

Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians

in secular ministry

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

CHRistians In Secular Ministry

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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

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Editorial

Happy New Year readers! I hope you had a rewarding Advent and Christmas, including some well-deserved rest.

This edition kicks off with two articles arising from the 50th anniversary colloquium of the French Worker Priests. Nick Yates reflections on the event are both informative and entertaining. Phil Aspinall seems to have spent a great deal of time being greeted by old friends, and the third article looks forward to this year's gathering of the European Worker Priests, in Belgium, inviting comments on questions the organisers have raised. The UK contributions are always particularly valued as our work roles tend to be different to the often blue collar work our European colleagues perform, so please do reply to Phil's invitation.

There are reports on various other events CHRISM folk have attended, and an article from Michael Powell on the journey to and context of MSE that rewards reading. Plenty in the Book Review, Events, and Resources sections to whet the appetite too.

I was disturbed to learn recently that the Church of England is proposing to end central funding for training ordinands over the age of 50. The full details have yet to emerge, for example it is unclear if this is at the start or end of training, but the effect of this will be greatest on SSMs, who tend to be older. We learned at the MinDiv SSM Consultation last year that the average age at ordination in the CofE is now 52. Dioceses will be able to fund over-50s training themselves – if they can, but many, particularly in the north, will find this very difficult, which in the longer term will lead to a more rapid decline in clergy numbers, whether paid or voluntary. Is your diocese aware of this and what is it intending to do? CHRISM is keen to map the impact.

Again, numbers of pages dictate I keep my bit to one page this edition. Keep counting your blessings readers!

Rob Fox

Whither the *Prêtres Ouvrières* (Women worker priests)

Nick Yates

Phil Aspinall and I attended a fascinating colloquium of *Prêtres Ouvriers* (worker priests) in St Denis, Paris over the weekend of 5th and 6th December 2015, celebrating their reinstatement fifty years ago in the wake of Vatican II. Those attending were priests young and old some with their partners, many other lay people working in the field, and many women currently doing work in heavy industry and amongst the unemployed or just describing how their very presence had an impact – hairdressers, bakers (both young women), union representatives.

The lectures were interesting but delivered fast and generally without visual aids thus my understanding is a little fragmentary, but the discussions that followed were illuminating - there was laughter when the celibacy of (at least) the early group was discussed and fierce disagreement about the qualities of the first *Prêtres Ouvriers* (PO), the old warriors quite sure that they had the purer vision, the young showing just how committed they are. There were fierce disagreements about facts and dates in the historical record versus on the spot recollections, plus *ca change*....

So what did I learn about *Prêtres Ouvriers*? These are ordained (catholic) priests working in the manual side of heavy industry alongside those in the workforce whom they counsel and support. Their involvement in this world of the manual worker has continued, for many, in retirement – living in neglected city areas, supporting the poor and the excluded, immigrants, refugees...

They emerged as a group after World War II, when many men had been forced into labour camps and priests found themselves cheek by jowl with their congregations and began to understand their problems at first hand, without the barrier of the confessional. After the war they continued to work in the great manual industries (coal, steel, manufacturing, the building trade and seafaring) and to live in those same communities. These committed men were initially supported by the catholic hierarchy, which saw opportunities for evangelism, and they thrived. However they shared at first hand the exploitation of these workers and their often desperate living

conditions; and in addition to supporting them they began to help them to unionize and negotiate with management. This did not find favour with the hierarchy of the Roman church, nor with the lay catholic intellectuals who feared the emergence of communism, a widely held anxiety in post war western Europe, and of losing control. These socially committed men were suddenly forbidden to work in factories in the spring of 1954 and were allocated to other duties by their bishops. It was a disaster for them and for their communities. Not all of them complied however many remaining where they were and quite a few left the priesthood.

In the late 50's and early 60's Vatican II was deliberating and by 1965 after the publication of its reports liberalisation was afoot and Prêtres Ouvriers returned to the shop floor. They were quite curtailed at first though: they could only work a limited working week and were not allowed to join a union or to be involved in one in any way, they remained working in lowly paid manual positions alongside the workforce and this was extended to hotel and leisure industry.

The process has continued to thrive; they have become a largely self-governing group valued by the liberalising Roman church. This conference was a forum for renewing old acquaintances, (Phil seem to meet people he had known for many years at every turn), and to look towards the future. There are many women associated with the movement and its role is gradually changing especially with growing unemployment, which of course involves the working priests too.

For me the lectures and discussions were interesting and informative particularly as there was an accompanying collection of essays although not transcripts of the actual lectures, but the personal contacts were incredible. I met a priest who had remained celibate during his working life, but married as soon as he retired and was there with his wife.

A young priest from Le Mission de France, a parallel organisation set up by the church hierarchy (1941 and 1957) to try to maintain the firewall between the church and its congregations, clearly a worker priest but somewhat uncomfortable to be amongst this group - what would the bishop think! There were also delegates from the

protestant churches in Germany who were not always celibate and not paid for their priestly work but clearly part of the movement

These are my own reflections about this weekend, which I felt very privileged to be able to attend, they do not represent a fully worked report nor are they a complete understanding of the process, time was too short for that. I have not included reflections on the philosophical and theological content of the last session as my specialist French vocabulary is simply not strong enough. (A book of papers presented at the Colloquium is available if you would like to explore more).

So what of the women? They seem to have been airbrushed out of the process, but many women have been, and continue to be influential. Rediscovered documents, from the 1930's through the war years and the early years of the peace, show just how important they were. There were many very committed women initially in lay work in the movement or as social workers and volunteers of many kinds often grouped into lay sisterhoods bound by vows, and mystics such as Margaret Debrell whose work is a continued influence. Many women came to the conference and are clearly filling gaps left by the increasing scarcity of ordained priests. In the conference group session of current engagements, two of the speakers were young women: one a baker and the other a hairdresser. They are a respected and important part of the movement and must become more relevant as the years progress.

