

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

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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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<https://www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=3756477>

Editorial

Well, a lot has happened since the last edition! Let's start with the less obvious. I'm on the move in the autumn, to Newcastle. My wife, Louisa, is from Durham and her mum still lives there, and our son David and his family are in Newcastle, so when the opportunity to move with work to HMRC's office in the city came up, it was too good an opportunity to let pass. You push at a door and fall through. Which in a way fits in with the 'Starting' theme of this edition – I'll be starting a new job and we'll be starting life in a new community. Canny, like

On the theme of Starting, there are welcome and readable articles by Helen Peatfield, Margaret Trivasse and Margaret Joachim.

In addition a group from CHRISM attended the Pentecost gathering of European Worker Priests in the small town of Drongen, Belgium. The accounts from Nick Yates (with input from Phil Aspinall) and Stan Frost give a good account of the discussions on Modern Day Slavery (MDS), which not only highlight the scope of this problem but also some interesting national differences on how far the 'authorities' are to be trusted. I read these parts with professional interest as I'm aware from the inside of the role and activities of HMRC as part of a concerted drive against MDS in the UK. Phil has also written up his notes on the German Old Catholic's gathering last October and extends an invitation to this year's event.

Also included are a characteristic observation from Southern Baptist SSM Denis Bickers, whose buoyant style has inspired many on both sides of the pond, and a follow up to last month's article on the misunderstanding of spiritual formation, from Frederick Schmidt. Speaking of which, as readers will know, CHRISM regularly provides advice and support to those exploring vocations to MSE and other expressions on Self-Supporting ministry, ordained and lay. Indeed the guidelines on MSE for the Bishops Advisory Panel (BAP) in the Church of England were penned, at the request of Ministry Division, by John Lees, with input from other CHRISM members. On three occasions in the past year or so I've been contacted by prospective MSEs who have encountered BAP Selectors who either have not read or do not understand these guidelines. In all three cases a Selector

told the candidate that they would be required to do a workplace placement as part of training. Just how this could be done while in a contract of employment with another business was not explained (or, apparently, understood), nor was it explained just how an employer could be persuaded to give a contract of a few months to an ordinand in order to satisfy the C of E's training wishes. In my view there are real problems with the spiritual formation the C of E imposes on its ordinands, and not just SSMs. As it stands it is not fit for purpose and as SSMs now comprise at least half of ordinands it is high time many more SSMs were at the heart of the vocations, selection and deployment processes. All views on that – especially from other denominations – most welcome!

Now to the elephant in the room – that referendum. It was no surprise, but still deeply saddening, that voices on all sides were too often raised with the increasing intolerance that afflicts not just our society but is a global problem. Rather than deploy reasoned argument against reasoned argument, the first response was usually to dismiss, denigrate and attack the 'other'. It is again no surprise, but even more saddening, that we have seen an upsurge in abuse of the 'other' in the last few weeks. Locally we have had a (black) former US Marine abused publicly and told to 'Go home!' and an Asian bus-driver spat at in his cab. Intolerance easily falls over into active hatred. And here I dare to say that liberal points of view are often promoted with intolerance too: 'our viewpoint on this is so self-evidently right that if you oppose it you are a bigot / reactionary / extremist' (and so on – delete as applicable). Of course any point of view will be self-evident to those who have convinced themselves that only it is valid. We have a saying up North: 'There's none so blind as them that won't see'. I seem to recall Jesus telling a parable on this, so let's make sure we know what is in our eye before we start telling others what's in theirs. Peter King's article on Freedom and the Holy Spirit is also apt.

Rant over. Do enjoy this edition as much as I have putting it together, and if you have a contribution for the next, let me have it (assuming I'm still Editor – we do have an AGM coming up) by the end of September.

Rob Fox

Contemporary Slavery in Europe

Report for CHRISM - The Old Abbey, Drongen meeting of European POs; May 2016

Stan Frost

It is over 10 years since the Pentecost meeting was last held here. This second visit was a much more worthwhile occasion than earlier. This time, travelling by Eurostar was a big improvement on the journey I remember with Eurolines - a coach and taxi adventure which due to various delays delivered my wife and I at the doors of the Old Abbey sometime after midnight, causing certain disturbance to those who greeted us. Ten years later and the scale of the building was something I had forgotten until being reminded by having time to spend exploring before the meeting began. I was able to take my constitutional walk by just using the corridors admiring the high timbered ceilings and huge 17th century paintings. Much of the old timberwork - particularly doors and doorframes has been renewed, and the rooms all seem to be en-suite now - earlier it was shared bathrooms along dark corridors.



Foolishly I was wearing new hearing aids which failed to function throughout the weekend. I was alerted to calls across tables at various times but I was not in a realistic position to hear what was required. I had to wait until I had opportunity to meet with my audiologist back home, before we could make the necessary changes

to allow me to communicate better! So apologies for my apparent vagueness and disinterest at the meeting.

Now, with thanks to the Equipe Belge we had a very profitable gathering. Although I had to leave on the Sunday to be back in time for commitments on the Monday, my early outward journey meant that I was at the venue in time to greet Jaak, Lieve and Jeff who arrived when expected on the Friday afternoon to prepare for the weekend. We decided where the meetings and worship would take place and the large meeting room had ample new cupboards for all the bits and pieces, as well as a fridge for the diverse beers provided for refreshment after enthusiastic conversations, and for the Pentecost celebratory evening on the Saturday.

The meeting received reports from the delegates describing circumstances in France, Germany, Italy, Catalonia, the UK, and Belgium. However the contributions from each group inevitably focussed more upon situations involving immigrants rather than the main issue. This is a major social concern and it is likely that many of those who are forced to move into new places or are trafficked in the search for new employment opportunities will be coerced into slave like conditions with restricted freedom of movement.

Unfortunately the opportunity to visit centres where refugees were based had to be re-arranged, so we missed the opportunity of talking with those directly involved in the local situations. We had a presentation from a manager of one of these places but sadly my French let me down and I have to rely upon what others translated. Reports by others who attended representing CHRISM will, I am sure provide more interesting and relevant reading derived from the various contributors.

I think that collectively we were faced with a topic about which most of us have little direct experience - up until recently we have accepted as normal practice, situations that are clearly exploitative. Locally in Derbyshire we have been informed about what happens with Sports Direct and this is currently the subject of a government enquiry. Similarly, on the continent there are concerns about how IKEA treat employees - no doubt this will attract more publicity later. There was no opportunity to add UK observations about what used

to happen in the 40's and 50's. Then it was expected that children would be excused going to school if they helped on local farms with haymaking and potato picking. Currently such jobs are now fully mechanised or use labour provided by those who are prepared to work for small wages - allegedly immigrants, especially on the farms in coastal areas.

