on since I did my degree: assignments are now typed and submitted online! Sermons can be videoed!

I'm now at the end of my first year, having survived 6 assignments, 8 study days, 25 evening sessions, a 3 month placement in another Church, stopping being Churchwarden (without emigrating to New Zealand, as a former warden did), starting to lead services and learning to preach. I remember one memorable weekend when I was writing an Exegesis on Ezekiel whilst Rob emptied the Dining Room behind me as we were having it decorated the following week.

Rob asked me to say how training to be a Lay Reader has impacted on my job. In many ways it hasn't. I work in two Church Schools and although I have occasionally mentioned my course, I haven't made a great deal of it. Maybe I am too scared of being asked to lead assemblies. Being a Christian and an IT technician can sometimes be tough. There are a number of moral issues around software licensing. Just because we can legally get away with buying one license instead of 30 doesn't mean that it is morally right. As a former computer programmer, I appreciate how many hours go into producing even a simple computer program.

In other ways it has job. I have learnt that my learning style has changed: less reflective, more pragmatic. The course gives us tools to use, a method of reading a text – exegesis, a way of thinking theologically through a problem – theological reflection, and these tools can be adapted and be useful in work situations.

When I started my course, I was thinking in terms of leading non-Eucharistic services in my team parish. As I approach my second year I am starting to realise that Lay Reader Ministry can be so much more than just leading services on a Sunday Morning.

P.S. My evening sessions are at Luther King House. When you come to the Conference there I would recommend visiting the Library.

Rencontre internationale des Pretres Ouvriers 2014
La vague actuelle du mouvement migratoire *Sue Cossey*

After meeting with some of our European partners last year, when the annual European Worker Priest Pentecost conference was held in London, I was interested to go to the whole conference this year in Turin.

So, having booked the time off work, I then got cold feet about spending a whole weekend speaking and listening in French, and considered not going.

However, Phil Aspinall wouldn't let me back out, and I'm glad he made me overcome my trepidation.

We were met at the airport and taken to the chartreuse (convent) that is now a hotel in a beautiful setting partway up a mountain near the town of Avigliana. It's also the headquarters of Libera – a national organisation that works against the Mafia.

Our theme for the weekend was to look at the issues raised from the movement of people throughout time, and the papers prepared by each national contingent gave a brief history of migratory movements across Europe.

But the most striking images concentrated on the arrival of migrants from Africa into places like Lampedusa in Italy and also into Spain.

The faces of young men in a small boat as they approached Europe were striking – faces showing fear, apprehension, resignation and hope.

Most hope to work and to travel to other European countries, but the Dublin agreement leaves them tied to the place where they land, and they are not allowed to join friends or family in other European countries, leading to some being bounced back and forward.

The language of the conference being French, it took much concentration, especially as some needed translation back into native languages, but gradually I understood more. Other delegates helped with occasional translation and explanation.

On Saturday afternoon, there were three visits on offer – to the site of a new railway tunnel, subject to much opposition; to the former Fiat factory in Turin (as featured in *The Italian Job* and *Top Gear*); and to a centre for refugees.

I visited the Fiat factory – which as a reflection of our times is now a shopping centre and a posh hotel. Sadly we could not visit the famous race track on the roof. We were also given a brief history of Turin, from capital of Italy (I didn't know it had been) to industrial centre for Fiat and the growth from that, followed by decline in the Eighties. A former mayor described the efforts to move the city from dependence on one employer to achieve a more balanced economy, including hosting the Winter Olympics.

On Sunday, we met in small groups and exchanged experiences of dealing with immigrants and with refugees. The conference closed with the preparation of a paper setting out our desire for refugees to be treated with dignity.

Four impressions of the weekend I will retain for a long time:

- The drive from the airport to the hotel along a motorway and through hairpin bends up the mountain while Josef our host and Phil tried to converse in fairly limited French. Italian driving is very scary / exciting!
- The sound of 30 people speaking the Lord's prayer simultaneously in their own languages

- Sitting in a restaurant with views to Sacra di San Michele, surrounded by our Italian hosts singing the Chorus of the Hebrew slaves from Nabucco - a foretaste surely of heaven!
- The achievement of telling a humorous story in French to a Frenchman, who both understood and got the joke!

