

Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in
secular ministry

Number 112 January 2010

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 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 inside rear cover).

Further information about CHRISM may be obtained from the Secretary or other members of the Committee

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Copy deadline for the next edition: Friday 9th April 2010

Please e-mail contributions to: Mike.Rayner@dphpc.ox.ac.uk

Editorial

This edition of Ministers-at-Work is shorter than some but nevertheless has lots of important and interesting things in it; I hope you agree.

As promised in my last editorial this edition has two articles on the theme of 'Training for MSE'. I was hoping for more but 'where two or three are gathered...' These two articles – although they both describe recent training for ordination in the Church of England – indicate that that experience can be very different. Ruth Brothwell's experience was generally negative: 'I am left deeply saddened and discouraged by the whole experience.' Martin Dryden's was generally positive leaving him with 'a rosy afterglow'.

Well we all know that people's experience – even of the same thing - can be quite different. The idea behind collecting together people's experience of training for MSE was to identify how CHRISM could help make it better. Given that there will only be MSEs if the Church recognises MSE as important and nurtures those with a vocation for this ministry, then MSE training is vital to the survival of MSE. This means, in turn, that CHRISM and its members should be deeply concerned about MSE training and not just ordination training: post-ordination training, lay ministry training, etc., etc.

So can we learn anything from Ruth's and Martin's experience? Read the articles and see (and ideally respond with a letter to me or an article of your own). The penultimate paragraph of Martin's article has most resonance for me. Martin writes: 'In fact I can truly say that I would not be writing this article now were it not for Phil [Aspinall] and Aidan [Smith] coming to talk to the STETS students...Having a lecturer talk about MSE in a theoretical context is one thing; meeting a real MSE takes learning to a deeper level.' This is surely a challenge to us all!

As well as the articles on MSE training this edition of Ministers-at-Work has lots of important notices from CHRISM – including a notice of an Extraordinary General Meeting, information about our

forthcoming annual conference and an appeal for the victims of the Haiti earthquake. Please note and act!

Mike Rayner

CHRISM Extraordinary General Meeting, 27th February 2010

Notice is hereby given that an Extraordinary General meeting of CHRISM will take place on Saturday 27th February 2010, at 2.00pm, at St. Deiniol's Library, Hawarden.

Agenda:

1. Election of a Moderator to serve for three years and preside for one year from the 2010 Annual General Meeting.

Nominations, which must be proposed and seconded by CHRISM members, may be made to the Secretary until the start of the meeting. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the meeting.

Apologies for absence may be sent to the Secretary: Margaret Joachim, 8 Newburgh Road, London W3 6DQ, e-mail: revdrmouse@ntlworld.com.

CHRISM members' e-mail addresses

Whilst we appreciate that not all our members are on e-mail the vast majority are, and as part of improving the way we communicate with you we want to ensure that we have got the right e-mail for you on our membership system.

Please could you send your name and your current e-mail address to our Membership Secretary Lyn Page, e-mail: Lyn.page@willow-bank.co.uk so that we can check that we have got the right one.

CHRISM Reflective Weekend 2010

26th - 28th February 2010
St. Deiniol's Library,
Church Lane, Hawarden, Flintshire CH5 3DF

My life, my ministry ...

*An exploration of where we are now, how we
got here, and where we are going,
led by Canon Michael Williams.*

In the usual format of a relaxing weekend there will be time for both reflective silence and companionship and to enjoy this magnificent 19th century Hall and Library, founded in 1889 by William Ewart Gladstone. St Deiniol's is located in the picturesque village of Hawarden, just 10 minutes drive from Chester and 15 minutes from the M56 motorway.

Canon Michael Williams was previously Principal of the Northern Ordination Course and Rector of Bolton.

Cost, from dinner on Friday evening to lunch on Sunday, inclusive: £140 (members); £150 (non-members); plus £25 if en suite required.

There may be one or two places left even at this late stage. E-mail Margaret Joachim at:
revdrmouse@ntlworld.com
or phone 0208 723 4514



CHRISM membership

Please note that we have a new Membership Secretary: Lyn Page, Willowbank, Hawkey, Nr Liss, Hampshire, GU33 6NF, e-mail: Lyn.page@willow-bank.co.uk. Please also note that the membership subscriptions have gone up slightly. For 2010 the basic subscription will be £35 (£25 for concessions and £10 for students). Therefore if you are a member of CHRISM please could you fill in the enclosed membership form for 2010 and return it to our new Membership Secretary (even if you pay by standing order).

CHRISM website

On 4th December 2009, and after a few heart-stopping moments to do with obscure issues with file extensions and directories, the new CHRISM website was launched gleaming and sparkling into cyberspace! While the address is still the same (www.chrism.org.uk), the design has been completely overhauled.

There have been many improvements but the watchwords have been minimalism and consistency. It now has a very simple black-and-white look with a blue heading. The menu bars have been rationalised for ease of navigation and the page sizes have been reduced for legibility. There is also a feature on each page to increase the font size for the visually impaired. Bubble help on hypertext links has been carefully included to ensure that the partially-sighted will have a good experience when using screen reading software with a synthesised vocal engine. Membership and other forms have been redesigned in PDF format and the resources have been made more accessible: nothing is more than one or two clicks away. We should also be far more accessible to web-surfers: Google "ministry secular employment" and CHRISM appears at the top of the list.