Worker Priests – Looking to the Future

Phil Aspinall

Nick has given a very compelling impression of the Colloquium in Paris to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the reinstatement of the Worker Priests. The weekend embraced history, theology, sociology (among others!) but the second day turned from a review, and celebration, of the past to address present realities and the future of the movement.

I was particularly struck by the reasons for the need and for the development of worker priests in the final contribution from Jean-Louis Souletie (Professor of Theology at the Institut Catholique de

Paris). The worker priests went into work, in a particular time and particular place, to enter into mission – is it time now, he asked, for such a mission in the increasingly secularised and de-Christianised world in which we now live and work? It would be interesting for CHRISM to consider how these criteria might apply to us.

1. Globalisation. The extent of global connection is new in the whole of human history, so challenges us to consider how we make the global humane. What does it mean to be a priest/minister working globally, and to be in contact with many different peoples (both physically and electronically)?
2. Pluralism. We are surrounded by diversity particularly in our places of work - a plurality of politics, religions etc. They are present and we are present in our work. So how are we to enter into and use the constant dialogue both cultural and international?
3. Individualism. This is the new reality – it exists – and many people are trapped in a prison, divorced from collective relations. What is our role to challenge this, to re-awake in our work the sense of community? How do we call people to vocation and relation – the call to serve others?
4. De-Institutionalisation. People and society are increasingly detached from the former institutions of state, family, church etc. Where do we encounter people outside these institutions – how are we to receive them? How are we to build institutions in the new humanity – to rebuild for the service of all.

My understanding of the French will not have been completely perfect, but I hope these give food for thought – perhaps for a CHRISM conference. Certainly, the French collective made a commitment to broaden and build on these discussions, and suggested a further day of reflection.

This was followed by a remarkably forthright intervention from the floor (which received prolonged applause) calling for the integration of Ordained women into the movement. “Who decides the theology of ministry? There is a call from God for the role of women in work!”

We hope the Bishop of St Denis, who joined us for the afternoon, took note.

An Invitation to Meet the Worker Priests

Phil Aspinall

You are invited to join the annual international conference of the Worker Priests which will be held, as always, at Pentecost which this year is over the weekend from Friday 13th to Monday 16th May 2016. We have been invited by our Belgian colleagues to DRONGEN, a house of the Jesuits close to the town of Gand, which we have used previously.

During the preparatory meeting held in Paris on the 4th December, we agreed the theme for reflection before and during the conference:

Towards Liberation from the new forms of Slavery in our world of today: in work, through immigration, among women, among young people and others.....

We proposed three strands of work:

1. How do we experience these people in our lives?
2. How can we construct together a sustainable world for us and for future generations?
3. How do we discover and live the elements of faith and Christian hope in our lives engaged in this world?

As usual, we are asked to prepare a paper of 2 pages with our reflections on this theme to send to the groups in the other European countries. Even if you cannot attend, please send me your thoughts (in English which it is possible for me to translate into French!) **by 1st March 2016.**

During the conference there will be opportunities for all the participants to share their thoughts on this theme, and we plan to

increase the time spent working in small groups. But there will, as always, be time for a visit – hopefully connected with the theme.

We hope you will want to take the opportunity to meet with these interesting and committed groups of people, who always challenge our way of life and our Christian living. You will be made very welcome.

The Belgians will send a letter of invitation during January, but please contact Phil Aspinall as soon as possible if you are interested in participating.

STOP PRESS:

In line with the theme for the 2016 International Worker Priest Conference, the next edition of the Journal (April 2016) will explore the theme of:

EXPLOITATION

Please send your thoughts and experiences to the Editor, in the form of articles (long or short), before the next deadline, 2 April.

Faith in the Workplace

Rob Fox

I was pleased to contribute an item to Bulletin 6 from the Kingdom at Work Project, issued last October, reproduced here. If you would like to receive the Bulletin, please contact David Clark, at david@clark58.eclipse.co.uk.

The growing interest in relating faith and work is a welcome shift in the ways the Christian churches see their role in contemporary society. Less has been said about mission in the world of work, and most of what there is has focussed on traditional evangelism. As a Minister in Secular Employment (MSE), I'd like to propose a different dimension.

Expressing faith in our work should come naturally to Christians (as it often does to devout Jewish and Islamic colleagues). Mission goes

beyond the passive – personal holiness in how we are – to actively seeking change in our workplace and even in our work itself. This may be through involvement in formal bodies such as a trades union, employee panel or social group, but it will often be informal. What sets our contribution apart is – and should be – our faith in God and the values following from that which we bring to our work. It also lies in recognising what God is already doing where we work. (I'm happy to share examples of this with readers if they would like to contact me.)

In the workplace MSEs can and do model ways of changing the relational dynamic so each person and their contribution is valued. This means a loving recognition, driven by our faith, of each person's worth. There is added value where an MSE engages in such recognition because they are usually known to be a minister, a church 'official' if you like. This gives permission to others to express similar forms of recognition.

Within the churches MSEs can also help equip members to live out their faith at work, to discern where they can influence how the office, factory or warehouse works, both as a community and a business, and to recognise that we are all loved by God. However, I would like to see MSEs much more closely involved in ministerial training, as mentors to those called to MSE or in equipping church leaders to support the day-to-day ministry of their congregations, not least when they are at work.

Much of the training of church leaders focusses on what goes on within the church building rather than on how to equip their members for mission outside. An example of this is the set of Learning Outcomes used by the Church of England. With few exceptions, examples of the outcomes cited are 'internal' to church life. However, outcomes should also be illustrated by examples taken from the community or workplace.