International Conference of European Worker Priests Pentecost 2014, Friday 6th – Monday 9th June

Phil Aspinall

The International Worker Priest conference was, as always, stimulating, challenging, inspiring, great fun – and very hard work. The location was splendid, the food magnificent and the participants were a joy to be with. As well as many of the usual delegates, it was great to meet many new, and younger, people. We were meeting at La Certosa, a former convent set in the hills above Avigliana just outside Turin.

The discussions were very rich and profound as we explored our theme of the Current Waves of Movements of Migration “We are Citizens of the World”. The papers prepared in advance by all the nations represented contained a vast amount of information on the histories of migrations and the current realities, although we barely touched these during the weekend itself. On Sunday morning I joined a workshop session on everyday racism and what we can do to combat it wherever we encounter it.

One thing that always fascinates me in these conferences in the process – getting some agreement out of the different ways of thinking of the different national groups, whether it is about deciding on the subjects for the workshop groups, or preparing a final statement for circulation outside the group. Then there were the mechanics of translation, principally between Italian and French (which got off to a rather shaky start but improved greatly), and the concentration needed when attempting to chair sessions.

The worship sessions were very moving, not least because of the many photos collected by the Italians and the Spaniards showing immigrants arriving on boats, huddled on beaches, surrounded by police – and of the dead bodies of those who did not make it. Another striking image offered to us in the Pentecost Eucharist was of Zacchaeus in his tree, looking down on Jesus and being told to come down - as we look down on the immigrant sat begging for food on the street. We also sang a lot – and prayed the Lord’s prayer in Aramaic.

On Saturday, I joined the visit to NoTAV - the protest movement in the Val de Sousa against the building of the proposed high speed rail link to connect Turin to Toulouse. We were taken to one of the several wooden huts built in villages along the valley, which had become the focus of the community action – strongly demonstrated by the number of people from the community, of all ages, who just keep arriving while we were there, as well as people who had had been asked to speak to us, activists and local politicians. What was made clear to us was that the grounds for the protest were the economic realities which made the line unviable and unnecessary.

The climax was dinner on the Sunday evening at the Cantina dei Canonici, a short but twisty drive further on up the mountain. What made it so good was not the magnificent views across the valley to the Sacra St Michaeli (another St Michael’s Mount), nor the amazing food made most from home-grown or local produce, nor the excellent wine and grappa – but meeting a young man who was taking a break from his work in the kitchen. He was from Senegal, where he had left family and friends, and had arrived in Italy on a boat at Lampedusa, and after two years working his way through Italy had now been at the Cantina for two years, working in the kitchen at night and tending the animals on the farm during the days – a tangible example of what we had been discussing all weekend.

Another anniversary ...

Rob Fox

It is a government's nightmare. Young men are radicalised, travel abroad, train with arms and explosives and return to bomb and assassinate. Cardiff and Syria? Possibly. But also Bosnia and Sarajevo.

This month sees the start of events marking, commemorating, the outbreak of the Great War, the 'war to end wars', which still casts a long, dark shadow over our national memory and identity. No doubt many of us will be called upon over the next four years to lead or speak at services and events recalling the events, losses and trauma of the conflict. It is right that we do remember together, commemorate. But how will we remember it? In terms of our national myth – what we collectively choose to believe – or with a more sober recognition of what happened, why, and the legacy.

Of course we think we know why war broke out: Germany was determined to fight in 1914 and used the events of that summer to engineer a war it hoped it would win in weeks. Over four years later it was therefore right to punish Germany severely; the war guilt was it's alone. But is that complete picture?