Post Script:

Since the end of the weekend conference there has been a report by Tim Wyatt, in the Church Times (3rd June) under the title, 'UK sets World standard with Slavery Act'. A comprehensive survey by the Global Slavery Index has found that the UK is leading the world's battle against modern slavery. The GSI website lists who are involved with the international research done with the Walk Free Foundation established by the Australian mining magnate & philanthropist, Andrew Forrest & his wife, to end modern slavery. It is partnered with the CofE and the Vatican to set up the Global Freedom Network (2014). It is estimated that there are 45.8 million slaves worldwide, with 11,700 being in Britain. India reputedly has the largest number of people in slavery (c.18 million) In N. Korea there are 1.1 million slaves, equivalent to 4.3% of the nation's population - so that N. Koreans are proportionately the world's most enslaved people.

The UK's 2015 Modern Slavery Act is recognised as a significant step forward to identify and prevent slavery with penalties for those prosecuted. To some extent this vindicates the Diocese of Derby who were being criticised in the Drongen discussion for publishing a poster which advises involvement of the police when suspicious circumstances arise. This recent UK legislation is the standard that all countries should be encouraged to aim for and the 2016 Global Slavery Index urges other wealthy nations to enact laws to penalise organisations which include slavery in their supply chains. In the year since the enactment of the 2015 Act, over 100 companies have reported on how they safeguard their supply chains from forced labour. It is clearly an international issue which impacts everyone - food we all need, goods and services we use are all made available at the cost of other people's freedom and we have a collective challenge to deal with this continuing crime.

We came away from Drongen prepared to be alert to situations we might be living with and encouraged to engage with those being exploited and the agencies who might be able to make things different - even if this might just be the local police force!

***Modern Slavery, a Reflection from Drongen
European Worker Priests, Pentecost 2016***

Nick Yates

This International conference of Worker Priests (PO) was billed to be all about modern slavery and I had been fired up by the preparatory work done with Phil Aspinall and Stan Frost as to what was involved. So I was somewhat surprised to see that pre-conference submissions from several delegations focussed on refugees only. This, then, is my impression of the lines of discussion from the conference, not a verbatim report, nor a list of the conclusions reached, or even of all the issues covered.

Phil, Stan, Susan Cooper and I from the UK joined a rather disparate group of fellow delegates from France, Belgium (Flemish), Germany, Italy and Catalonia (but not Spain), that assembled at the vast former seminary in the Oude Abdije at Drongen, near Ghent, Belgium, for the Pentecost weekend and tried to make sense of the significantly contrasting preconference papers. There were *prêtres ouvriers* (PO) strongly attached to the Roman church and those, of various denominations, deeply ensconced in the politics of work and very definitely on the anti-capitalist wing, workers who are not yet priests, wise retired priests no longer workers, and those who are none of those things but engaged. The proceedings were in French translated for the non-French speakers with varying success. Communication was at times a little tricky as the range of acronyms used by the different language groups could be mystifying and confusing in a rapid delivery.

After agreeing to disagree on the first day there was gradual progress towards looking at the whole picture. This involved the situation of the *precariat*, defined as: those people whose existence

is without security or predictability, adversely affecting their material, psychological and social welfare. This group includes refugees, but also those in low paid occupations or unemployed and unable to get work, the disabled, the mentally ill and those on parole. This group is suffering increased social exclusion because of declining social relief associated with austerity programs. Then there are those in our communities, often illegals, who are exploited by others and, of course, there are the modern slaves.

Émigrés of all sorts are naturally the preoccupation of most European countries, some facing completely unregulated invasions of both asylum seekers from war zones and from tyranny, along with the perennial economic migrants. This impacts especially those working with the *precariat*, such as the priests, social workers, trade unionists, medical workers and many others

The local and indigenous precariat group resent the refugees, whom they perceive as incoming competitors for already scarce resources. This is one of the causes that has led to burgeoning support for right wing, racially motivated parties such as "*Alternative für Deutschland*", "*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*", "*Pegida*", United Kingdom Independence Party and "*Le Front Nationale*" in France, and other smaller groups.

There were many stories demonstrating the anxieties of these committed people; we heard:

- Fritz, a retired Priest from Germany had concerns about the growing number of Wahabist mullahs in some increasingly introspective ghettoised Muslim refugee groups whose adherents encourage conformity with the group – "didn't see you at prayers on Friday"; clearly there are risks of radicalisation here.
- Phillippe a PO working in the French union movement had anxieties about the legal status of refugees without papers and no route to obtain any.
- Giancarlo, a priest from northern Italy, was concerned that terrorists are alleged to mingle with those fleeing war zones and so get access to Europe, often with new and uncheckable identities, but how can they be identified?

- Leh from Berlin – “We must have respect for all those living amongst us”.
- Jean Claude, Secretary General of the French Worker Priests (ENPO), urged co-operation, living together constructively builds a just world, “*Jesu vit avec le precariat et partage avec les esclaves*”.

On Saturday afternoon visits had been scheduled but in the event only one happened, the rest of us had group work in the abbey. Phil's visit took him out of the abbey and into Ghent, to the Zuidpoort - a community centre which is not just a place of welcome and meeting, but based on a fundamental principle to be a place where the poorest in society have a right to speak and be heard (www.dezuidpoortgent.be). He met many people who were part of the community. One notable feature was the "Babelbank", a park bench which volunteers wheel out into local parks around the tower blocks, to sit on, and invite people to join them in conversation - again, with the aim of listening to others and giving them a voice.



Stan reports that the visit he had booked never happened and instead they had what proved an incomprehensible presentation (to Stan!) by a visiting speaker, involving much concentration on Refugees, and the fear that they might be taking over.

My visit was about the political configuration of Belgium (rather complicated) and its relevance to the trades' union structure. The union organizer presenters described: thoughtful discussion about industrial action amongst the Flemish Belgian workers; and significant willingness to strike at the drop of a hat amongst the French speaking Belgians – rather like France at the time. It was very scholarly, but only just touched on low wages, unemployment, and immigrants in passing. Phillipe, the French union activist found it fascinating but then he would wouldn't he? We also had an "apéro" with the local PO group in Ghent, and social contact with the local "L'Arche" community, occupying part of the Oude Abdije.