I feel it is important to use the pastoral cycle (learning, action, experience, theological reflection - the order can vary) every day in my work as a tax professional in HM Revenue & Customs. In particular we need to learn to think outside the church box. As James puts it (1: 22), let us 'be doers of the word, not hearers only'

for we help build the Kingdom of God by living it, not least within the workplace.

Church and Industry: Uncovering a Pathway to MSE

Michael Powell

I came into MSE in the 1980's aware of a wide gap between church and industry. Since retirement I have been pondering 'What was the situation before the gap, and what kinds of bridges or links might have been in existence?' Some digging around in what are now United Reformed, previously Congregational churches, in Chelmsford, has produced some interesting insights.

My first find has been that of '**dual lay leadership**'. In the 19th century there were strong families who were the mainstays of both industries and churches. The premier example is that of the Wells and Perry families, in particular William Wells 1790-1865, Isaac Perry 1799-1880, Frederick Wells 1827-1908, and Frederick Arthur Wells 1852-1943. They acquired the leading Chelmsford Brewery and grew it into a county-wide brewing, public house and wine and spirit merchants' business. Prominent along with other nonconformists, in the prestigious New London Road Development Company, they were benefactors and lifelong office-holders of the 1500-seater New London Road Congregational Church (to which they gave a beer-barrel shaped pulpit!). More widely, they were long-serving chairmen and treasurers of the Essex Congregational Union founded in 1798, which was the spearhead of evangelical and educational work particularly in the surrounding villages, and as might be expected, they held a range of civic and public offices. Undergirding and perhaps questioning all this activity was a deep piety, focused in early morning meditation and soul-searching. Their lives were not divided up; they lived, worked and served mainly in one town and one county.

My second find is '**public address**'. From time to time Ministers were called upon to preach in the presence of the Mayor and Corporation. On Sunday evening November 15th 1891 the Revd James Burgess had to do this. The Mayor, a church Deacon Mr Alderman Alfred George Edwin Morton, had been born in Wakefield and apprenticed there to the hardware trade. In the 1871 census he

appears in Chelmsford as an iron-founder and agricultural engineer employing 92 men and 10 boys. By 1890, the firm had produced 25000 cultivators and its innovations included a patented form of corn screen, a water and liquid manure cart, a hand water cart, a garden engine and a road-sweeper of 10ft width.

That Sunday night James Burgess announced his text, I Timothy vi 17-18: *'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate (KJV).'* Burgess's interpretation both supports and challenges his business, industrialist and civic congregation.

Authentically for his time and place, but perhaps questionably for ours, Burgess said:

'The religion of Jesus Christ does teach the rich man to say of his wealth – that is not mine but a trust imposed upon me to be used for the good of men and to the glory of God. But it does not teach the poor to say the rich man's wealth is ours and as soon as we are strong enough we will compel him to make a restitution. God has a place in his world for both rich and poor; and while men remain what they are no scheme of the socialist, whether Atheistic or Christian, will bring the estate and fortune of men to a common level.'

Today we may be more at ease with Burgess as he continues:

'It should be every man's aim to be useful, to convert at least one thorn-bush into a fir tree, or one briar into a myrtle tree.... Usefulness means true greatness. It is not wealth or ancestry but honourable conduct and a noble disposition that make men great, and these qualities and usefulness are inseparable.... We are rich in material forces, we possess excellent municipal and other machinery, but to trust in them were to trust in uncertain riches. What is wanted – what, thank God in very many cases we have – is men of Christian principle to love righteousness, men of pure and wholesome life – patriots and servants of the living God. Such are the men we want for builders and watchmen, then the house will stand, and the city will not be destroyed...'

Third I come to '**social and spiritual provision**' for new industrial workers. In the 1920's Chelmsford changed from being a predominantly market town to an industrial one, with Marconi as its most notable company. The town Corporation initiated the new Boarded Barns housing development to accommodate the fast-growing workforce. The existing churches built a Congregational Hall and funded a newly-ordained minister to start an appropriate new church. It grew like wildfire.

This story comes from a sound archive. A man had grown up in South Wales and worked in the collieries until the General Strike of 1926. Hearing that work was available in Chelmsford, he and his brother moved here. The day after his arrival he started work in the furnaces at Hoffman's factory. While his wage of 9d per hour was higher than was paid in some parts of the factory, he found it low for heavy industrial work because the firm recruited mainly from low paid agricultural workers. Unions were starting to be involved at Hoffman's and he became the Works Convenor, serving the whole staff of 5,000. When he was wanting to get married in 1930, the Assistant Works Manager helped him find a new house on Boarded Barns. Then he continues: 'We joined the church at North Avenue. That was a new church with a new minister. Very nice people up there.' As he often worked long weekend shifts to keep the furnaces running, he was not always able to attend church on Sunday but, he says, 'I joined the Men's Meeting on Mondays, usually taking 1½ hours off to go and I enjoyed that very, very much'. He played the piano for the Buffs group so perhaps it was singing and playing that contributed to the attraction to him as a Welshman of the church's Men's Meeting.

Lastly I come to '**equipping those who already work...**'. In 1965 the Revd Ernest Gould, minister of New London Road, Chelmsford served as Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. His inaugural address was entitled *For the Facing of this Hour*— the hour, he said, 'of computers, new technologies and automation. In the terrific heat generated by nuclear fission, all the metal of men's thought and behaviour was becoming molten once more and so ready to be run into new moulds. We have to preach the glorious Gospel of the blessed God in a world from which all the

accepted authorities and established institutions have already gone or are sliding into the melting pot of change and revolution.'