Our new webmaster is Martin Dryden and he would be very pleased to receive constructive feedback and suggestions both on the content and the design of the new site. You can e-mail him at martin@mont-ube.net

Help for a worker-priest colleague in Haiti: an appeal

Margaret Joachim

Ramiro Pampols is a Catalan worker-priest. Phil Aspinall, Stan Frost and I used to meet him regularly at the annual European Worker-Priest get-togethers. (He used to argue with us about what he regarded as our “fat-cat capitalist fascist” lifestyles.) Ramiro worked for a large Spanish trades union until about three years ago, when he retired and went to live and work among the poorest people in Haiti. He worked among street children, broken families and the mentally-handicapped, and sent us the occasional e-mail describing his life there.

Just over a year ago, Haiti was hit by four hurricanes in the same season. They flattened the shanty-towns and devastated what little trade and agriculture existed. However, people gradually pulled their lives back together, and Ramiro’s last letter, at Christmas, was hopeful. Here is one of the photos he sent – of himself and one of the street children.

We know that Ramiro has survived the hurricane and is unhurt. But many in his local community are dead, or badly injured. The pictures we’ve been seeing on the news show what he and his neighbours are enduring. On Friday 15th January he sent another e-mail. It said, in part:

“The state itself has no structure. Everything is collapsing. As I write, I hear singing in the streets – children who are about to sleep on the ground, barely covered with a cloth, are distracting themselves from hunger as best they can. Everything is overwhelming. There remains only hope.”

We know Ramiro is already trying to help his people. We know he won’t be deterred by the “security issues” which are discouraging others – he has lived with them for three years. We know he is trusted by the people with whom he lives and works, and we know he will use any resources to the absolute maximum, because he has been doing that already for the last three years.



Please make a donation to help Ramiro. You may already have sent money to the DEC or another aid agency. But it will mean an enormous amount to Ramiro to know that his fellow MSEs in the UK are helping him. The other European worker-priest groups are also asking their members to contribute, and we hope that, together, we can make a real difference to the shattered lives of some of the most unfortunate people in the world.

The charity Ramiro works with can get money to him, and has opened a special bank account for the purpose. It's a Spanish charity (and a Spanish account), so you would have to pay an individual transfer fee if you made a direct payment to them. However, my PCC has agreed to consolidate any money received into a single payment which will only incur one fee. **Please make your cheque payable to 'St. Peter's PCC'.**

Please send your donations to me Margaret Joachim, 8 Newburgh Road, London W3 6DQ. I'll acknowledge each donation, make sure the money gets paid across, and let Ramiro (and CHRISM members) know how much you have contributed.

CHRISM Summer Conference 2010

16th - 18th July 2010,
University of the West of England in Bristol

Being human at work

Is work a dehumanising experience for many?
Where do we find our humanity expressed at work?
How can we make our work more human?

The weekend will be hosted by the Revd Dr Peter Johnson, the Head of The Living Centre in the Octagon on Frenchay Campus, and we shall work with a range of practitioners as we explore the essence of being human and see how it relates to our experiences of our work and workplaces. So here are some radical thoughts:

The work of a MSE is to get out of the way - to be human rather than Christian
Or to misquote St. Irenaeus - the glory of God is a man [sic] truly human

The Living Centre at the University of the West of England is a new service concept developed from the traditional model of chaplaincy. The service is based on the results of consultation with students and staff of the university. The concept is that of a service based on the word 'esse' - to be: the indispensable nature of something that gives it identity. The Living Centre therefore states as its aim - 'exploring the essence of being human'.

Eight aspects of human being have been identified and the service provides resources to explore the essence of each aspect:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Intellectual
- Spiritual
- Vocational
- Recreational
- Social
- Environmental

The Living Centre is hosted by the Octagon on Frenchay campus but the service is flexible enough to be delivered through any space. Other campuses have a focal space from which The Living Centre is advertised and some aspects delivered. The Octagon provides spaces for teaching and learning; prayer, meditation, reflection and wellbeing practices; rest, relaxation and socialising.

The University of the West of England (UWE) is a modern, growing university in the thriving harbourside city of Bristol. UWE is one of Britain's most popular universities, with around 30,000 students and 3,000 staff and is the largest provider of Higher Education in the South West of England. Students come to UWE from all parts of the UK, as well as a significant and growing number of international students from over 50 countries worldwide. Frenchay Campus, the main University Campus, was purpose-built in 1975 and lies about four miles north of Bristol city centre. It is linked to the city by a regular bus service as well as the nearby Bristol Parkway train station. You can find out more at <http://www.uwe.ac.uk/>

The weekend will incorporate the CHRISM AGM and visits to local places of interest and of work. The city contains much of interest from the cathedral to the historic port, from art galleries to the parks of Clifton. Accommodation on the UWE campus is in single-bedded ensuite study bedrooms. Partners are welcome – so why not make this part of a longer break?