Let's start at the beginning. Gavrilo Princip, who fired the fatal shots, and his associates were Bosnian Serbs, born in a province ruled as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They came to believe passionately, almost religiously, in the pan-Serb cause, and dreamed of uniting Bosnian Serbs with an expanded Serbia. They were trained in terrorism with the connivance of Serbian military intelligence and armed from the State arsenal. Their aim was to assassinate the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Franz Ferdinand, and on 28 July, 1914, in Sarajevo, they succeeded. The first result was an anti-Serb pogrom across Bosnia – over 300 were lynched, a scar remembered by the Serb gunners who shelled Sarajevo in the 1990s. Memories of wrong tend to run deep and sore.

The Austro-Hungarian government asked the German government if it could rely on German support in punishing Serbia, which in its turn relied on support from Russia to deter Austro-Hungary from extreme action. It got the assurance it wanted and – after four weeks delay to bring in the harvest – issued an ultimatum to Serbia that would, in

effect, make it a province of the Empire. It was designed to be unacceptable, and it was. Kaiser Wilhelm was shocked at how far the Austrians had gone. He'd sailed off on holiday in the belief that there would not be a major crisis, and rushed back when he realised there was.

The timing of the ultimatum was designed to make Russia think twice about backing Serbia. President Poincare of France, Russia's ally, had just visited St. Petersburg on a State visit and could not easily be contacted on his week-long journey back to Paris. Vienna expected this to make Russia cautious. It was a miscalculation.

On 28 July Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, the first shells falling on Belgrade the following day. Seeing itself as defender of the Slav nations, Russia was honour-bound to declare war on Austria-Hungary. Germany, the latter's ally, could hardly back down now and declared war on Russia, then on Russia's ally, France. On 4 August, after German troops had crossed into Belgium, of whose neutrality Britain was a guarantor since 1838, this country declared war on Germany.

Was a European, soon to be world, war inevitable? Could it have been avoided? A 'what if' approach to the past is fraught with difficulties; we don't know what *may* have happened, only what did. So what did happen?

There were many at the time, and not just in the UK, who did try to avert the threat of war. To his credit, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, did propose a pan-European peace conference, an approach that had succeeded several times over the previous century in preventing a general European war. In the event there was no peace conference, no issue of firm invitations to the heads of government to come to London at a stated time and date, backed up by personal messages from George V to the heads of State, two of whom were his cousins, urging them to back the initiative.

Why was this? In part because the British government was pre-occupied with a conference at Buckingham Palace on Irish Home Rule, and in avoiding civil war in Ireland between Nationalists and Unionists. (That conference succeeded, only for its work to be

undone when the Attorney General, Sir Edward Carson, an Ulster Unionist, authorised the courts marshal and execution by firing squad of leaders of the Easter Rising in 1916). The cabinet too was split: Grey and others sought peace; some, Churchill included, were at best not averse to a war with Germany, not least to see off its challenge to British naval supremacy. Then there was the external pressure on the UK government by the many here, including sections of the press, who clamoured for war. German observers at the time ranked as one of the chief causes of war Lord Northcliffe, proprietor of the Daily Mail.

Does our country therefore share some of the responsibility for the death and destruction of the following four years? It is not a thought we are used to. It may also be objected that it could not at the time be known what was to happen in the echoes of those shots at Sarajevo. Surely the war would be over by Christmas? Sir Edward Grey was not the only one to grasp what brink we stood on when he observed, *"The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our life-time."*

It is also part of our collective memory that the Great War ended at the 11th hour, of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, in hard-fought but glorious victory. The British troops fighting in northern Russia a year later might have disagreed. And it was 1923 before the last of the spin-off wars, this one between Greece and Turkey, ended and the last of the 'peace' treaties was signed. In the intervening nine years around 80 million died, mostly civilians, of wounds, starvation and disease. This includes flu' epidemic of 1918-1919, which was spread first by movements of troops, another consequence of war.