Arguing that the Church must have its own revolution and new ministries, Gould thought not only of industrial chaplaincy work, but of what was, to his mind, 'the far more important task of **equipping those who already work** in factories so that they are enabled to argue the Christian case reasonably and winsomely, and to counter the often half-baked arguments of the disgruntled agnostics and semi-converted communists with whom they will find themselves working. Christians are preaching the Gospel when they send men and women each Monday into the factories and works canteens, schools, shops, offices and kitchens armed with confidence in a winning God. People are preaching the Gospel who do their daily tasks in the glorious light of such a confidence in the God who holds the whole universe, with all its dreadful possibilities, as well as its most glorious prospects, in the hollow of his hand'.

'In my own church', Gould continued, 'we ran a *School of Evangelism*. We got someone to record some bona fide discussions about religion between church members and vocal antagonists in the canteen of one of our local factories. The Christian claims were challenged and denied in these discussions. Gould urged the revitalisation of the Church Meeting as a training ground for the witnessing ministry of the whole church, including ministers, deacons and members. He believed 'that all members of the church should be equipped for *the apostolate of the laity* so that they could take the Gospel into factories, works canteens, schools, shops and offices as the spearhead of evangelism.' While Gould did not quite get to the idea of ordained MSE as many CHRISM members have come to practice it, I think we can say he was on the right track.

When I started to do MSE in Chelmsford in the 1980's I did not know that the way had in some respects already been prepared! I felt then that I was going out on a limb but now I know that Wells and Perry, Burgess and Morton, the unnamed factory furnace man and Ernest Gould, had all played a part.

My thanks to the staff of the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford and of Dr Williams' Library in London for their interest and most willing assistance.

How Christian is Secular Work?

This article first appeared in the March 1961 issue of HIS Magazine (InterVarsity Press, USA). The writer, Paul Fromer, served on InterVarsity staff, as editor for HIS Magazine, and taught English at Wheaton College for 26 years.

Are you a "full-time" Christian worker? If not, whom do you serve the rest of the time? Most Protestants seem to have accepted a concept derived from the medieval church - that work is of two sorts, sacred and secular. If a man is a preacher or missionary, his work is sacred. If he's a scientist or accountant, it's secular.

The Bible protests this distinction. To God, work isn't sacred or secular, but sacred or sinful. Work done in obedience to God is sacred. Work done in disobedience to God is sinful.

The false view undercuts the moral vigor and spiritual purpose of the scientist and accountant. It suggests that they are serving God less fully than they could in some "full-time" capacity. And it suggests that as they do the will of God they are sinners.

In church services, an impassioned call is often given to enter "full-time" Christian service, and certain people may even go forward to signify their intention of entering the ministry. That's fine. We need consecrated ministers. But how long has it been since your church gave an altar call for Christians to join the faculty of the nearby "secular" college? After all, we need consecrated witnesses too.

Whenever I hear the call to "full-time" work I tense up inside. Those tender-hearted, eager students, who have responded to God's call to become, say, Christian chemists, have been betrayed again. I know the thoughts that go through their mind ("Am I a second-class Christian? Have I deceived myself into thinking that God wants me in chemistry?"). And under this social pressure, some rise to their feet and go forward. After all, they want to do the right thing. I've

known some of these fellows in seminary-and watched them go to pieces.

This concept of sacred and secular is carried into education too. "The only education for a Christian is a Christian college education." Yet some of the most magnificent saints of God I've known have been students in "secular" colleges. And some of the most secular saints I've known have been in Christian schools. God evidently sends some Christians to one type of school and some to the other. Consequently, neither is really sacred or secular.

In some churches when the Christian-college students go back to school after a vacation, they're given gifts, good wishes and the promise of prayer - while the students returning to "secular" schools are cautioned, cajoled, even intimidated. Why do we pray for our missionaries in the Congo and abandon our missionaries on the "secular" campus? Don't they need spiritual power? The next time you hear of a backsliding student ask yourself whether he was a Joshua fighting in the forces of God while you were failing to be a Moses on the mountain top. And when the devil weakens the IV group you know about, don't drop these students, but rather rally to their aid. They need you.

The school may be secular, but the Christian student is not. He is the vessel of the Holy Spirit on the campus. And similarly, the Christian typist is the Holy Spirit's vessel in her office, and the Christian teacher in the classroom, and the Christian chemist in his lab.

But not all Christians do the stimulating work of a scientist. Some lick stamps and stuff envelopes, some screw nut 114C on throttle body A, some wash dishes. I have a friend in California whom God used to establish a servicemen's center during the Second World War. To it came American service personnel, and Chinese cadets who were in the U.S. for flight training. My friend says that he never lacked people to preach the gospel, but he had a frightful time finding people to come and wash dishes.

It's almost as if a more sanctified (if possibly less gifted) person were needed to do the less inspiring tasks. InterVarsity, for instance, according to (former) Comptroller James McLeish, finds it easier to get men and women for field work than for office work. It seems that a small salary plus inspiring work requires less dedication than a small salary plus routine work.

Brother Lawrence, a floor scrubber of the Middle Ages said he had learned to pick up a piece of straw from the floor for the glory of God. He agreed with Paul: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3: 17).

How about you? Are you in full-time Christian service?

Shared Ministry Network Conference, November 2015

Rob Fox

I decided to walk the last mile or so to the Britannia Country House Hotel, Didsbury, south Manchester, where the Shared Ministry Network was holding its annual conference as I could cut through a lovely small park that I remembered from my childhood. It was smaller than I remembered, but still lovely, even in late autumn, and the squirrels, grey where I remembered red, frolicked enthusiastically. Being Thursday to Saturday it meant taking a couple of days leave from work, but this was time well spent.