The cost for the whole weekend, from dinner on Friday evening to lunch on Sunday, inclusive will be £170 (members) and £180 (non-members). Day visitors are also welcome and special rates can be arranged. If you have limited financial resources, a bursary from CHRISSET may be available on application to the Trustees.

We hope you will want to come. Space is limited, so please, book the date in your diary now, and return the enclosed registration form before 1st June 2010.

Thoughts on training as an MSE

Ruth Brothwell

It is of course a fact that there is no such thing! Vocation, selection and training are all about 'priesthood'. It is a fair statement to say that 'a priest is a priest is a priest'. The question about what actually a priest is, causes many interesting discussions, sometimes late into the night in retreat centre bars and university conference rooms. At the end of the day the Church of England seems fairly set in its ways of thinking where training candidates for the priesthood is concerned.

I have had the benefit of training on two different courses and ample time to reflect and compare views, syllabuses and preparation for this role. Three years actual training and a theological degree later I am still bemused and confused by the issues that seem to tax the minds of the course directors and tutors. They try hard to incorporate lots of thinking about 'fresh expressions', 'pioneer ministry' and mission. Nevertheless the overriding intention seems to be to maintain an active workforce for doing the stuff that people come to church expecting to be done. To continue the offerings of old. And often it feels that, wherever possible, they would like to do them free of charge.

I am still not there yet and putting aside all issues of suitability and practicality I am left deeply saddened and discouraged by the whole experience. I have had three wonderful years of learning. I have been stretched in my thinking but also to the limits of endurance where time demands are concerned, and my husband and son have sacrificed much family time together driving many miles to support my comings and goings. But still there is no end in sight. I remain part of a wonderful parish where I fully participate in liturgy and preaching and where the incumbent has made every effort to ensure ample experience in the liturgies as well as teaching me about them. The parish have engaged in my business world and my efforts to provide pilgrimages and prayer services.

My Diocesan Bishop is hugely sympathetic but at heart though, the real issue is that there is no engagement with the model of mission that MSE is endeavouring to promote. I ask myself time and time again: how is MSE different from the lives of the early Apostles, from Paul, tent making in Corinth for over a year, supporting his ministry there, from the conversations with the metalworkers in Ephesus and with the itinerant nature of leadership? Pritchard tells us that the priest's task is often to be a 'kingdom-spotter'. 'What is God doing out there and how can the church join in?' (Pritchard J, *The Life and Work of a Priest*, SPCK, 2007.)

The courses I attended both aimed to provide two streams: theological study leading to a university accredited degree in ministerial studies and a 'formation for ministry' strand running alongside.

At the first, ministerial formation took place over monthly weekends while a weekly weekday evening handled the nuts and bolts. It was here each week that we were taught about liturgy and in one module, we were required to create a seasonal service around a theme. A small group of us were in full time work so put our heads together to explore how liturgy could be made to fit into a workplace situation as a seasonal offering. We thought about the use of conference rooms, their size and limitations. We realised that candles would set off the smoke alarms! We knew there would be limited time. People might set aside part of a lunch break but that is all we might expect. How to condense therefore a major piece of divine service into half an hour in a rather bland setting within four walls? We did our best and the exercise proved that more thinking was needed. It's why I suppose our mid week lunchtime communion services in the euphemistically named 'prayer room' are generally poorly attended. We are trying to fit a ready-made article into something that isn't quite right for it. There is little sense of real community being formed – just a standard liturgical offering being made. Is this not an issue to grapple with?

But back to the project – it was given a bad mark. Perhaps, we thought, because no-one understood it. It didn't fit in with what the vicar of a church in a large town felt should be an offering for the people.

On course two, there came a time for reflecting on problems encountered in our ministry and how we would deal with them. Naturally everyone brought parish problems to the table. I knew that my work would not primarily involve these issues so I brought up an issue of business fidelity. That seemed way outside the experience of those gathered and you could feel a palpable sense of 'is this relevant, is this ministry?' It felt very excluding but then most of it did. The issues we face every day are hugely important. Why else would our newspapers, Internet and TV bulletins concentrate on these stories? We don't often get the BBC reporting on the issues of a local PCC but those of us who are in the centre of City business have to deal with publicly debated issues every day. A whole session was taken up with those little issues which of course are important to those people who meet in villages throughout the land. But for the growing number of Christians caught up in the affairs of the world called by God to enter the ministry, it felt that there was no attempt at understanding.

The first course provided debating sessions at the start of each weekend. We debated 'a just war?' and 'supersuccessionism'. Here we grappled for a bit with current issues. But just for half an hour or so and very late on a Friday night after a long week of work and a long journey to get there. Then it was back to liturgy, rites of passage and how to deal with parish teams of disenchanted people. (Business people could tell them a thing or two about that.)

I was saddened by the overall feeling of 'not being one of them'. The strange thing is that when I describe the MSE concept to my fellow workers they think it is wonderful that the Church should break out of its mould and be amongst them as a touching place. I see Paul again in the tent making shop – maybe he too despairs and waits.