Returning to the issue of slavery, Stan had brought a poster from a Derbyshire slavery awareness group, which suggested ways of identifying those who were not free. This had been sponsored by the police, the County Council and the Anglican diocese. An approach to the police was suggested if slavery was suspected. Two parts of this caused discussion, the first was a logo "making Derbyshire safer". This irritated the German delegation (not unreasonably) who wondered who was being made safer (it was an unreformed and recycled bit of UK government propaganda in fact). The second suggested that if a situation of exploitation was suspected, then the police should be involved – this exposed great differences, between us Brits and the other Europeans, in that respect and trust for the police and security services was considerably stronger in Britain. Most thought involving the arm of the law would be counterproductive as the exploited/slaves would be arrested as they would have no papers. With the collusion of the authorities the gang masters would simply vanish. Much discussion ensued as to what should be done. The charities working in this area were important (Amnesty, Oxfam, Walk Free) as was the church, the unions - particularly in France - and in some countries the press, although probably not in the UK with the notable exception of the Guardian, but finally a change in the law was what was required to give rights to all workers, regardless of status. There were the usual tropes about: categorising refugees into "justified", fleeing war and terror, and the "unjustified", economic migrants. Stan agreed to take these comments back to his antislavery group in Chesterfield.

So what was it all about, there is certainly a link between the refugee crisis and slavery: refugees are at risk of being enslaved or at the very least exploited, but this does not help with the original question as to what is modern slavery. Enslavement is probably as old as the human race, but in the modern world this is hidden more widely than in former years, but is just as prevalent. It also involves religious justification for the slavery of women and others (especially Wahabist teaching). The supply chain issues were discussed in a small group with concrete examples and some ideas as to how to combat this (1) (2) (3). Then there is the issue of those people trapped in low wage, low esteem employment, the precariat; are they slaves of global capitalism?

It was a very valuable conference, even if we did not completely answer the initial question or produce the proclamation hoped for by some of the more activist, anti-capitalist, leftist delegates. The cohesion was palpably helped by the, thoughtful and spiritual devotions led by the various delegations to start the day (Phil's were tremendous) and the communal, inclusive Pentecost Eucharist.

It was generally agreed that the issue of slavery needs to be moved up everybody's scale of importance; this theme recurred throughout the weekend. Laws, both national and European, will be required to regularise the status of, and provide some protection for, émigrés of all types, along with universal rights for all working people. Management of the neo-liberal economic model, prevalent throughout the wealthy West, which leads people to exploit the system, wherever they can, for economic, greed, is also essential. Some hope in the current political climate!

Resources:

(1) www.walkfree.org

(2) See Modern Slavery, A slave in Scotland:
www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/may/28/slavery-human-trafficking-hotel-workers-bangladesh-scotland (all of the European fears are also here but well hidden)

(3)

www.cips.org/Documents/About%20CIPS/Ethics/CIPS_ModernSlavery_Broch_WEB.pdf

(There are many relevant references on the web especially The Guardian website)

SSMs of the Old Catholic Church of Germany Frankfurt, 16th - 18th Oct 2015

Phil Aspinall

Some 19 participants, a mixture of priests and deacons of the Old Catholic Church of Germany (AKD), attended this annual conference of MSEs. As noted on my previous visits, MSEs are a significant proportion of the clergy of the AKD. There were, as always, several newcomers to the group, but many are becoming old friends and, although it was some 5 years since I had last been able to join them, it was like returning to a family reunion. Several members of the group have joined us at CHRISM conferences.

Readers should note that these are Old Catholics not "Old Roman Catholics" as was stated in error in the July 2015 Journal – the defining principle of the Old Catholics is they are not linked to the Roman church because of the question of Papal authority. I apologised during the weekend for this basic error.

For the last few years they have been meeting at Hoffmans Höfe, a very well-appointed conference centre in Frankfurt (chosen as the most central point for the majority to travel to). The house was established as a workplace for people with disabilities, living in community with able-bodied, and providing training and formation.

During the recent years the group has changed its name, reflecting the change in the title used by the AKD. They used to be called Ministers in/with Secular Employment (Geistliche in Zivil Beruf), but they are now known as Honorary Clergy (Ehrenamtliche) – a somewhat familiar change for Anglicans, to become "Self-Supporting Ministers"!

The participants are an interesting collection of people, and most of them are still in work. Their range of jobs is also interesting, and they (unlike the European Worker Priests) are mostly in professional jobs, including things such as University lecturers, Nursery School teachers, Psychiatrist Therapists, Government officials – and of course, most are engaged as Priests and Deacons in Old Catholic parishes.

The theme for the weekend was the newly published liturgy of the AKD for the blessing of same-sex Partnerships. The sessions on the Saturday were led by Peter Ben Smit, an Old Catholic theologian from the Netherlands – he was an excellent guide and facilitator, and led us into some very stimulating and profound theological discussions of a quality I have not experienced for some time. I have a copy of the liturgy if you would like to look at it in more detail.

We began the morning session looking at the bible readings provided in the liturgy, which I have listed below if you are interested. In small working groups, we were asked to pick one and use it to prepare a sermon – the group I was in chose the passage from Samuel (David and Jonathan).

During the afternoon we looked at liturgy itself and the meaning of Sacraments and Sacrament in the context of Old Catholic and Orthodox (very interesting in itself). I found myself slightly disadvantaged by not being familiar with the German law on marriage (which does not yet include same-sex relationships) and the AKD marriage service. We were greatly helped by having one of the authors of the liturgy with us. The discussion ranged over the nature of contract and covenant (Bund) and of faithfulness (Treur). The liturgy is titled a service of blessing, but after much discussion it was proposed that the Prayer of Blessing was a sacramental action – and that this would be put to the Synod.

The Bishop of the Diocese of Germany, Matthäus Ring, was unable to be present, so we did not have the annual "Bishop's Report" as I have described in previous years. But the committee members (who are automatically on the Synod of the German Diocese) gave a

summary of the events and issues of the year – a key subject for debate has been the relation between the SSMS and the Stipendiary clergy. (Sounds familiar?).

We celebrated the Eucharist on Saturday evening around a huge table in the room we were using for our meeting. I find something very compelling about the relaxed and informal style of Old Catholic worship – although obviously in a very venerable tradition ! There was also worship each morning and evening led by different people using the AKD prayer book – and as always there was lots of singing.

The date has now been fixed for their conference next year: **30th September - 2nd October 2016** which will again be at Hoffmans Höfe in Frankfurt (also very convenient for flights from the UK!) I would encourage you to come and meet with them and join in this conference, so please contact me if you would like more details.

As a postscript, Franz Segbers, who has attended two of our conferences, was unable to be there; however I went on to stay with him and his wife afterwards, and found myself helping Franz prepare a letter to the Government Ministry for Human Rights over persecution of the church in Philippines. Franz, and one person at least, are hoping to come to join us for CHRISM events.

Liturgical texts for the Rite for the Celebration of a Blessing of a Partnership:

Ruth 1 14b-17

1 Samuel 18 1b-4

Proverbs 3 3-6

Ecclesiastes 4 9-12

Isaiah 43 1-5a

Isaiah 63 7-9

Luke 22 22-31

John 15 9-12

John 15 12-17

Matthew 5 1- 12a

Matthew 7 7-12

Matthew 7 24-29

Matthew 14 22-34

Matthew 18 19-20

Romans 15 1b-3a, 5-7, 13

Philippians 4 4-9

Colossians 3 12-17

Hebrews 10 22-24, 25b

2017 International Worker Priest Conference

This will take place as always over the Pentecost Weekend, 2nd - 5th June 2017, hosted by the German delegation in Essen - and you are warmly invited to attend.