About 50 varied and fascinating folk gradually arrived, from about 15 dioceses, including that of Edinburgh – in force! The Network exists to promote shared and collaborative ministry, lay and ordained, and has members in most diocese of the provinces of Canterbury, York, Scotland and Wales. I was pleased to find that 'ministry' was not automatically assumed to be church based, but widely accepted as wherever the people of God are, when they are.

The pattern of the Conference was similar to that which CHRISM follows, with case studies, talks / presentations and plenty of group work. I'm not sure that the last always worked as well as it might as it was generally split between a small group of 4-5, which would later merge with another such group for a similar time (30-45 minutes).

Most of the plenary sessions were filmed or recorded. Three videos are available at <http://shared-ministry.net/news/videos/>. The first was by the ministry team – yes, all of them - from St. John's Church, Selkirk, Diocese of Edinburgh. Faced with a shortage of stipendiary clergy, the last *de facto* incumbent suggested to the congregation that when he retired in a few years' time that they provide for the ministry needs of the parish by selecting, calling, and training a lay ministry team. Each person on the team, now in its second term, is called by the congregation and serves for 5 years.

The diocese bought into the idea quickly has clearly given plenty of support and encouragement, as evidence also in the second of the three videos, by the Dean of Edinburgh, Susan McDonald, who spoke about a number of ways in which the diocese is supporting ministry in the community (including business!) (The role of Dean in Scotland is more akin to a suffragan bishop, being diocesan, and similar to that of the Deans of Guernsey and Jersey). The third video is of the presentation by Jill Hopkinson, Worcester, who is the National Rural Officer for the Church of England, on growing rural mission-shaped shared ministry. For those living and working in an urban context, as I do, there were illuminating comparisons. I found myself thinking of Jim Cummins several times during this session!

There are two talks, given by Bishop Alan Smith, St Albans, on the Thursday evening, followed by another just before lunch on Friday, available as audio only, both worth listening to (at <http://shared-ministry.net/conference/2015-conference/conference-audio/>).

The Conference report on the website was still, at time of writing, of 2014, however do keep an eye open as the 2015 report should be up by now.

It is also worth visiting the 'Library' section of the website, including as it does links to a number of familiar websites (including CHRISM) and information about aspects of mission and ministry.

My overall impression of the weekend is that the Network is predominantly outward-looking, an understanding that Mission may usually start in church, but to be effective it needs to go out to where people are. I look forward to 2016!

Derby Diocesan Quiet Day for Self-Supporting Ministers

Stan Frost

The Derby SSMS were treated to a special day in Darley Dale Church of St Helen on Saturday October 31st. It is the Church next to an ancient Yew Tree but with no witches despite the date. Gillian White however, had worked her magic to assemble about 30 of us from across the Diocese and into Lichfield Diocese.

Alan and Ros Harper had been invited to lead the worship, which extended from when we arrived to well into the afternoon. As an experienced Spiritual Director Alan spoke with authority about the role of prayer and some of the problems shared by many of us, which obstruct or restrict what and how we do it. He explained that his preferred pattern of prayer was to adopt a relaxed sitting position - his favoured chair was in his conservatory which has become his prayer room. We were each encouraged to relax and sit like him in quietness. Most of us though perhaps don't share the privilege of dedicated space and have no choice but to pray 'on the run'.

Though it is better if time can be found outside of life's busy-ness, when we can use quiet interludes. The talk was interspersed into the liturgy for the morning and Ros led us through the service with opportunities to walk around the church building to view various items and information set aside to provide topics for prayer and to do inspirational things with glass pebbles and small crosses.

During the second exploration the table had been set and the lunch prepared ready to collect from the kitchen. There was a meat stew and a Mediterranean style cooked vegetable selection with cheeses, cakes and fruit, prepared and presented by Gillian and her team.

We were encouraged to finish lunch by 2.30 and then spend more time in the church or outside. Soon after we were invited back into the parish room to find a life sized black and white labyrinth laid out on the floor with the chairs pushed back to the walls. We were asked to remove our shoes and leave them on the blue groundsheet on which the labyrinth rested.

Probably most of the group risked feeling intimidated by stepping on to the white canvas which had the labyrinth painted on it. Some of us went barefoot, to give our toes an airing and to better get the feel of the walk the journey along the path provided by the black outline of the labyrinth. There were frequent stops needed to permit those ahead or behind to decide what their next move was to be. The path to the centre was self-evident but you needed small steps taken slowly - particularly when you reached a bend.

Like in life, some of the time passed relatively quickly and the path was straight when you turned the smaller steps took longer and your feet had to be moved several times to get them in the right position to proceed. The process was a useful opportunity to empty your mind, partly to concentrate on what was happening and also to prayerfully address issues of concern. Reaching the centre gave a distinct feeling of achievement - job done!

But where now? The obvious option was to turn and take the same route back to the start - however you could step over the line into a different path which provided a short cut to the access point. Is this what we do in Life? Should we always take the same route back - perhaps to check on things and people that we have been praying about - or should those experiences be left with God to free ourselves for other situations?

When time came to pack up we were treated to watching Ros and Alan folding up the labyrinth and its blue groundsheet into a package that would fit into a suitcase. A process they must have done several times before - they managed it without a wrong fold and impressed us all by walking off with the blue and white packages beneath their arms.

The day was a fruitful experience and we met and shared challenges which will be useful for the future. Thank you to all those who came and to those who prepared and led us through the worship and sharing.

Where do we meet Christ today?

Margaret Yates, SSM Officer for Berkshire.