The final piece is still to be put in place - the parish title placement. Here is the rooting; here I will learn the 'priestcraft' and what it's all about to be a minister called by God to work for the church. Of course, I am told, it is very important to find a parish who will understand that I am not going to be there very much of the time to work for them...so I wait.

CHRISM members: what are your experiences? How were you trained? How were you prepared and supported for your role? Am I alone in my sadness? Surely what we need is some robust thinking here – some grappling with Bosch, Ramsay, Pritchard and others. Pritchard makes some illuminating comments about the future of the church and after describing the social situation that we know only too well he goes on to say: ‘the consequence of these major cultural and ecclesial changes is that today’s priests may be ministers of the last rites of the church as we know it... Today’s priests need to be living in two ecclesial worlds at the same time...We have to do the future thinking for the church while the former model is still just about surviving...’

So, enough of this moaning. Perhaps some real contribution to the Ministry Division of the Church of England is needed. A push to have some term time spent on every ministerial training course exploring issues of the world: issues that can be thought through and new theology formed. I believe wholeheartedly that the MSE model is the future of a vibrant church. Or do we constrict into little groups of ancient people without voice or reputation? Is the Church just preparing itself to have more time for its fund raising bazaars, fetes, flower festivals and whilst its local pastoral work is very important is it busy preparing liturgy just for those who turn up?

What is a priest? Now there’s a thought.

Ruth Brothwell is currently Head of Business Support at HBV Enterprise, a charitable support company in Hackney, East London. This role supports small businesses in East London through the opportunities for them arising out of regeneration projects including the Olympic Games. She is also an ordinand with Guildford Diocese where she lives with her husband Keith and son, Jon. She feels passionately about ministering to those who commute to London each day out of the Surrey heartlands. Ministering where people actually ARE is a byword!

Ordination training for MSEs: half-baked or hard-boiled?

Martin Dryden

According to the great Mark Twain, I was a cabbage until June 2009. That was the month I finished my training course for the ordained ministry with the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS) at Sarum College, Salisbury. "Training is everything" Twain said. "The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education." Thanks Mark...

The course took two instead of the usual three years as I had some recent relevant academic experience (I was in the process of completing an MA in Christian Spirituality at Sarum College and I had gone through Reader training at the end of the 1990s). I therefore had a head-start on many of my colleagues who had not written an essay in 20 or 30 years. I knew my onions, my cabbages and my cauliflowers. I even knew the Hind Report, and had read it, and that was why I approached ordination training with mixed feelings.

Back in 2003, Hind expressed the Anglican Church's new resolve to ensure that every person in ordained ministry should achieve a minimum of diploma level in theology. At a time of almost universal literacy and an increasing percentage of the British population who have received a university education, it cannot be right for the Church's leadership to be less well-educated than the people in the pews. That was all good. On the other hand, Hind used the secular language of academia, management and the market and expressed the wish that ministerial education should be 'efficient'. Clearly, the creation of team ministries to serve multiple benefices requires a focus on collaborative and managerial skills that had not been necessary in previous generations, but part of me worried that Hind might be misinterpreted: it might inspire a managerial vision of ministry that owed more to the secular world than to the Church.

Another concern I had was that for all its talk about learning outcomes (measuring educational outputs rather than the inputs), Hind might end up (unwittingly) creating a focus on academic attainment. Clergy might begin to see themselves like any other secular professional and value themselves (and each other) on the quality of their academic achievements. They might become so earthly minded that they would be no heavenly good.

Hind had also advocated a system where the theoretical and practical aspects of training would be separated out and delivered in two phases, beginning with the theological. It would be more efficient: who could argue against that? The thing that worried me here was that industry and commerce in the UK seem to be rediscovering the benefits of apprenticeship (having rejected it sometime in the 1960s) just when the Church has decided to move in the opposite direction and opt for a more polarised system! I am well aware that the quality of training is inherently more variable in an apprenticeship model (because there are good and not-so-good trainers), but a one-size-fits all approach is not without its own problems. This is especially true given the growth in late callings, when many start ordination training with life experience that is both considerable and varied. Under such circumstances, isn't the best training system one that 'plugs the gaps' rather than puts everyone through a (rather expensive) theological sausage machine? Sausage machines might be efficient, but are they effective if not everyone wants sausages? To return to Mark Twain's quote, I feel that there is a great deal of truth in the old Irish adage that there is no point in boiling your cabbage twice. And how would these mass-produced theological sausages taste to folks who had been called to be MSEs: half-baked or hard-boiled?

Now at this stage you may be thinking that I am either obsessed with food or that I worry too much. You may well have a point. So what was my experience of STETS training actually like? If I had to sum it up in one sentence it would have to be in the words of Confucius: "What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember; what I do, I understand." I am not saying that I fell asleep in the tutorials (we studied with local tutors in small groups and came together as a year group at Sarum College for long weekends four or five times

a year). In fact we had some truly inspirational tutors. It is just that as the painful memories of the stresses and strains of the course fade away into a rosy afterglow, my abiding memories are of people and of events.