The 2017 conference promises to be different as the Germans have already invited the younger French Worker Priests who are currently in work (Prêtres en activité professionnelle). The theme has yet to be decided - so please email your suggestions to Phil Aspinall (philaspinall0@gmail.com).

Please send suggestions before October so we can feed them in to the planning meeting in the autumn. And please consider coming to the conference.

For further information about the Worker Priest movement, see:

<http://www.mission-de-france.com/>

A missionary diocese of the French Catholic Church: 250 clergy, many of them worker-priests, plus lay associates.

<http://www.pretres-ouvriers.fr/>

National membership organisation of French Worker Priests.

Other organisations of ministers at work include:

<http://www.pcusatentmakers.org/>

US Presbyterian ministers in part time paid church work but also in secular employment.

<http://www.nassam.org/>

The National Association of Self Supporting Assistant Ministers (NASSAM), relatively small group of non-stipendiary ministers of the Episcopal Church of the USA.

<http://www.bivocational.com/>

US Southern Baptist ministers in part time paid church work but also in secular employment. Speaking of which, it is great to see veteran Bivo Dennis Bickers is still flying the flag ...

Can ministry exist in a secular job?

Dennis Bickers

I hesitated to use the term "secular" in the title for this post, but I knew this is a question people sometimes ask, and they often use the word secular to separate it from ministry. Some bivocational ministers even do this. I don't think there should be that separation because I believe that everything that a Christian does should be seen as ministry.

I have been a bivocational minister throughout my 34 year ministry. I've always done something else besides my ministry. Much of that time I worked in a factory. During part of the time I owned and operated a small business. Recently, I obtained my auctioneer's license and started an auction business. In each of these settings I've had the opportunity to minister to people who I would never have met in my formal ministry settings.

Since starting an auction business people have asked why at my age I would want to start doing something like this. For starters, I love auctions, and the idea of being an auctioneer appealed to me. Secondly, I saw opportunities to minister to people in this setting. Essentially, there are three groups of people who use the services of an auctioneer.

- Some people make their living buying and selling. Many of these people are pickers who support their families by buying what other people don't want and selling those items for a profit. I work hard to see that they get top dollar for these items, and in so doing I'm able to serve them and their families.
- A second group of people are those who need to downsize or begin to sell off items that their family members do not want. A common statement I hear from many of these people is, "We're getting older and need to get rid of some of this stuff, and no one in our family is interested in it." It's a relief to these folks when I'm able to begin selling these items and getting them out of their homes.

- The third group of people are those who have an estate they need to sell. Parents or other family members have passed away, and often their heirs don't even know what all is in the estate. Perhaps they live in another state and cannot easily dispose of the estate. An auctioneer is able to minister to these family members by selling off the estate for them.

In each of these scenarios I'm able to provide a service, a ministry, to people. It is not unusual when I tell people that I am a minister that people begin to open up personal issues they are dealing with. Recently, this happened to me twice in one week when I was meeting with people who wanted me to sell some items for them. These folks began to share some significant recent hurts in their lives. Neither of them attended church or had a pastor to talk to. Not only was I able to listen and minister to them, I was able to suggest a good church in their communities that had pastors who could continue to provide ministry to them.

The answer to the question is that ministry can exist in your secular job. In fact, if there are no opportunities for ministry you may be in the wrong job. I believe God places His people in situations, including work, where we can be a light to a people who are trapped in darkness. Our ministries must not be limited to the church facility but must occur in the workplace, the market place, and anywhere else we may be.

Book Review

Falling upward. A spirituality for the two halves of life

Richard Rohr, SPCK, 2012; ISBN 1459635752

Margaret Yates

I am writing this review as *une dame d'un certain âge*. My appreciation of the book reflects my place in the second half of the life-cycle, a position shared with the author. Richard Rohr is a Franciscan priest of over 40 years, founder of the Centre for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque New Mexico, author of numerous spiritual books and in the eighth decade of his life. Thus he writes this book from the vantage point of a wise elder within the Christian

church who has observed that our failing can become the foundation of spiritual growth in later life.

My emphasis on age reflects the thesis of the book which argues that our lives can be divided into distinctive parts: first and second halves. The first half is characterised by creating a strong 'container' for our identity when we focus on building careers, purpose, wealth and core human relationships. The container needs to be strong to hold all the contradictions of modern living and working and yet, despite the achievements, we are left feeling unsatisfied and searching for more.

The second half of life is lived through filling the container because a good container can hold a broader and deeper world where the soul can find its fullness. It is more about being than doing, although the doing can consist of uniting fruitful activity within a contemplative approach. It is about personal and spiritual integration and becoming whole, what Rohr calls a 'unified field'. It is how we creatively hold the darkness of life's failures and losses so that they become an essential part of our spiritual growth.

Why is this relevant to MSEs in a special issue of the journal concerned with *Starting*? Because, according to Rohr, in order to become our True Self, made in the likeness of God, we must transition from one half to the other and this involves necessary suffering which he terms "Stumbling over the stumbling stone". We reach that point in our life when, spiritually speaking, we are brought to the edge of our private individual resources and have to give up control to the One who created us. "The bottom line of the Gospel is that most of us have to hit some kind of bottom before we even *start* the real spiritual journey" (p. 138).

The *Starting* here is Rohr's "falling upward", akin to "falling" in love but also, he argues, because only those who have gone "down" can understand "up" and he uses the Alcoholics Anonymous analogy. He argues that if the first half of life has been well done we can rise up from the stumbling stone and begin to fulfil and enjoy the second half of life. Thus the heartbreaks, disappointments and first loves of life become stepping stones to the spiritual joys that the second half of life has in store for us. Or to put it another way, the first half of

life is writing the text, and the second half is writing the commentary on the text. (p. 143)

Rohr writes clearly and accessibly. He is influenced by Jungian psychology so the development and management of the ego and our shadow side are important in the process. Together with personal examples, he employs myths ranging from Odysseus to the Wizard of Oz to illustrate his arguments. Whilst the arguments of this book resonated with me, I was left questioning whether they would be meaningful and relevant to someone in the first half of life. I suspect its relevance is limited. Nevertheless, for those of us in the second half of life, it is a stimulating and encouraging book.

Starting ...