The wars themselves left deep scars. Nearly a quarter of Serbia's population perished. It is still debated whether the deaths of between half and one and a half million Armenians during forced movements by the Ottoman Turks was genocide. In this country we see memorials to the dead in nearly every town and village. The 32 villages where all the servicemen returned are known as 'Blessed Villages'; in France there is 1. Travelling the A1 road in France is an unforgettable experience, a seemingly never-ending vista of military

cemeteries: French, US, British and Commonwealth to the west, German to the east.

Yet having 'won' the titanic struggle, the victors were more concerned to squabble over the spoils of war than secure the dividends of peace. It started even as the fighting raged. The 1916 Anglo-French carve-up of the Ottoman Turkish empire created artificial borders in the Middle East that paid little regard to religion or communities; the current and recent wars in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon are easily traceable to this. Blair and Bush may bear some responsibility for recent events in Iraq, but so too does Lloyd George's government.

The much-vaunted principle of creating nation-states in Europe from the old empires in the post war settlements also created as many problems as it appeared to solve: national minorities were left stranded in new or expanded nations across Europe - Germans in Poland, Hungarians in Rumania, and many more. The festering sores sowed the seeds of future conflict 20 years later, and more recently in former Yugoslavia. And the largest national group without a nation of its own at the time - the Kurds - is still waiting.

One final error of judgement made the next world war inevitable, the desire to punish the losers. By heaping all the guilt and as much of the consequences as possible on the losing side, especially on Germany, the victors ensured that yet more deep scars were left. And there were observers at the time, such as the Daily Herald cartoonist Will Dyson, who foresaw this. He even got the year right; the class of 1940 are the conscripts who would be serving in the army that year.



So how will we remember the Great War? Celebrate it as a great national victory? As a tragic waste of human life on a scale never seen before? Will we, as Wilfred Owen put it, "repeat again the old lie, *dulce et decorum est pro patria more.*" The war to end wars it certainly wasn't. Yes, let us commemorate the many acts of selfless bravery, not just of soldiers at the front, but also of, for example, the Scottish nurses and doctors who cared for the sick and wounded in primitive conditions in Serbia. However it may be that the most useful way to remember is by recognising that our country got some of what it did wrong. We may have been on the winning side at the end of the war, but we – and every other participant – lost the opportunity for peace.

To finish, a line from another poet of the time, Robert Service, who, too old for the (Canadian) army, served as a Red Cross ambulance driver in France:

*And you yourself would mutter when
You took the things that once were men,
And sped them through that zone of hate
To where the dripping surgeons wait;
And wonder too if in God's sight
War ever, ever can be right.*

Resources

Westminster Faith Debates

The last of the 2014 debates - *How has religion become an agent in peace-building in conflict areas of the world?* - took place last Thursday, 14th May 2014.

Videos and podcasts of the debates are now available on our website <http://faithdebates.org.uk/debates/religion-an-agent-in-peace-building-in-conflict-areas-of-the-world/>

A further series of Debates will be held in Oxford later this year entitled *The Future of the Church of England* (details under 'Events', below). Details of these events will be announced shortly. Please keep an eye on our website for information about these and other future events.

New Video Resources on Researching the Contemporary Moral Landscape

Ten new training videos have been uploaded on to the Religion Methods website at the University of Kent - (<https://www.kent.ac.uk/religionmethods/contemporary-moral-landscapes/index.html>). These have been developed from an AHRC Collaborative Research Training project and provide presentations from leading speakers aimed at introducing researchers from post-graduate level onwards to key concepts, methods and approaches to researching contemporary forms of meaning and value.