The theological content of our study weekends were punctuated by worship, which we organised and led in small groups. These events were immeasurably enriched by the ecumenical nature of STETS. I recall experiencing the vibrancy of charismatic worship; the surprising power of an entirely silent communion; the transcendent beauty of an Anglo-Catholic mass and the freedom of worship in the URC tradition (unfortunately, our year was the last one with URC students as the result of rationalisation within that church). We routinely created liturgy in unfamiliar traditions and so came to appreciate the great riches of Christian worship. At the risk of stating the blindingly obvious, Christian denominations are of no real significance out there in the secular world, so the ecumenical nature of our training contributed towards ministry in secular employment by helping us to look for God in the unfamiliar and to see God through the eyes of others.

While on the subject of the unfamiliar, one of my most vivid memories was from our interfaith weekend when in May 2008 we visited a bewildering variety of places of worship in and around Wimbledon. It had been planned that we would be the lunch guests of the Hindu congregation at the Shree Ghanapathy Temple on the Saturday. The Shree Ghanapathy Temple was the first fully consecrated Hindu Temple in Europe (having previously been St Cuthbert's Scottish Presbyterian Church), and, together with the adjacent Sai Mandir (a prayer hall dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba), it formed the cultural and religious hub of the Hindu community in Wimbledon. For someone who had never before visited a Hindu temple, the sights, smells and ideas were all bewildering and I have to admit that by the end of the guided tour I was feeling rather uncomfortable. However, all cultural and theological queasiness disappeared with the appearance of lunch (as it always does), which consisted of large quantities of fluffy fragrant rice, poppadoms and wonderful, spiced vegetarian dishes. We were all thoroughly fed and watered. It was only towards the

end of our visit that we discovered that there had been a mistake with the arrangements: they were not expecting us until the following Saturday. The women had seemingly effortlessly created an entire lunch for over forty hungry ordinands in just over 30 minutes. Their website says: "helping others is a major part of the way that we express our devotion to God as we believe that, through serving others, we are serving our Lord." I say "Amen" to that.

One image became increasingly important for me as the course progressed: a small stone sculpture inspired by Rublev's Ikon of the Trinity stands on a table in the entrance to the refectory at Sarum College. Its three pillars represent the three strangers who Abraham welcomed at Mamré and who ultimately welcomed Abraham himself as they ate together. The stone pillars represent the mystic union of three in one and one in three, which evokes the ecumenical goal of unity in diversity. They represent the contemplation that lies at the heart of God that transcends speech or intellectual activity. They represent the hospitality that I have come to believe needs to be at the heart of the ecumenical endeavour and of the Christian life itself. When I contemplate Rublev's Ikon, I can never work out who is being hospitable to whom and that, I think, is the point. The wonderful welcome given to us by the ladies of the Shree Ghanapathy Temple was the high point of my kaleidoscopic day out in Wimbledon. Their hospitality serves as a reminder to me that if I am ever tempted to see myself as bringing God into the workplace, I will be surprised when I find him there already.

One of the buzz-words in ordination training is formation. As a professional administrator who has become oh-so-cynical about the latest management fads and buzz-words (who went through Total Quality Management; Learning Organizations; Matrix Management; Business Process Re-engineering, to name but four?), my natural reaction was yet more cynicism (I strongly suspected that formation was a weasel-word for education), but I have come to appreciate it for what it is. I have not emerged from STETS as a cabbage with college education. The image that works for me is the butter stamp. (I do feel embarrassed to introduce such a

mundane illustration into such an august journal: I can only put it down to my food-obsession). The butter stamp leaves an impression on the butter but does not actually change its nature: butter is still butter. Where it falls short as an image is that the stamping is done by a third party whereas I understand formation as something you do in partnership with others.

As I mentioned earlier, while my recall of the theories of the atonement is beginning to get a little fuzzy round the edges (*mea culpa*), my memories of people and of events continue undimmed. My learning experience was immeasurably enhanced by time spent over the dinner table and the coffee machine. I am old enough to have experienced long business lunches in the 1980s. Things are now much more buttoned down with the dawn of the new millennium and the credit crunch and there is part of me that laments this change in culture. Relationships are built over the meal table, as the Church well knows.

So how did my training equip me for ministry in secular employment? I would have to say "so far, so good." I think that the Hind Report's vision, of concentrating the training on the theological groundwork in phase one, is positive for MSE because the provision of theological tools and the encouragement of reflective practice works for any sort of ministry, whether in a secular context or not. During IME 1-3 (as it is snappily called) there were two occasions when we had specific input on MSE. The first was in December 2007, when Phil Aspinall came to address my year group on a STETS Study Day. The second was in October 2008, when Aidan Smith, an MSE and curate in the City of London, came to talk to us on his ministry in the workplace. I distinctly recall Phil talking about the similarities between community and communion, especially how we deal with sin; atonement and reconciliation; absolution and conversion. The vocabulary differs in the workplace but not the issues. MSE, he said, is being in the mess along with others while the Incarnation was God coming into the mess. He described two different models of being Christians in the world: Worker Priests (when doing the work is one's ministry) and the medieval friar (who is itinerant between communities/groups, listening and looking at where God is at work, and pointing

to the Kingdom). "Everything is ministry", he said; "or rather everything should be in ministry". Aidan Smith gave us a very personal (and quite moving) talk of ministry in a large City of London corporate bank in the teeth of the Credit Crunch.