Milestones and rituals of working in publishing

Helen Peatfield

Initiations:

- *Human Resources:* I first started work at Harper Collins doing work experience so my experience of a first day was a little different to those that start having never set foot in the building. On the first day of my first contract I was escorted up to HR. It was 'Occupy Rupert Murdoch' week, so I had to have my passport checked at the door. In the open plan HR department I stood by someone's desk and they gave me a folder with my contract to read, sign and return, health insurance and pension information and a code of conduct. This was all very exciting and felt more like the first day of school in September when new text books get handed out. It was so unlike temp jobs and bar jobs where there is no formal welcome - you just fill someone else's warm seat and 'pension' may as well be a foreign language.
- *New Desk:* I was then shown to a new desk with a filing cabinet which was all my own but still seemed to be filled with mysterious papers from the previous occupant. I brought a jam jar in to put pens in, and I seemed to have

the choice of about 12 printer-sponsored calendars. I went for one which stood out least, and bought myself a ruler and a pen at lunch time, not knowing that there were stationery drawers overflowing with biros.

- *IT*: in order to operate the computer and do any work you have to be completely vetted by IT and given a username and password. This can take weeks and new starters can often be seen vainly alphabetising bookshelves because there is nothing else to do. Since the Sony fiasco, a lot of emphasis has been placed on internet and IT security. As soon as you get a password there are several online exercises you have to complete relating to corporate security. These are mostly common sense but with a few strange wild cards that seem to be hang-ups from the Cold War.

Celebrations:

- *Number one best seller*: Every time a Harper Collins book gets to number one in any best sellers chart there is an email from communications followed by drinks for people who work in the division. The divisions being: Children's, Fiction and Non-fiction, Fourth Estate and William Collins, Harlequin and Mills & Boon and Collins Learning. If a book is number one for consecutive weeks in lots of publications this can result in one division having daily drinks whilst the rest of the divisions in the open plan office look soberly on.
- *Author visits*: Drinks are also had when an author visits. Authors usually come in and have a meeting with their editor before being taken upstairs to the fancy and very corporate 17th floor where they will be given a fizzy drink and a cheese straw. The editor will talk about the author and how well their latest book is selling or how many awards they have been shortlisted for and the author will awkwardly eat the cheese straw and sip champagne.
- *Long service*: In my department Harlequin/Mills & Boon and Group Production there are lots of members of staff who

have worked at the company for a long time. For every 10 years you get an extra day's holiday and for 25 you get a week's holiday. We recently had a combined 40 years' service, which was celebrated with some post-meeting prosecco. My boss has worked for Mills and Boon since she was 19 in the mid-1980s when it was still owned and run by Mr. Boon. Heart-warming speeches are often given about how much the company has changed and how they are not leaving, and then it is back to work.

Pilgrimage:

- *Printers:* There are several places you get to visit when you first start in publishing. One such place is Clays Printers in Bungay. Printers, as you can imagine, are very important to publishers and a having a close relationship with them and understanding their processes is vital. Going round is very exciting, watching them make plates and bind. Bungay is a small town and everyone there seems to have worked at the printers for generations, adapting to changing competition and processes.
- *Training Courses:* Book Industry Communications runs several courses for all levels and I have been sent on two to date, which were 'An Introduction to Book Production' and 'Pre- Press Preparation'. Both were in good locations. One was at Faber in Bloomsbury, which was great because it gave me some insight into how other publishing houses operate, and the other was at a repro house which is where all production images are created. I got to see how colour proofing and industrial scanning works, as well as how book and magazine jackets get made up.
- *The Photocopier:* Another form of pilgrimage is the much shorter trip to the printer/scanner/photocopier. This is a short route from my desk but an area where you are allowed to talk as well as sometimes swear at the machine. I end up doing a lot of printing for proofs to check margins.

Departures:

- *Redundancy:* redundancy is a tricky business and with the perpetual emphasis on how the book industry is changing it seems easier than ever to justify. The majority of redundancies happen when there is a change of management and the inevitable reshuffle and restructure, but there are a few curve-ball redundancies that no one seems to see coming and news of them spreads round the office alarmingly quickly by word of mouth.
- *Retirements:* these are met with the customary drinks and a card very much like the drinks for long service. However it is not back to work but a scramble to find out who will do what task, what strange things the person who is retiring used to do and how soon someone will be appointed.
- *Maternity leave:* this always seems to happen much closer to the birth than I thought it did. The point at which the expectant mother can't reach the keyboard and can't stand up without being asked if it's due today, is the day a fancy cake and some John Lewis vouchers make their way to her desk and everyone over thirty tells a tale of a stressful birth whilst the expectant mother goes steadily more green.

Helen is a member of the congregation at St Peter's, Ealing, and started a full-time job at Harper Collins about a year ago, after various part-time jobs and an internship following graduation. The above divisions are her own. It is interesting to note that Initiation is individual but everything else has an element of community!

Should I stay or should I go now?

The challenge of maintaining integrity in NHS mental health work

Margaret Trivasse

The government's most recent initiative for tackling mental health issues is a programme called Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT). The aim is laudable; mental health has long been the poor relation in NHS priorities. The reality, at least in my

experience of its implementation, is rather different, and raises challenges for me as a worker in the sector. I have always believed wholehearted in working for the NHS whereby clients get a service which is free at the point of delivery, and those who would be least likely and least equipped to seek out private therapy can be seen. Because I have been ideologically committed to the NHS, I have mostly managed to go along with what it has asked of me and have provided a service to the client within the rules (mostly). And where I have nudged the boundaries, I have been able to justify my actions on clinical grounds and this has been accepted. I now find myself working for a service "where attention to targets, outcomes, protocols and policies is privileged over attention to the patient's psychological needs" (Rizq, 2012). Can I continue to work in a system where the prophetic voice is utterly powerless to resist the juggernaut, or is my place to continue to stay alongside the voiceless?

Some background. I trained as a counsellor in the 1990s in the person-centred school of counselling grounded in the work of Carl Rogers. Although broadly defined as humanistic in principle, I found close parallels with Christian belief and practice, and so the modality was a very good fit for me. The counsellor accepts the client with unconditional positive regard, believing that they are capable of working through their own difficulties if accompanied by an understanding therapist, a parallel to the loving value in which God holds us. The counsellor does not tell the client what to do but enables them to come to conclusions based on their own values, just as God does not pull our strings. It is through the trusting relationship with the therapist that the client moves. In this close relationship, "all hearts are open and all desires known". Facing and articulating pain and fear and shame open the way to growth.

This background, together with a heartfelt longing for all people as children of God to flourish, particularly the most disadvantaged, made joining a primary care mental health team in a deprived inner city area an ideal fit for me. It has felt to be the central element of my vocation, and within that has evolved an equally passionate commitment to working with asylum seekers and refugees.