This was the theme of the diocese of Oxford's day conference for Self-Supporting Ministers held on Sunday 11 October 2015 - yes a Sunday! It was an appreciation by the diocese, and celebration of, the gifts and ministries of SSMs. There was a strong MSE presence with the keynote lecture given by Hugh Valentine, "Seeing and hearing: the value of irregular clergy" and workshops by CHRISM's own Phil Aspinall and Margaret Joachim, Teresa Morgan, Charles Sutton and Margaret Whipp. Hugh Lee was the celebrant at the Eucharist and Karen Gorham (Archdeacon of Bucks and now bishop designate of Sherborne) gave the sermon. Texts of both lecture and sermon can be found at <http://www.oxford.anglican.org/mission-ministry/self-supporting-clergy-nsm/>

Links are at the bottom of the page. It was a feast of a day: physically as the lunch was excellent, intellectually in the quality of the speakers, and spiritually in the fellowship and worship of SSMs together.

Book review:

The Widening Circle. Priesthood as God's way of blessing the world, by Graham Tomlin

(SPCK, 2014, ISBN 9780281069026)

Margaret Yates

This book is a Christian theological account of priesthood focussed on Christ's example. It is written for an audience who wish to understand what it means to be a priest and comes from a growing dissatisfaction, by the author, on the thinking surrounding priestly ministry today. It is an important book and has the potential to become a core text on the subject. Indeed, it came highly recommended to us at the annual conference by Richard Collins, DDO for Durham.

Graham Tomlin was Dean of St Mellitus College and Principal of St Paul's Theological Centre London and was used to giving talks on the role of priestly ministry to students at St Mellitus who were about to be ordained. From this academic background it is unsurprising that the book is based on a thorough grounding in the literature of

Anglican priesthood, has a clarity of expression and writing, logical development of themes and arguments, and is fully supported by endnotes and references.

The subtitle of the book, *Priesthood as God's way of blessing the world*, is significant. The priesthood of Christ is the central theme of the explorations and particularly as it is set out in the letter to the Hebrews where Christ is presented as the archetypal and true High Priest. Tomlin enjoys groups of threes; thus the character of priesthood as revealed by Christ is of mediating, perfecting and offering which leads him to describe priests as interceding, blessing and worshipping.

The first two chapters explore Christ as High Priest in the Old and New Testaments in terms of the downward movement of incarnation and atonement, followed by the upward thrust of resurrection and ascension. Having looked at scripture he turns to the traditions of the Protestant Reformation and particularly the writings of Luther and Calvin on priesthood. Subsequent chapters investigate how Christ's priesthood is manifest within the world. First in Creation, and the mediating priestly role played by all of humanity in perfecting and protecting Creation, so that it can bring the joy and blessing for which it was made as it is offered back to God in a worshipful life. Secondly the priestly work of the Church who acts as mediator between God and humanity. Here (pp.109-110) he writes eloquently in a manner that may resonate with members of CHRISM:

"The priestly role of the Church therefore exists not just at its centre, in worship, prayer and sacramental activity, but also at its edges. Perhaps even primarily at its edges. Christians often feel most 'priestly', in other words, standing in a mediating position between God and the rest of humanity, when they are at work, rather than when they are in church. Being known as a Christian in the workplace, at the school gate, in local clubs or sports fields, is to represent God in a very tangible and conscious way."

Thirdly, the person of the priest is to be a part of the whole, yet is set apart to serve the whole, and to bless the whole. "God chooses

some to be the means by which the blessing poured out in Christ reaches the rest, to enable the Church to be what it is called to be, and do what it is called to do: to recall humanity to its priestly role in Creation.” (p. 113) He argues (p.121) that “priestly ministry in the Church is much more than a job or a function. It flows out of the very being of ministers, and their relationship to the Christ who works through them. In particular, it flows out of the life of the priest in prayer.”

Finally, he concludes, the purpose of Creation is joy. It is to be reminded in a counter-cultural manner that we are here in the fullest sense to enjoy God, ourselves and the Creation. We are here for the glory of God which shines most clearly when we are seen enjoying God and Creation to the full. (p.158)

Whilst this is not a book written specifically for MSEs, the depth of the theological reflection should stimulate us to think further about our own calling and lives. I recommend it wholeheartedly.

Events

2016 CHRISM Reflective Weekend – last few places!

***26th to 28th February, at Abbey House Retreat House,
Glastonbury*** (<http://abbeyhouse.org/>)

Sue Henderson will lead us exploring moving from the desert places created by our hectic life-styles towards the streams of living waters, following themes from Scripture.

A Minister in the United Reformed Church. her first pastorate was in the Wiltshire United Area, then serving in Bath and Sanderstead. She retired from full-time ministry in December 2013.

She also recently retired as Convenor of the URC Retreats Group. She trained Spiritual Director in Bristol and has also trained in Ignatian Spirituality at the London Centre for Spirituality. In retirement she continues to lead worship, be a spiritual guide and lead Retreats and Quiet Days.

Sue is married to Patrick and they have two grown up sons, two daughters-in-law and 3 grandchildren.

In her spare time she loves walking and cycling, painting, needlework and being a 'hands-on' grandparent to her youngest granddaughter.

Rates for the weekend (17.00 Friday to after lunch Sunday) are £160 for members (and spouses), £170 non-members. The weekend will count towards your CME and grants may be available from your church.

LICC event

Passionate about seeing faith have an impact in the workplace?

Whatever your situation, if you're convinced that being a Christian should touch down in our working lives and you're looking for fresh and practical ways to see that happen - in your own life and the lives of other working Christians - then this networking event is a great way for you to kick off the new year.

You'll get a chance to meet other like-minded (and local) workplace influencers; find out about some of the latest workplace discipleship resources aimed specifically at working Christians; and chat with LICC's WorkForum team, who have tons of experience and expertise in connecting faith and work. Plus you'll get some light relief in the form of comedian Andy Kind who, after his 30-minute set, will be chatting to us briefly about what it looks like to be a Christian in his line of work.

Date: Thurs 11 Feb 2016

Time: 6.15pm for drinks and networking, 7.00pm for Andy's set (drinks, food and networking then continue until last orders!)

