

CHRISM Paper 2

CARE

Care is essential to Christian ministry

In 1995 the CHRISM Conference explored the particular kinds of care which Ministers In Secular Employment are called to exercise,

Taking part in this exploration were people from accountancy, banking, building, careers advice, counselling, customs and excise, dietetics, education, energy economics, engineering, food technology, industrial health and safety, kiln technology, management, medicine, radiography, science and town planning. Some were in industry, some in public service and some in individual practice.

FOR WHAT DO MSE's CARE?

In a word, for the work.

Where the work is to make or maintain a hard, concrete "thing", we care about the thing itself. We care that it is appropriate, safe, attractive and has whatever other qualities it needs to do its job well.

Where the work involves the production and explanation of information, that must be appropriate for the recipient, accurate relevant and well presented.

Where the work involves performing a one-to-one service for a particular person, it should be done with competence, gentleness, consideration, and appropriate insight.

Where the work involves the creation of designs, programmes, policies or procedures, caring means acknowledging the human dimension, attention to detail, and ensuring practicability.

The product of work is always important.

Bad or inappropriate work weakens God's kingdom, diminishes the divine image in us, and adds to the divine suffering.

HOW CAN THIS CARE FOR THE WORK BE SHOWN?

Above all, by the minister's full involvement in the work.

And by encouragement, affirmation, and a supportive attitude to others involved.

Such ministry directs care to the work, so giving things, skills and ideas their holy value and meaning.

Care necessitates the minister's involvement in the hard debates on what may or may not be ethical in relation to the particular work.

WHAT FOLLOWS FROM SUCH CARE?

Active care leads to reflective thought and prayer.

Reflective prayer confronts the particular work with the purposes of God. It draws it towards God's creative activity, revealed in the practical and the material. Since God's work is good, the work about which we pray is pulled towards that goodness. It is brought into a relationship with Christ's sacrificial and life-giving work.

Reflection and prayer enable us to see what is lacking in our work. Such awareness makes possible the redemption of inadequate work.

We have to live with the inadequacy and imperfection of our work. We seek greater perfection in it. So to does God.

WHAT LEADS ON FROM REFLECTION AND PRAYER?

Care, reflection and prayer together ensure that work ceases to appear a God-forsaken activity.

Whenever some revealing of the loving nature of God takes place, work-places become holy places.

HOW DOES THIS CARE AND PRAYER RELATE TO OTHER ASPECTS OF MSE?

Seeking out the ethical way, grappling with the moral dilemmas, and relating pastorally to others are always important parts of ministry. Ministry in secular employment is no exception.

Ethical discussion and pastoral concern are best seen as integral, but not necessarily dominant parts of caring for the work itself.

Michael Powell © CHRISM 1996

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