Enter IAPT. Its underlying driver is to get people well enough to return to work. In itself this is not unreasonable. Purposeful work can promote good mental health. But there is already a conflict with pure person-centred practice; the counsellor should follow the client's agenda and not have an underlying motive of their own. That is easy enough to get round, for what happens in the therapy room is between the counsellor and client. Where should my responsibility lie? I am employed by the agency, and that agency tells me I should be trying to get the client back into work. *Ministers-at-Work* often raises issues of power. My natural inclination is to side with the underdog, the client (with whom I am already in a power imbalance). But the institution also demands my allegiance.

In my fourteen years with the team I believe I have been loyal and conscientious and have mostly managed to find ways around the system. I have kept my head down and got on with the job. This is becoming increasingly difficult. IAPT is constructed around Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which is a more directive and structured approach than counselling. I have no quarrel with CBT *per se* and have every confidence in my colleagues who work within this modality. My argument is that one size does not fit all, and counsellors are being overtly marginalized. If any of us leave, we will not be replaced. CBT works well with literate people who live orderly lives and whose first language is English. It is less well equipped to deal with those whose first language is not English and whose social circumstances are chaotic. Already there is the risk of discrimination.

IAPT rules say that if someone does not attend without letting the service know, or has more than two cancellations, they should be discharged. I am well aware that missed appointments cost money, and I have tended to over-book appointments to compensate for this. However, immediate discharge when someone is in hospital or cannot get childcare or does not have credit on their phone to call is inhumane. I would prefer to take flack rather than kick someone who is already disadvantaged and may have struggled to get into the system in the first place.

My main concern about IAPT is the way therapists are expected to use outcome measures. At each session we are required to deliver

standard questionnaires about depression and anxiety. In itself, this is not a bad thing: although the measures we use are crude, they do indicate progress or otherwise and can highlight areas on which to focus. They should be our servants, but they are in danger of becoming our masters. A person's initial score determines whether they should enter the service, and quite a narrow range is deemed acceptable: too low, and we cannot take them on; too high and they are regarded as too severe. In both instances, the client will not reach what is known as "recovery", which is the end goal of IAPT, and the basis on which the service will continue to be commissioned.

Under IAPT, the outcome of therapy, therefore, is to reach a certain target figure, with the client's own agenda in second place. Of course, good work can be done in enabling people to cope better with their difficulties and some do indeed reach the "recovery" score without skewing the sessions or manipulating the figures. To a counsellor determined to be wholly present for the client, accepting their wishes as to what is important for them, the scores are at least a distraction and at worst disrespectful. They also risk excluding huge swathes of people with complex difficulties who will benefit from therapy but not to the extent of reaching "recovery". As yet, services for these more troubled clients are inadequate. I fear that the most socially deprived and least articulate will once again be left out. Asylum seekers and refugees are prime examples. If they do manage to access the service, they usually score too high and, due to past trauma and current uncertain circumstances, they are unlikely to reach "recovery" in twelve sessions (now an absolute maximum where previously there was a little flexibility). They are thus excluded.

It is a matter of principle for me that these clients (today's *anawim*) are not forgotten. At the time of writing, it looks as if I might be pulled out of IAPT so that I can continue working with asylum seekers and refugees. If it happens (and I have nothing in writing) that is a good result. If I can find a way of embedding a service for them within the system, so that they will continue to be seen even if I leave, then fourteen years of raising their needs will have been worthwhile. That does not solve the problem of access for those with other intractable problems such as chronic ill-health and

domestic abuse. (Or even bereavement: it is simply insulting to try to "treat" grief in twelve sessions.)

It has become increasingly hard to be loyal to the institution. I have put my head further above the parapet than ever before (not least as facilitator of the counsellors' special interest group where we are discussing the ways in which IAPT conflicts with our Ethical Framework). This has perhaps encouraged more vocal members to make direct challenges to management. I don't think we can stop the juggernaut which is IAPT (and my letters to parliament have received either no reply or a perfunctory response). It sounded like a good idea but Rizq (2012) who has analyzed the programme, sees it as "a perversion of care where NHS mental health services now disavow the realities of suffering, dependence and vulnerability". It is applied rigidly and without consideration for human differences or those in deprived areas. I want to find ways of working positively and ethically within it, but is that possible in a fatally flawed system? I have not even begun to describe the impact on the therapists of being required to see more than the recognized maximum number of clients, nor the stress of constant compromise.

To quote a phrase frequently used in a different context: "should I stay or should I go now?" At what point is my integrity completely undermined? Should I be taking the institution's money while challenging it? If I am not permitted to continue working with the asylum seekers, this will be a real dilemma. While in no way seeing myself as indispensable nor of having the answers for my clients' difficulties, I do believe I offer them an opportunity to be heard, treated with respect and valued. I believe I am called to be alongside them, and to support colleagues as we struggle with an institution which risks draining all of us of our unique humanity. I cannot abandon the ship just yet.

For further reading, see Rizq, R. (2012) The perversion of care: Psychological therapies in a time of IAPT. *Psychodynamic Practice* 18(1):7-24.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

Margaret Joachim

On April 1st 2014 I boarded a Central Line train from Acton to Epping. I then phoned my daughter, who wanted to know why I was in Epping. 'I've retired', I said. 'April Fool', she replied. But it was true – and I had completed the first of my list of things to do.

You are given two conflicting sets of advice when considering retirement. One version recommends making no decisions about next steps for six months, getting used to not working and not rushing into commitments which one will later regret. The alternative is to have detailed plans ready to put into action from R-Day +1, on the grounds that otherwise one will sink into *ennui*, carpet slippers and hopeless decline. I am constitutionally incapable of doing nothing, so option I was never going to work, but moving straight from one form of relentless activity to another didn't seem entirely sensible either. The plan, as it existed on R-Day -1 had three components: reach the far end of the one London Underground line that I had not already fully travelled, discover at what time I naturally wake up in the morning*, and find a mentally-stimulating volunteering assignment. Oh, and there was something floating about in the background about ministry, as well.

Two years later, I have decided that the only thing I have retired from is being paid. One of the continuing uncertainties about MSE is what happens to the M when the SE is no longer in place – whether this comes about as a result of redundancy, retirement or resignation for some other reason (health, for example, or to take on caring responsibilities). An early challenge was the discussion with my incumbent, whose clear expectation was that now I 'was no longer working' I would put a lot more time and effort into the parish. Fortunately he is a reasonable man, and after a certain amount of dancing around handbags we agreed that retirement doesn't automatically come with an increased vocation to parish ministry. That was one new start I was not going to make. But if I no longer had work colleagues, where was my ministry?