Cost: 1 for £10, 2 for £15

Location: The Horse and Stables pub, 124 Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1 7RW

See: <http://www.licc.org.uk/about-licc/events/passionate-about-seeing-faith-have-an-impact-in-the-workplace-1502>

ICF Members and Friends evening – Law and Justice in the Workplace

Monday, 8 February, 2016, 19.45, at Bill's Restaurant, Reading.

Speaker Laurie Anstis leads a discussion on the question 'What is the role of the law in establishing and promoting justice in the workplace?' We will look at how the law approaches workplace justice and consider both the strengths and limitations of law as a means of establishing justice between workers and employers.

Faith in Business

Stakeholder or Neighbour?

A fresh look at business relationships

Friday, 8 April, 17.00 – Sunday, 10 April, 14.00, at Ridley Hall, Cambridge.

In the course of doing business, companies relate to many different groups of people: customers, employees, suppliers, shareholders or other investors, competitors and local communities (*and tax authorities! Ed.*). The word 'stakeholder' is often used to cover all these different groups. Is this helpful, or is there an alternative Christian perspective on these relationships? Should these groups be placed in some sort of order of priorities, or is each relationship equally important? And where does God fit in?

Speakers include: Paula Vennells, Dawn Stallwood, David Ball, Steve Apted and Steve Middleton, David Barclay and Bill Seddon.

Cost is £250 residential, £175 non-residential. Booking and further details at: www.faith-in-business.org. (See also item under Resources, below).

St Peter's Saltley Trust

"What Helps Disciples Grow?" – Celebration and Exploration

On Tuesday 19th April 2016, St Peter's Saltley Trust will be sharing and celebrating the learning and opportunities from the *What Helps Disciples Grow?* research project.

The day is planned as an exciting and interactive programme which picks up on much of what the research has uncovered. It will:

- unpack the results of the research;
- explore the role of the church in Christian growth;
- connect with resources and people to help you in your mission.

The programme will explore, in a range of ways, some of the themes thrown up by the research, which will include:

- what does 'discipleship' really mean?
- personal call, personal responsibility: how today's Christians look at faith;
- music and discipleship: what's the connection?
- the things that are rarely done, but much valued by those who do them;
- prayer and growth;
- practical faith.

To book a place, please download, complete, and return the booking form, at

<https://watchingtheflocks.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/what-helps-disciples-grow-booking-form.docx>

Readers are often MSEs too!

**Service of Celebration of 150 Years of Reader Ministry
All Souls, Langham Place, Thursday, 5 May, 2pm.**

A national service of thanksgiving, this is the first of two major CRC events to mark the 150th anniversary of the re-founding of Reader ministry in the Church of England.

This service will be a Eucharist at which it is hoped all dioceses will be represented. Admission will be by (free) ticket, and the number of places is restricted to the space in the church. Each diocese is being offered an allocation of tickets in proportion to the number of Readers there, and an invitation has been sent to diocesan Wardens of Readers with the request to forward names by 11th December

2015. If you would like to attend this service and have not heard from your Warden, please contact him or her, NOT CRC.

The second event, **Follow 2016**, is a **day festival**, sponsored by the Central Readers Council to celebrate 150 years of Reader Ministry, and is open to everyone of any age or denomination. It will be held on Saturday 16th July 2016 at De Montfort Hall, Leicester from 10.00am until 4.00pm.

Speakers include **Paula Gooder**, writer and lecturer in Biblical studies, **Mark Russell**, Church Army Chief Executive, **Mark Greene**, author and speaker from the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity, **Debbie Thrower**, former broadcaster and champion of BRF's the gift of year's initiative, and **Paul Blakey**, founder of the Street Angels movement.

Pete James, full-time songwriter will be leading worship throughout the day and **Roger Jones** from Christian Music Ministries will be forming a scratch choir and performing his brand new musical "Barnabas", he will also be hosting a Worship Works seminar, based on the Worship Works book, a practical handbook for church worship. Other activities available throughout the day will be a taste of Messy Church from **Lucy Moore**, multi-sensory equipment for adults and children from Leicester diocese, **24-7** prayer space, adult & children bouncy castles (*now you're talking! Ed.*), entertainment from Christian magician **Steve Price**, together with resource stalls across the site and world food available all day.

Tickets have been subsidised to make the event accessible to as many people as possible, and families are welcome to attend. Children under 5 go free. To book your tickets, which are sold on a first come, first served basis, please phone De Montfort Hall on 0116 233 3111 or go to the bookings section of their website <http://www.demontforhall.co.uk>

Baptism Matters ...

... is a day event (£65) organised by the **Archbishop's Council** being held at the following venues:

Solihull, 23 February; Webbington, 8 March; Bracknell, 15 March; Harrogate, 14 April; Cambridge, 26 April.

It is open to clergy, licensed lay ministers and all involved in family ministry, and aims to:

- Discover new resources that have emerged from major research with the public and with churches
- Discover the key simple changes that can help children and families after baptism, and help them on their lifelong journey of faith
- See the new websites and find out how local churches can quickly and easily access resources and practical ideas

Registration opens at 9:30am, first session starts at 10am, and the day finishes at 4pm. It can be booked at:

<https://cofeprojects.eventhq.co.uk/baptism-matters>

***** Hold the dates! *****
CHRISM 2016 Conference, 15-17 July

This year we are at Foxhill ((<http://www.foxhillconferences.co.uk/>), Frodsham, Cheshire; full details with the April edition. Foxhill is a comfortable and popular conference venue, situated on the outskirts of this small town, with views over the inner Mersey estuary. Access is excellent: a few minutes off the M56 and M6, rail station on the main Manchester – Chester line, which passes through Warrington Bank Quay, on the West Coast main line.

