

Ministry Where You Work?

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On Sunday October 7th 2007, the Coventry Diocese MSE group (five members) held a workshop starting to explore ministry at work with seven other people from around the diocese – six of whom were readers.

Our initial flyer sent out with the diocesan mailing was an open invitation to anyone interested in exploring the possibility of their ministry at work. This was followed up by a direct individual invitation to all the readers (220), OLMs and NSMs (about 30 in all). Eight readers applied to come whilst four readers were unable to attend but were positive in expressing an interest in an alternative date. Two NSMs and one OLM applied thanking us for the invitation but were too occupied (church-wise) at present.

Our 'workshop' was held from 2pm to 5pm in a comfy sitting room at our diocesan retreat house with tea and coffee on arrival. After introductions, members of the MSE group described their everyday work. (I described my pre-retirement job as a doctor.) We then broke up into small groups of three or four people, each having one MSE and the invited people described their work and its value for them. This was very interesting and valuable for all of us as most felt that it was a rarity for anyone to ask what they did in their life outside of church; to be listened to attentively was a bonus!

We reconvened and presented a summary of the occupations to the whole group. The MSEs then talked about "How might this be ministry", relating examples in our own work and defining them in theological terms.

We returned to our small groups and the invited participants were asked to reflect for a while on their own occupations and then try to define some aspects of their work theologically. This as always proved quite a challenging task but also an enjoyable and constructive exercise as was shown when the resulting thoughts and reflections were shared with the whole group.

We also pooled ideas on "what next?" Several people suggested a further similar session and others would like to attend the two monthly diocesan M.S.E. meetings when possible. After a tea and cake break we completed the session with prayers for our work, for all of our ministry and for guidance on our plans for the future.

The whole afternoon finished on a positive note and it was felt that the 'sharing' of life at work had been very helpful. One reader of many years standing had never been asked what he did at work (!). Bearing all the comments in mind and the general positive response, we are organising a further similar meeting at the end of February 2008. The people who came to the October meeting are being invited to attend a planning meeting in January

Personal Reflection

I think it was the comfortable surroundings, the simplicity of the format, the feeling of sharing all together and acceptance of each other's experience that gave comfortable space to talk and reflect, then think about the reality of our ministry at work. The positive response of readers and the lack of it from NSMs said something important about how the two groups see their whole ministry. I believe there is a very real need for MSE input and support here; the participants also voiced this need.