'Well', as my college tutor used to say at infuriatingly frequent intervals, 'it all depends what you mean by...'. I certainly have

colleagues. I started to volunteer one day a week in the herbarium at Kew, so there were a handful of other volunteers and a professional botanist or three. But a weekly stint of filing flat, brown, dried plants in a building designed on much the same principle as a Victorian prison didn't initially have obvious ministry potential. Until, six months after I started, government funding for Kew was drastically cut back and a comprehensive 'restructuring' got under way. The botanists were largely out of their depth with the statutory consultation process, and their staff union wasn't helping much. But I had been chair of the company UK employee forum before I retired ... how could I resist offering a word or two of advice ... and in no time I was helping them draft a set of sharp questions for management and explaining how a compulsory redundancy programme was supposed to work.

There are other colleagues too. I've been active politically for longer than I've been employed, and although I had to abandon attempts to become an MP when God muscled in and decreed that he wanted me to be ordained instead, I have continued with various back-room activities. Now some rather senior people came along with a request. Would I stand for election for vice-chair of the party in England? This position carries some pretty heavy baggage, as the holder is responsible for disciplinary process and complaint resolution. Yes, they realised that I wasn't a lawyer, or an HR specialist, or an expert in PPERA (the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act). But I wasn't identified with any particular faction within the party, and they thought I could be trusted to be fair and objective 'because of the collar', as one of them put it. (Surely an object lesson in skilled arm-twisting – how does one turn down a request made like that?) So I stood, and there was no opposition, probably because it is a pretty nasty job. Organising investigations and listening to hearings and appeals on complaints about bullying, sexual harassment and child pornography isn't easy or pleasant. Nor is dealing with people's increasing tendency to say things on social media in terms that they would never use in a face-to-face conversation. Is there a right not to be offended? Should Party Conference be a haven of free speech or what is now called a 'safe space'? It seems decreasingly possible for it to be both. To what extent should our younger members be protected from the possible consequences of their cheerful indulgence in drink and drugs? If an

ethnic-minority candidate isn't selected for the good seat for which they have applied, is this institutional racism or did someone else just come across much more effectively at the hustings meeting? Where is Solomon when I need him? Ultimately, if all parties to a dispute end up only mildly miffed, I reckon we've probably been as fair and objective as possible.

This is undoubtedly ministry, and it is as big a challenge as any I have faced so far. Prior experience and 'transferable skills' are contributing in ways I could not have imagined. Moving from running big project teams for which I had personal management responsibility to executing and revising procedures and making decisions which affect people I scarcely know is both a substantial change and no change at all. Empathy, attention to detail, a nose for problems and an underpinning of prayer are essential for both.

And I have MSE (and SSM) colleagues. I hope that the constitutionally-required step-down from being CHRISM's secretary won't cut me off from the rest of you. It will give me a bit more time to devote to a third attempt at creating a support and networking organisation for SSMs in London diocese. There are no SSM officers, no general strategy for SSM-relevant ministerial development and no coherent view (let alone policy) of SSM deployment. Parish SSMs are reckoned to be 'normal clergy'; the rest of us are essentially invisible. But this time we've managed to start a series of evening get-togethers, and maybe something more lasting will emerge. 'It's so good that this is happening at the grass-roots', a senior diocesan officer said to me the other day. 'It's much more authentic and effective that way.' And no doubt it relieves him of any need to consider what might otherwise be done. But even grass roots need a certain amount of nourishing and encouragement. Perhaps there is a ministry to SSMs.

Do I miss my work colleagues? Yes. Do I miss the work? No. I am no less occupied than I was two years ago, and there is just as much opportunity to celebrate the presence of God and the holiness of life in my work. Not being paid for it doesn't make any difference. I'm still an MSE, ministering in the secular environment. I've also acquired a greater element of choice in what I do and how I organise each day, and I'm quietly indulging in a little bit of ministering to

myself, pursuing study and research in a topic which has interested me from the side-lines for many years. Retirement has proved to be a start, a continuation and a culmination. Long may it continue to culminate.

* About 9am. After all these years of getting up at the crack of dawn, it turns out that I'm an owl.

Freedom and the Holy Spirit

Peter King

I expect that Friday 24 June 2016 will rate as one of those famous "where were you when?" moments. Sitting on the underground train on the morning after the Referendum was surreal. Nobody spoke and most seemed dazed by the result. The unknown was chosen over the known and risk substituted for the Status quo. The wisdom of the decision will occupy months if not years of political debate and media discussion. Try not to let It spoil the next few months of relaxation and holiday. Peace, space and freedom is a vital part of what being human is all about.

Paul in his writings frequently contrasts the world of law [many rules and regulations] with the freedom found in faith. Agreements, fiscal policies, constitutional practices and corporate planning are of course part of our world but not the whole of it. We are not slaves to human made structures because in some ways the richer part of our lives lies in the relationships which we make and the values and hopes which we share. We are all children of promise and inheritors of hope. We are part of a pilgrim church and asked to travel lightly and in faith. By the grace of God our baggage of sin, guilt, anger and fear is set aside. We should travel in trust, hope and expectation.

Often we bind ourselves to the shackles of routine, worry and regret rather than seeing the future as an adventure to be embraced with hope and trust.

The Referendum has revealed many divisions in our society and highlighted inequalities, marginalisation and real social issues to be addressed. We pray for the prompting of the Holy Spirit to inform and change human hearts, wills and aspirations. The gifts of the

Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness and gentleness. What a wonderful world if we practiced what we preached!

Let us take time to be with our families in July and August and discover the joy in the God-given freedom to be truly human and alive to the riches and wonder of creation and of the great creative power of the Spirit. The Rules and Regulations can wait until we gain, through play and relaxation, a holistic understanding of what is truly of importance to us in God's holy, rich and loving creation.

4 Ways the Culture misunderstands Spiritual Formation

Frederick Schmidt

This article is a follow up to that run in the last edition of MAW, '4 Ways the Church misunderstands Spiritual Formation'.

For much of the late 20th Century and all of the early 21st Century, an increasing number of people have described themselves as "spiritual, but not religious."

Even if that trend left the church at some disadvantage in speaking to the needs of a growing segment of the population, the development was a welcome one. It was also a wake-up call to a church that had allowed an important dimension of its experience to slip to the margins of its life.

The church's failure to do that work, however, left people to navigate the contemporary spiritual landscape on their own, sorting through not only the misunderstandings that were common across the church, but the ways in which our culture misunderstands spiritual formation as well.

In order to provide some orientation to that landscape, my previous article described the four ways that the church misunderstands or misrepresents formation. Here I want to describe the four ways in which – from a Christian perspective – the culture misunderstands spiritual formation. I say, "from a Christian perspective," because – of course – if you don't share Christian assumptions about

spirituality, then you can certainly describe spiritual formation in almost any way you like. And people do. But for those who are trying to get their bearings from a Christian perspective, it is important to understand how even well-intentioned alternatives misrepresent the goals of the spiritual life. So, here's my shortlist of cultural misunderstandings of spiritual formation.