I am telling you about these two events, not because their message will be unfamiliar to you (it won't), but to demonstrate the impression it made on me. In fact I can truly say that I would not be writing this article now were it not for Phil and Aidan coming to talk to the STETS students. I believe that CHRISM can be particularly effective in promoting MSE by offering speakers to the theological colleges like Phil and Aidan, and perhaps you. Having a lecturer talk about MSE in a theoretical context is one thing; meeting a real MSE takes learning to a deeper level.

I liked Phil's description of MSE being ministry in the mess. I have heard God's call in the mess. I also believe that being in the mess, rather than just being told what mess is, is the road to wisdom. And the road to wisdom is where I would like to end my reflection on my ordination training, with a poem by the Danish inventor and poet Piet Hein:

The road to wisdom?
Well, it's plain and simple to express:
Err
and err
and err again
but less
and less
and less.

Martin Dryden works as a Non-Executive Director for Maurant, an international financial services company, and unlike Rob Fox is not in Jersey for tax purposes as he was born and brought up there! Martin was a Reader for 10 years until July 2009 when he was ordained deacon in Winchester Cathedral.

Ministry at work on the internet

Rob Fox

Fresh Expressions is keen to promote Workplace Church and provides a basic guide, with examples at <http://www.sharetheguide.org/examples/workplace>. The main example used, in Merseyside Police, focuses more on work than church. The guidance is basic but clear and positive.

Building – a project in ministry is another exploration of ministry through and within the built environment from veteran MSE and CHRISM member Michael Powell. Visit <http://www.building-theology.org.uk/building2.htm>, and prepare to be inspired!

Raymond Eveleigh's MA thesis on **NSM in the Church of England** is available on-line at <http://www.revray.co.uk/ministry/nsm.html>, and includes an informative historical background to the development of NSM and MSE. The link takes you to an introductory page, from where the thesis can be downloaded in Word via a link at the foot of the page.

The Anglican Episcopal Church International in Australia includes a section on **Worker Priests** in its Guide for prospective clergy at <http://aec-int-au.webs.com/vocations.htm>. The model is closer to the US Bi-vocational ministers than French Worker-Priests, but still interesting.

The BBC website carries a report on ordinations last year in the Dioceses of Hereford and Worcester at http://www.bbc.co.uk/herefordandworcester/content/articles/2009/07/07/diocese_ordinations_2009_feature.shtml, including **MSE** David Morris.

Business and Kingdom, Work and Spirit was a conversation starter for the Diocese of Guildford in 2008. A report on what arose is at http://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/downloads/departments/communications/church_kingdom_work_spirit.pdf.

The Diocese of Canterbury **Review Pack** (for clergy and lay workers) positively recognises **ministry in the workplace**. If your Diocese, region, province etc. is weak on ministry in and through work, this is worth borrowing from, at <http://www.canterburydiocese.org/bmt/ministrydevelopment/review/ministerialdevelopmentreviewpack09.pdf>.

Kathy O'Loughlin, on the staff of STETS, is developing a blog for former STETS students (no doubt others can join in too) supporting ministry in secular employment. More at <http://www.stets.ac.uk/staff/koloughlin.html>.

New Developments in Ministerial Training is an interesting article from Dr David Way, Theological Education Secretary to the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council. Available at <http://aocm.org.uk/blog/new-developments-in-ministerial-training/>, it is a brief but informative overview of current thinking in training and deployment of pioneer ministers and their relationship to local ministry.

News from local groups

The Coventry Group

Phil Aspinall

The Coventry MSE Group held another of their "Ministry where you work" sessions back in November 2009. We were, as previously, a mixture of Readers and ordained MSEs.

One participant said: "I found the whole morning very useful and enjoyable. I felt we had built bridges between Work – Me – God. I felt better about having given some serious theological thought to the situations facing me at present. I appreciate the openness I find in the group and throughout the sessions."

We began with time in which to talk about the things going on at work, but each person was then asked to concentrate on one particular incident or issue in their work. These were wide ranging, with people from a range of different workplaces: redundancy, parental expectations of care for their children, support for a co-worker trying to get pregnant (but also considering the impact on the business) and managing difficult people.

We explored these issues further and, as we did last time, looked for the sacraments we recognised at work, the signs of God's grace. We identified the rites of passage, such as baptism, marriage and divorce, and drew parallels with the sacraments of ordination as being key to recognising leadership. We seemed to talk in many of the contexts about the sacrament of reconciliation and the process of confession, absolution and forgiveness - but with the interesting thought about who, or what, needs forgiveness in a redundancy situation.

We talked again about the many ways we celebrate the Eucharist, but particularly made the connection with sacrifice - that we are recalling sacrifice made for others, and that this is to be celebrated in many acts of self giving.