Eight of the films address specific areas for theoretical and methodological reflection:

- Prof Linda Woodhead (University of Lancaster) on 'Moral emotion and the re-ritualization of everyday life'
- Dr Abby Day (University of Kent/Goldsmiths) on 'Conceptualising and researching belief'
- Prof Adam Dinham (Goldsmiths) on 'The policy context for researching the contemporary moral landscape'
- Prof David Morgan (Duke University) on 'Visual and material culture as media of moral life'
- Prof Gordon Lynch (University of Kent) on 'Researching the sacred'
- Dr Jonthan Rowson (RSA) on 'The social brain: ontology, well-being and public policy'
- Dr Lois Lee (UCL) on 'Researching the religious, non-religious and the secular'
- Prof Vicky Lebeau on 'Image and ideology in the contemporary moral landscape'

A further two films explore the process of communicating research to wider public audiences and are valuable training resources for any researcher thinking about working through the media:

- Lou Bolch (radio presenter and former editor for science programming at Channel 4) on 'Public engagement through broadcast media'
- Dr Mark Vernon (freelance journalist and writer) on 'Public engagement through print media and blogs'

Wider content on research methods for the study of religion are also available at www.kent.ac.uk/religionmethods

St Mark's Battersea ...

... has a useful section on its website about workplace ministry:
<http://www.stmarks-battersea.org.uk/Workplace>

Events

12 – 14 September, 2014: CHRISM Conference and AGM At Luther King House, Manchester.

Ecumenical perspectives on the needs for the calling, training, development and support of Ministers in Secular Employment, in all the churches. Booking details on the attached flyer, or contact Margaret Joachim (details on rear inside cover).

We shall explore together the different strands needed in the development of MSE. (Many of these were considered at a national consultation in Southwark last summer).

- **The meaning of Ministry**
- **Vocations discernment**
- **Training for ministry**
- **Support required for MSE**
- **Recognition of the institutional contribution of SSMS**
- **Valuing the ministry of SSMS in their work and workplaces**
- **What CHRISM might do to help and support**

The weekend incorporates the CHRISM AGM and visits to local places of interest and of work.

Luther King House is located three miles south of Manchester city centre, close to Platt Fields Park and the 'curry mile', in a leafy oasis. It's easy to reach by train and car. Accommodation is en suite.

Further details at:

<http://www.lutherkinghouse.co.uk/>

At Pentecost last year, the Ministry division of the Church of England (MinDiv) hosted a consultation in Southwark on 'A New Pattern of Priesthood', looking at the current state and future of Self-Supporting Ministry in the Church of England (see the official outputs at http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/a_new_pattern_of_priesthood). A further consultation is planned for 2015, and this weekend will help inform the agenda for it.

One of the questions raised was: how can CHRISM most effectively support MinDiv (and its sister bodies in other churches) and SSMS in shaping the future selection, training and deployment of SSMS? We are preparing a paper with initial responses. At our conference we will explore ways in which we can develop our role, as a network and as individuals, in the future. We have been asked – by MinDiv and by the SSMS at the consultation – to help. Now we need to act.

Please put the date in your diary; we look forward to seeing you.

CABE autumn events

Weds 3 September –CABE Women– 1815 for 1830 start

Nola Leach, CE CARE: Women in Leadership

Venue: Hoop and Grapes, 80, Farringdon Street, EC4 4B

Thursday October 2 – 1815 for 1830 start

James Featherby – Chair of Church of England Ethical Investment Advisory Group and writer and speaker: ***Ethical Investment***

Venue: Hymans Robertson's offices 1 London Wall, London EC2Y 5EA

Tuesday 4 November – 1815 for 1830 start

HUGH KAY LECTURE

Herta von Stiegel - Executive Chairman of Ariya Capital group and non-executive Chairman of Stargate Capital Investment Group

**“Catastrophe, Complacency or Courage?”
based on the story of the Titanic**

To book CABE Events contact Jayne Payne, events@cabe-online.org

The Future of the Church of England

The team behind the Westminster Faith Debates, in association with Ripon College, Cuddesdon, and the Church Times, is hosting a new series of debates on the Future of the Church of England, to be held in Oxford this autumn at the University Church. The topics are:

Parishes – what future for the parochial system?

Dr Andrew Davison, Professor Robin Gill, Lord Mawson, Revd Canon Anna Norman-Walker. Thursday, 9th October.

Heritage – how can buildings, endowments and pensions become assets not burdens?

Andrew Mackie, Bishop John Pritchard, Dame Fiona Reynolds, Sir Barney White-Spunner - Thursday, 23rd October.