Spirituality as Talisman

A talisman is an object that wards off adversity and insures good luck and for many, the latent assumption is that if we are spiritually attuned, we will not suffer – or at a minimum — we will not be troubled by suffering. That magical assumption has wrapped itself around spiritual practice in the church and, in particular, around the practice of prayer. I have lost count of the number of people who assume that if life is difficult, then they must have failed in some way.

The Christian message offers two correctives to this misunderstanding of the Christian life:

One: Our journey into God is made possible by God's grace. We are never good enough and our goodness and the rigor of our spiritual practice is not the key to that journey.

Two: That journey into God sustains us in lives that are inevitably marked by suffering and mortality. Contrary to some caricatures of the Christian faith, it's message is not escapist or about "pie in the sky by and by." It is about a faith that sustains us in cooperating with the work of God's Kingdom, which is breaking into a broken world, but which is not yet fully transformed.

Spirituality as Quietism

If I am spiritual I can elect to withdraw from the world's needs and from the obligation to address those needs. Fed to some degree by popular images of spiritual people as somehow otherworldly and given to a faintly tragic demeanour, it is not uncommon for "more practical types" to complain that the problem with spiritual formation is that it's all about withdrawing from the world. There a number of

ways in which this caricature of spiritual formation misunderstands the Christian tradition.

One: Withdrawal from the world is a secondary meaning of the word “quietism.” The other — and primary — definition of quietism is a withdrawal from one’s desires in favour of attending to the things of God. It is, then, far more about getting clear about our desires and God’s and, for that reason, quietism (properly understood) makes far more rigorous demands upon the person who practices it than does the popular understanding of it.

Two: Even those who live in monasteries, devoting themselves to regular prayer, understand that prayer involves engagement with the needs of the world. Convinced that the world is marked by physical struggles that mirror spiritual struggles, the difference is in the conception of what is at stake.

And three: Christian spirituality is always and everywhere about a journey inward that requires a journey outward. Unlike some forms of spirituality, spiritual formation in the Christian tradition is never simply for the benefit of the one who gives themselves to the journey into God. The journey into God leads us into deeper connection with others as well – with the needs and the struggles of those living on life’s margins and facing peril.

Spirituality as Therapy

Many think that to be spiritual is to be emotionally well-adjusted and emotionally well-adjusted people attend to their spiritual lives. Predictably, in a culture that finds the notion of sin and redemption quaint or quite simply objectionable, it is easier to think of the spiritual life in therapeutic categories than it is to think of it in theological categories. Bookstore shelves where self-help and spirituality merge with one another are an artefact of this approach to the spiritual life.

To be sure, spiritual formation *may* lend itself to a better-adjusted approach to life, but it doesn’t necessarily. And when a person is deeply in touch with the will of God, the priorities of a deeply spiritual person may not even look like a balanced approach to life

from a secular point of view – particularly in a world in which self-actualization is often given priority over every other commitment. Whatever its impact on our emotional lives, spiritual formation assumes that we are made in the image of God and that as such, we are more than flesh and emotions. And everyone, regardless of their psychological state can begin the spiritual journey.

Spirituality as Lifestyle

In some corners, the spiritual life is all about lifestyle. If I can just get the lighting and the mood music in my life attuned, I will be centered and whole.

This, it seems to me, is where cultural understandings of spiritual formation finally land if there is nothing transcendent and divine at stake in the spiritual journey. As such, the desire to change our lives hints at the fact that there is, in each of us, that God-shaped vacuum that St. Augustine described.

But for Christians, spiritual formation can never be about interior decorating. The assumption, in fact, is completely different. Formation – from a Christian point of view — is demanding, transformative, and liberating in ways that can be invigorating and frightening at the same time. And it is fundamentally and inescapably about an encounter with God in Christ. *What is striking about all four approaches to spiritual formation on offer from our culture is that to one degree or another, all of them lack a transcendent dimension.*

At the same time, however, our culture's desire for spiritual deepening speaks to an existential need that has been missing from our life as a church. Human beings are made to love, know, and desire God, and if the church expects to offer the world a gift that speaks to that longing, it will need to provide guidance that moves beyond the self and leads people toward the divine.

Resources

The **Lawyers Christian Fellowship** (<https://lawcf.org/home>) is worth exploring; lots of useful resources.

Floating church anyone? Then try <http://stpetersbarge.org/>

At West India Quay, Limehouse, and anchored in the local community, in both senses.

Weekly Insights for the Workplace: A Devotional for Christian Professionals, by Agnes Amos-Coleman and Carolyn Cogswell. West Bow Pres, 2016. ISBN 1512733369.

John Wedlake comments:

Our Christian faith can't be left for Sunday use only, yet the pressure in many working environments does not permit thoughts of much other than the immediate tasks being faced. So I welcome this Devotional, which focuses on the Christian in the workplace. A good starting point would be to read each week's Devotional on Monday at breakfast, on the journey to work, or during morning coffee time, and so set one's thoughts on an aspect of Christian living and work for the week ahead.

It isn't always wise or possible to try to discuss one's faith with colleagues while at work, but I still recall the witness of a Christian who worked in the same factory as me many years ago. His work brought him into contact with people of all levels and responsibilities. Everyone spoke well of him. His clear Christian witness was in the way he did his job. As you read this Devotional each week I pray that you may, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NJKV).

Events

LICC: CHANGING LIGHT - A weekend experience for people in their first year of working life or preparing to start work.

The transition into working life can be both exciting and overwhelming - 'What kind of job do I want?' 'Where does God want me to be?' 'What will this new phase of life look like?' 'How does faith fit into a workplace?' We're convinced that 'work' matters to God, and that our own joy, purpose and fruitfulness at work grows as we

see it in the light of God's bigger purposes in the world. So if you're in this transition, we would love you to join us as we support you at the beginning of this adventure of living and learning with God at work. More detail on LICC website.

WHERE: Camping in the beautiful fields of Latimer Minster, Buckinghamshire, HP9 2XE.

WHEN: From 5pm Friday 9th September, to 2pm Sunday 11th September, 2016

CABE events

HUGH KAY lecture – Wednesday 5 October

CABE is excited to announce that Paul Vennells, Chief Executive of the Post Office will be speaking at our Hugh Kay Event. This will take the form of an interview allowing opportunity for interaction and debate.

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

Advance dates for 2017!

Not like CHRISM to be this organised, but already booked are ...

CHRISM Reflective weekend – a return visit to The Briery, Ilkley, Yorkshire, 24-26 February 2017.

(<http://www.briery.org.uk/wordpress/>)

CHRISM Annual Conference – 14-16 July, at Westminster College, Cambridge. (<http://www.westminster.cam.ac.uk/>)

CHRISM Reflective weekend – the old favourite, Holland House, near Evesham, Worcestershire, 23-25 February 2018.

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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