The group members were keen to continue with this process of engagement in the real world of work and reflecting upon it, so we shall be organising another session within the next three to four months. Please let me know if you would like more information (see inside back cover for contact details). We also continue with our regular evening meetings, and, at the last one in October, we explained the structure of the MSE Lent Course to our new members and agreed we would promote it further (please see the separate panel).

These meetings are helping the participants discover their own MSE, as well as giving them a chance to talk about often-difficult work situations. We would encourage all of you to try something similar in your area.

Still looking for an idea for something to do for Lent?

Here's a Lent Course with a difference!

Joined up living - weekday faith

An invitation to hold a Lent Study Course in small groups

Starting from the day-to-day events of life, it is designed for use during five sessions in Lent. The course follows a pattern used by many of us to reflect on our daily work (paid or unpaid). We offer it for use in parishes, 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 Coventry MSE Group, has been run in several parishes in recent years. 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 starting point for the course was grounded in our own experience - in everyday life outside the church.

Somebody 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.

The course is designed to be led by a Leader, using the Leader's manual provided through the MSE Group. It obviously helps to have similar relevant experience. For more information please contact: Revd Felicity Smith, 01926 492 452 or felicity@fandi.me.uk.

The West London Group

Margaret Joachim

There has now been a CHRISM local group in West London for just over two years, meeting three or four times a year for discussion and mutual support and usually also once for a purely social activity of some kind. There are around half a dozen of us, and now that we've got ourselves organized we'd be happy to welcome other MSEs. The only qualification is that you can get to the meeting place (currently in Acton) for an 8pm-10pm meeting on any or all of March 18th, June 15th, September 7th and November 18th. If you're interested, drop an e-mail to margaret.joachim@london.anglican.org or phone 020 8723 4514 (evenings) for details.

Reports of past events

Annual Conference of the Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers, 31st October – 2nd November 2009, University of Our Lady of the Lake, Mundelein, Chicago, USA

Phil Aspinall

Doing ministry with muddy feet

The vast campus of this Roman Catholic seminary, much of which is now used as a conference and retreat centre, is a frequent venue for APT conferences. Close to 20 tentmakers gathered for "Doing Ministry with Muddy Feet". This year I was again the only Episcopalian but this will be redressed in 2010 as the conference will be hosted by the Episcopalians in Chicago.

The promised keynote speaker Frantz Cole, from Haiti, was unable to be with us, but Lea McCloud (Alternative Gifts International) and Linda Wygant (Grace Seeds Ministry in Chicago) ably filled our inspirational and learning times. And yes, we donned our work

gloves and muddied our feet as we pulled weeds and swept up leaves in the flowerbeds and a recently constructed labyrinth at First Presbyterian Church in nearby Libertyville. The Bible studies throughout the weekend worked our way through the stories of Luke Chapter 10, and were woven into our worship, and Eucharist.

The flyer for the weekend promised that we would be taken out of our comfort zone, and some of the participants provided challenging input to our bible study: "Can you live your life expecting that someone you despise would come to help you?" Several felt that we should have got our feet muddy in something rather more radical than a comfortable suburban church. Someone shared their experience of recently being made redundant – that was really having muddy feet. "Tentmakers are always outside the comfort zones of other people".

But, as always at these events, the theme is secondary to the heartfelt fellowship and mutual support which comes from spending a full weekend together, and meeting friends old and new.

On the Sunday we celebrated the festival of All Saints, and drew out from the various discussions and bible studies over the weekend some of the things which characterise a saint as someone who:

- recognises when they are in the ditch and the surprising people who help them out
- goes without fear into dangerous places
- takes risks for the Good News
- realises that they don't have to do it all and trust other people to take action
- knows when to take action and when to sit and wait
- shows hospitality and welcomes the outsider
- recognises the call and vocation of all people
- fights for peace, justice and reconciliation
- sows, plants and helps things grow
- lives constantly in joy and laughs a lot
- accepts hospitality, the food set before them, with humility
- shares the peace of God with all those they meet
- perseveres, trusting in the faith of God and moves on when things don't work out, shaking the dust from their feet

- loves the ***** and knows the robber to be their neighbour
- gets their hands dirty and feet muddy and knows that the Kingdom of God is near

As always, the weekend included the APT Business Meeting and reports on other APT activities. As I reported last year, APT has received a \$2000 grant from the General Assembly to visit Church Seminaries, and have begun with a session at Dubuque which generated very positive feedback. One seminarian said “for the first time I have hope; I have vision”. They have now developed a presentation which they can use elsewhere. Phil Gehman from the Pensions Department at GA reported on the collapse and near recovery of the pension fund during the cycle of the financial crisis.

Some six members attended the “Big Tent” at Atlanta in June 2009, which brought together ten different specialist sectors of the Presbyterian Church, including New Immigrants and Tentmakers, among others. The APT exhibition stand attracted many visitors, good conversations and useful contacts; they ran two seminars on Tentmaking which attracted mainly New Immigrant ministers who mostly, sadly, aspired to be full time in a church context.