People – how can Anglicans of all kinds be engaged in the Church of the future?

Sir Tony Baldry MP, Revd Canon Jane Charman, Very Revd Dr Jane Shaw, John Tuckett. Thursday, 6th November.

Diversity – what kind of unity is appropriate nationally and internationally, how can diversity become a strength?

Very Revd June Osborne, Canon David Porter, Andrew Symes, Bishop Alan Wilson. Thursday, 20th November.

Vision – what does the Church of England offer the next generation?

Vicky Beeching, Revd Canon Rosie Harper, Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch, Christina Rees. Thursday, 4th December.

The debates will be held at University Church of St Mary the Virgin, High Street, Oxford, OX1 4BJ, from 17.30 to 19.00 (followed by a drinks reception).

For further details and to register for a free place please visit the website (<http://faithdebates.org.uk/category/debates/2014-debates/oxford-faith-debates-the-future-of-the-church-of-england/>) or telephone Peta Ainsworth (01524 510826) with the name, institution (if applicable) and email address of each person you wish to register. Please also let Peta know which category you come under, e.g. Academic, Policy, FBO/voluntary organisation, religious group, media or other.

The **William Temple Foundation** presents '**Reclaiming the Public Space: Archbishop William Temple 70th Anniversary Conference**' on Monday, 10 November, 1030 to 16.30, at the People's History Museum, Manchester.

Exploring the role of religion in contemporary public life, as well as looking at the legacy of William Temple's visionary thinking, the conference aims to bring together academics, clergy, community activists, and policy makers to learn from one another.

A diverse range of excellent speakers includes Prof Craig Calhoun (LSE), Lord Raymond Plant (KCL), Prof Linda Woodhead (Lancaster) and Prof Elaine Graham (Chester) alongside practitioners such as Chris Mould (Trussell Trust) and Economist journalist Bruce Clark.

To read more about the conference, including booking details, please visit: <http://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/conference2014/>

Educating for Mission in the World of Work

St Peter's Saltley Trust and the Kingdom at Work Project are organising a day consultation on the above topic to be held on: **Thursday, November 13th, 2014, 10.30 to 3.45** at **Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham** (accommodation available at Woodbrooke College if required)

The consultation will focus on three main issues:

- What is preventing the church equipping its people for mission in the world of work?
- A new model of mission for the world of work?
- How can the ordained ministry and other Christian educators be equipped with the skills to prepare church members for mission within the workplace?

The consultation explores the implications of two recent publications:

- ❖ Faith and Work in Theological Education and Training: an Enquiry by Hannah Matthews (St Peter's Saltley Trust, 2013), and
- ❖ The Kingdom at Work Project, designed by David Clark (2014).

The Kingdom at Work 'Bulletin' available for **download** at www.saltleytrust.org.uk/publications.

Order the Faith and Work in Theological Education and Training report via: St Peter's Saltley Trust, Grays Court, 3 Nursery Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3JX / bursar@saltleytrust.org.uk

Booking details will be on the Trust website shortly.

Save the date!

2015 CHRISM Reflective Weekend

At Shepherd's Dene, Riding Mill, Northumberland.

The Retreat House is in delightful countryside, not far from Hadrian's Wall. It isn't difficult to get to either, being close to a rail station and the main Newcastle to Carlisle road, half an hour from Newcastle on

both. Further details later (including who will lead us), but put the dates in your diary now. If you want to extend your stay then the area is well worth exploring: the Roman Wall, Kielder and Hexham to start with.

See the venue website at <http://www.shepherdsdene.co.uk/>

CHRISM Annual General Meeting 2014

The CHRISM AGM will take place at 9am on Saturday 13th September, at Luther King House, Brighton Grove (off Wilmslow Road), Manchester, M14 5JP.