Our theme is 'What in the World?', looking at what ministry and mission are in a world that is increasingly secularised and de-Christianised. There will be sessions on how globalisation, pluralism, individualism and deinstitutionalisation impact on our work, plus visits to local workplaces.

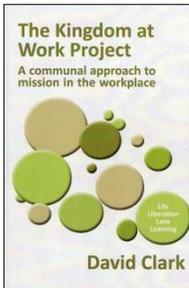
Resources

'The Kingdom at Work Project - a communal approach to mission in the workplace', David Clark.

Peterborough: Upfront Publishing (£14.99 paperback; £8.99 e-book).

Available to CHRISM members for £10 + £2.80 postage, from David. Cheque to 'David Clark' at Hill View, Burton Close Drive, Bakewell DE45 1BG.

'This book may represent the beginning of another stage in the historic and contemporary Christian engagement with work' (*Crucible*)



Unique in literature on faith and work in that its focus is the transformation of the workplace - founded on an innovative theology of the kingdom - 'profoundly lay-centred' - a wealth of resources for practice - a radically new role for chaplains and ministers in secular employment - a clear and comprehensive mission agenda for the local church.

'A brilliant work-book for the servant leader' (*Peter Challen - Sloan Fellow of London Business School*)

Modem's 2015 conference ...

... on the theme, **Faith in the Future, Organization, Power and Trust**, was held at Sarum College on 3/4 December. Some 40 delegates heard keynote talks from **Professor Veronica Hope Hailey**, Dean of the School of Management at the University of Bath, and **Revd Dr Justin Lewis-Anthony**, Associate Dean of Students at Virginia Theological Seminary in the USA. Six further presentations were given by delegates, and many informal conversations contributed to a stimulating event. You can get a flavour of the conference on MODEM's [Twitter feed](#) using **#ModemConf2015**.

Other shared ministry networks are available ...

... and are useful sources of resources:

- <http://www.edge-ucc.ca/> - Canada. "A Network for Ministry Development began in 2011 as a three-year project focused on new and renewing ministries across The United Church of Canada. In 2014, it was integrated into the Church in Mission unit of the General Council Offices."
- <http://livingstonespartnership.net/>. Set up to promote "collaborative leadership and work ... and to engage in ongoing theological reflection as the members encourage new ways of engaging in Baptismal Ministry through Total Ministry, Shared Ministry or Mutual Ministry." Partners are currently from the Anglican Church in Canada and the Episcopal Church in the US.
- <http://www.layanglicana.org/>, the "unofficial voice of the laity throughout the Anglican communion."

Faith in Business

There is an informative report on the FiB website from the conference in November, **Capitalism for the Kingdom? Redefining Next Generation Economics** (<http://www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/centres/faith-in-business/fib-news>).

The event took as its starting point Eve Poole's book ***Capitalism's Toxic Assumptions***, reviewed in the last edition of FiBQ magazine, and was an opportunity for business people, policy makers, and ordinands to discuss how to redeem capitalism.

The resources section of the website is also worth a visit.

Faith Pictures ...

... is a six session discipleship course produced by the Church Army, and rooted in everyday life as the starting point and setting of faith. It is free to use, once registered, and available online at

http://www.faithpictures.org/Groups/266913/Faith_Pictures.aspx?redirected=1

A Lent Course with a difference!

Joined up living – Weekday Faith

Are you looking for ideas for Lent 2016? Starting from the day-to-day events of life, this Lent course 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).

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

The course 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

This course, designed by the group of Ministers in Secular Employment in Coventry Diocese, 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
- I 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.

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

Derby City Centre Chaplaincy ...

... provides pastoral support to people in the city centre as well as beyond by building bridges of understanding between industry, faith, commerce and society. It's chaplains serve in the retail, business, education, sport and entertainment sectors.

Paul Morris, vicar of St. Peter's, in the centre of Derby, had the initial vision in 2009. Since starting, the service has grown to include over more than 20 chaplains, lay and ordained, from 10 different churches. Key stakeholders include: Workplace Chaplaincy in Derbyshire, Churches Together in Derbyshire, City Vision and City Centre Churches and the management at Intu, the Bid Boards of Cathedral Quarter and St. Peter's Quarter, and store managers throughout the city.

To find out more, visit: <http://www.derbyccc.org.uk/about-us/>

LICC Learning Hubs

LICC runs a three session event on ministry as a road show, available at various locations across England during 2016. The Programme comprises:

Day 1 – Sustaining Frontline Ministry

Exploring how the gathered practices of preaching and worship-leading combined with a frontline lens, can prepare the people of God to live fruitful lives when scattered on their frontlines.

Part 1: Preaching for the Frontlines – for local church preachers

Part 2: Leading Sunday Worship with Monday's Frontlines in Mind – for worship leaders

Day 2 – Enabling Frontline Ministry

Creating a framework for mission with a frontline focus, so that the people of God are enabled to build strategies for mission and discipleship on their frontlines. This session includes a session for small group leaders.

Part 1: Creating a framework for mission with a Frontline Focus – for senior leaders & wider leadership teams

Part 2: Creating Small Groups with a Frontline Focus – for Small Group Leaders

Day 3 – Owning a Frontline Ministry

Exploring the world of work (paid and unpaid) through the lens of vocation, and develop a robust theology of work that will help the people of God see their work as endowed with purpose and meaning.

For more information visit: <http://www.licc.org.uk/about-licc/events/>

Bogus email warning

There is an email circulating offering salted processed pork in gelatine, packaged in a can. If you receive such an email, don't open it, it is spam.

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 below).

**Further information may be obtained from the Secretary or the Journal
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.txt, .rtf, or .doc format) should be sent to:**

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