Next year’s tentmaker conference is already planned for 12th – 14th November 2010. The Keynote Speaker will be Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Great Emergence*, and the theme “Emergent Christianity and Tentmaker Ministry” promises to bring together many and varied strands such as fresh expressions, pioneer ministry etc. The venue will be the University of St. Mary’s of the Lake in Mundelein, with easy links from Chicago O’Hare Airport and so easily accessible by direct flight from the UK. Once again it will be a joint conference of the Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (APT) and the National Association for the Self-Supporting Active Ministry (NASSAM), the equivalent Episcopalian group. Please put the date in your diary and watch for details as they emerge, or contact Phil Aspinall (contact details inside back cover) for more information.

Forthcoming events

International Worker Priest Conference, Pentecost 2010

Phil Aspinall

The Crisis

The Annual International Conference of Worker Priests will take place as usual at Pentecost and this year will run from Friday 21st May until midday on Monday 24th May. The venue will be just outside Brussels, arranged by the Belgian group, and so will be easily accessible by train from the UK.

You are invited to join the delegates who will be attending the conference, for this opportunity to meet with our European colleagues and to learn more of their experiences, struggles and successes. It is a chance to understand different ways of Christian engagement in the world of work and politics.

The theme for the conference was proposed at the end of last year's conference in Bergamo and thrashed out at a planning meeting in Paris just before Christmas:

1. The economic crisis imposes constraints

In businesses we find mass redundancies, blackmail ("take reduced hours to keep your job") and insecurity; and in society as a whole an increase in unemployment, reduced job prospects and loss of status (e.g. graduates forced to take menial jobs), repression by the powerful, loss of civil liberties etc.

2. Who pulls the strings?

3. **What prospects do we discern for change and liberation? Where do we see signs of hope? How do we contribute to them?**

4. **How does the light of the Gospel shine through this and what strength does it bring us?**

We are asked to discuss the theme among ourselves and prepare a short summary paper for the UK delegation to present to the conference. So, **even if you are not able to attend the conference**, I should be very grateful if you would send me your thoughts on any or all of these topics **by the end of February**, so we can circulate our paper by Easter. Please let us have any personal stories of experiences prompted by these questions – even the smallest contribution can be incorporated into our paper.

We are not asked to respond to all the themes listed under point 1 – we might even just take one. But it would be helpful to address the four points on any selected topic.

But the conference is not just about working on a theme. It is an opportunity to meet a stimulating group of people with diverse backgrounds, challenging views on the realities of our societies, dedicated Christian commitment, and their own fascinating stories. It is also very enjoyable, and will help improve your French!

We hope you will want to join us – please do contact me (contact details inside back cover) if you would like more details.

Other dates for your diary

Christian Association of Business Executives (CABE)

17th March 2010: Special CABE Network Event with Dominic Grieve, Shadow Secretary for Justice, more details to follow.

11th May 2010: CABE Paper with Baroness Cox, more details to follow.

(See <http://www.cabe-online.org/events.php> for more details of these and other events)

Faith in Business (Ridley Hall, Cambridge)

26th – 28th March 2010: Sustaining a business recovery. Faith in Business conference. At Ridley Hall, Cambridge. For more details including a booking form see: www.faith-in-business.org.

London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC)

27th February 2010: 21st century disciples with Bishop Graham Cray. One day conference organised by Mission Scotland in partnership with LICC aimed at Christians and church leaders eager to explore the challenges of whole-life discipleship in today's world At Newhills Parish Church, Aberdeen, AB21 9SS. Cost: £20 including a light lunch, coffee/tea. To book please contact Sarah-Jane Biggart by e-mailing sarahjane.biggart@missionscotland.org.uk or by phoning 07734 101358. For more information about this and other events see: <http://www.licc.org.uk/about-licc/events/>

The Modern Churchpeople's Union

13th – 16th July 2010: Shifting paradigms: theology and economics in the 21st Century. MCU Conference. Speakers include: Stephen Green, Philip Goodchild, Catherine Cowley, Michael Northcott, Valpy Fitzgerald and Kathryn Tanner. At High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 8SG. Cost: £245 (full conference fee, reductions available). Download a booking form at: <http://www.modchurchunion.org/events/conference/index.htm> or write to Elizabeth Darlington, Conference bookings secretary, 1 The Woods, Grotton, Oldham, OL4 4LP.

And finally

From Jim Cummins who was sent this by an accountant friend

Our Birth is our Opening Balance

Our Death is our Closing Balance

Our Prejudiced Views are our Liabilities

Our Creative Ideas are our Assets

Heart is our Current Asset

Soul is our Fixed Asset

Brain is our Fixed Deposit

Thinking is our Current Account

Achievements are our Capital Gain

Character and Morals are our Stock-in-Trade

Friends are our General Reserves

Values and Behaviour are our Goodwill

Patience is our Interest Earned

Love is our Investment

Children are our Bonus Issues

Education is Brands/Patents

Knowledge is our Dividend

Experience is our Premium Account

The Aim is to Tally the Balance Sheet Accurately

The Goal is to get the Best Presented Accounts Award

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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