Agenda

1. Minutes of 2013 AGM
2. Matters arising
3. Presiding Moderator's report
4. Secretary's report
5. Membership report
6. Financial report
7. Subscriptions for 2015
8. Election of officers and committee
9. CHRISM nominee to CHRISSET
10. Date of next AGM

11. Incoming Moderator's remarks

Any motions for discussion should be sent to the secretary, Margaret Joachim (margaret.joachim@london.anglican.org) a minimum of four weeks in advance of the meeting.

Apologies should, if possible, reach the secretary 48 hours before the meeting starts.

Nominations are required for the positions of Incoming Moderator, Journal Editor and three Committee Members, and should reach the secretary 48 hours before the meeting starts.

If you are willing to volunteer as Treasurer of Christians in Secular Employment Trust (CHRISSET) and CHRISM the secretary would also like to hear from you. This is not an elected position but you would become a CHRISSET Trustee.

Margaret Joachim, Hon Secretary

And finally ... the lighter side of tax

Over the passage of time it seems that there have been many strange ways of raising taxes. They have also been used to promote social change. Here are some of the strangest examples.

- In Ancient Egypt, cooking oil was not only taxed but people had to buy it from the Pharaoh's monopoly, and were prohibited from re-using previously purchased oil.
- During the 1st century AD, Roman emperor Vespasian placed a tax on urine. The urine from public toilets was sold as an essential ingredient for several chemical processes, such as tanning, and also by launderers as a source of ammonia to clean and whiten woollen togas. Buyers who obtained urine from collectors were charged a tax.
- During the Middle Ages, European governments placed taxes on soap which remained in effect for many years. The UK didn't repeal the soap tax until 1835.

- King Henry I allowed knights to opt out of their duties fight in wars by paying a tax called "scutage". When King John came to power he raised this tax by 300%. Some claim that the excessive tax rate may have contributed to the Magna Carta, limiting the king's power.
- Oliver Cromwell placed a tax on Royalists, taking one tenth of their property to his activities, aimed against the Royalists.
- In 1696, England introduced a window tax, based on the number of windows. That led to many houses having very few windows in order to avoid paying the tax, which eventually became a health problem and led to its repeal in 1851.
- In 1705, Russian Emperor Peter the Great placed a tax on beards, hoping to force men to adopt the clean-shaven look that was common in Western Europe.
- The French had a salt tax called the "gabelle" and was one of the contributing factors to the French Revolution.
- In 1712, England imposed a tax on printed wallpaper. Builders avoided the tax by hanging plain wallpaper and then painting patterns on the walls.
- In 1795, England put a tax on the aromatic powders that men and women put on their wigs. This led to a dramatic decline in the popularity of wigs.

Some of the strangest examples are from the USA though.

- New York City places a special tax on prepared foods, so sliced bagels are taxed once as food and again as prepared food, thus creating a sliced bagel tax.
- Maine has special tax on blueberries, a valuable state resource.
- Pennsylvania has a tax on coin-operated vacuum machines at gas stations.
- Pittsburgh has a 5% amusement tax on anything that offers entertainment or allows people to engage in entertainment.
- States like Iowa, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey exempt pumpkins from a sales tax, but only if they will be eaten and not carved.

- In 2005, Tennessee began requiring drug dealers to anonymously pay taxes on any illegal substances they sold.
- In New Mexico, people over 100 years old are tax-exempt, but only if they are not dependents. (*Does that mean living with their parents? Ed.*)
- In the state of Kansas, untethered hot air balloon rides are exempt from sales tax because they are considered a legitimate form of air transportation. Tethered hot air balloon rides, on the other hand, are considered to be an amusement ride and therefore are subject to sales tax.

But the prize for the best try must surely go to New Zealand. The Agricultural emissions research levy (commonly described as a "flatulence tax" or "fart tax") was proposed in 2003, to assist with compliance with the Kyoto Protocol. The tax would target the release of methane by farm animals, which, in New Zealand, account for over 50% of the greenhouse gas emissions. Needless to say there was an outcry due to the importance of farming in New Zealand and the government eventually gave up the idea of taxing cow's farts.