

Ministers-at-Work

*The Journal for Christians in
secular ministry*

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*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 the Journal Editor

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Copy deadline for the next edition: Saturday 5th July 2008
Please e-mail contributions to: Mike.Rayner@dphpc.ox.ac.uk

Editorial

This is the first edition of the Journal that I have edited and therefore of course my first editorial. Producing this edition has been really fun but also much harder than I had thought.

Waiting to see what people would write has been exciting and I hope you like at least some of the offerings. Then there has been the intriguing task of assembling what's been submitted into something which hopefully seems vaguely logical and coherent. Oh and finally there have been the joys of getting to grips with Microsoft Publisher, haggling with printers, etc. It's made me much more appreciative of Rob Fox's efforts as Editor for the last seven years. Thanks again Rob!

On reflection, of course, MSE is much like editing this journal - a mixture of fun and hard work. And for me MSE also seems to involve quite a bit of waiting around to see what might happen - trusting that God will send me things to make sense of.

But back to this edition. There's no real discernable 'theme' I am afraid - something I am sort of hoping to rectify in future editions. Perhaps it might be possible to have a series of articles on what, for some, are never-really-resolved-thorny-questions about MSE, such as: 'Is MSE something that needs to be recognised?' (cf Paul Romano's Letter to the Editor on page 3) or 'Can a hangman really be an MSE?' (cf Alan Crawley's article on page 14).

But please particularly note in this edition the appeal for information about local groups from Margaret Joachim on page 5 and the notice of CHRISM's annual conference on page 31. With this journal you'll also find two flyers for the conference. Please keep one for yourself and pass the other on to a friend or colleague. Well when I say keep the flyer for yourself I really mean fill it in and come to the conference. It should be good!

And as for the next edition: please keep the news, articles and reports coming in!

Mike Rayner

Letter to the Editor

From Paul Romano

I would like to comment upon the excellent article by Megan Smith (Discipleship and Ministry in the Workplace) which appeared in the October 2007 edition of the Journal. In expanding upon her theme she quotes from a Church of England policy document from the Associated Board for Ministry which advocates that an MSE ought to have their role 'formally recognised by the employer...'. Megan Smith then argues that to seek such recognition would be '... potentially undermining the basis of the ministry itself.' I have to say that I disagree with that sentiment not because it is, per se, a 'bad thing' to ignore the recommendations of that particular ABM policy paper, but because of the underlying philosophy I detect behind the statement (which, if I am reading too much into Megan's argument then I do apologise).

Over the years, as a member of CHRISM, I have been aware of two opposing camps regarding the 'proper' role of the MSE (again, I am aware that this might be too crude and sweeping an analysis given the wide diversity of our membership) but nonetheless it is fair to point out that there are those who argue that the sine qua non of being an MSE is its 'hidden' quality and that any official recognition is to be avoided at all costs. Any condition that has an element of 'recognition' however defined is regarded at best with faint suspicion bordering on the accusation that the model being discussed is Industrial Chaplaincy and not an 'authentic' MSE. (I am quite clear in my mind that MSEs are not Industrial Chaplains in that the Industrial Chaplain arrives, visits and departs whereas the MSE is embedded within the workforce bringing a special dynamic and insight unknown to the Industrial Chaplain.)

On the other hand there are those like me who through circumstance have found themselves enjoying a de facto recognition that has evolved over a period of time. When I was going through the selection process my bishop insisted that, before my final selection conference, I had to make my self known to the Chief Executive (I was and still am a solicitor in the litigation department of Glasgow

City Council Legal Services) and discuss my calling with him. At the meeting I remember being very anxious about the theory of being the 'hidden presence' within the workforce and was making great play about this when the Chief Executive interrupted me and wondered aloud what use I would be to anyone if I was so silent as to be invisible. Surely, he argued, the whole point of the role was to be available as a spiritual presence and resource?

Over the years I have never forgotten that challenge and any lingering doubts about what the proper status for an MSE might be (at least from my perspective) was dispelled before Christmas when a senior officer in another council department contacted me to say that he needed to see me urgently but not on a legal matter. It emerged that his long term partner (also an employee in the same department) had been diagnosed with a particularly virulent and ravaging cancer. I visited her in hospital on many occasions and continued to visit after her move to a hospice. They were determined to be married and asked me to preside at their nuptials which I conducted at the hospice. Mere words will never describe adequately the profound and moving aspect of this encounter for me and I hope for them. Nineteen days later she was dead. I assisted at the funeral and delivered the eulogy to a packed church full of our colleagues.

Later I asked the husband what had prompted him to phone me. He explained that he had remembered seeing me in my dog collar some years ago delivering the grace at a municipal awards function for staff and thought that as I was a minister I might be able to help them. What is amazing to me is that the Chief Executive (who could never be described as a church going person) when organising the gala with his staff had insisted that I be contacted and asked to say an appropriate grace. It was most definitely not the 'hidden' quality of my presence that had attracted the husband. It was the dog collar he remembered!

What, then, shall we make of all of this? Was I colluding with the forces that would absorb me into the organisation and thus tame me? Was this the sort of 'recognition' frowned upon by some MSE's?

I come to the tentative conclusion that the MSE family has to be mature enough to accept that there is a very wide diversity and range of experience within our fold. It all depends upon how the Holy Spirit wishes to operate within the parameters we present as humans in the particular soil of our calling. For me, the Spirit seems to be saying that recognition, even 'official' recognition can bear fruit for how else would I have had the deep privilege of marrying and burying a work colleague in the circumstances described?

Paul Romano is Executive Legal Manager and Honorary Chaplain, Glasgow City Council.

When two or three are gathered together....others might like to join them

Margaret Joachim

Do you meet other MSEs (and/or NSMs) in your local area? Is it for post-ordination training or continuing discussion and support? Is this a regular group – organised by your diocese or deanery, by CHRISM or some other group - or simply an occasional get-together of a number of colleagues?

If you do, could you please spare a couple of minutes to tell us about it? We're trying to compile a list of MSE groups in the UK, partly so we have a clearer idea of what is available and where the gaps are, and partly so that we can put new members (and others who enquire) in touch with a group near them. This will also provide information for the review of CHRISM's organisation and functioning which your comments at the last AGM prompted us to undertake.

Please e-mail me (margaret.joachim@london.anglican.org) or write to me (8 Newburgh Road, London W3 6DQ) with brief details of any group you are involved with. It would be helpful to know the area it covers, and whether it is restricted in some way (e.g. a diocesan post-ordination training group) or open. Please also include a contact name/email/phone number for the group, if you have one, and let us know whether it would be appropriate for others to join.

Tax and the individual's responsibility

Rob Fox

In two earlier articles I looked at tax and corporate responsibility and tax and the taxing authority's responsibility. I now turn to the individual's responsibilities in respect of taxation. It is not the aim here to provide an apologia for, or theology of, taxation, though some aspects of what follows inevitably point in those directions. Taxation is therefore taken as a given; as the saying goes, there are only two things certain in life - death and taxes - so we might as well live with them.

Firstly a brief recap on the nature of taxes. Currently and historically taxation falls into one of four types, on income, expenditure, action and possession. Taxes on income are the most obvious, whether it is simply on earnings or on profit. Those on expenditure too are usually easy to identify and include Value Added Tax and Excise Duties. Levies on action could – mistakenly – be taken to have a recent pedigree as several high profile examples have made their debut in the UK in recent years: Air Passenger Duty, London's Congestion Charge and Landfill Tax. In fact taxes on actions are arguably the oldest in existence: Customs Duties have a pedigree of several millennia, as do Tolls, and Stamp Duty is no spring chicken. Taxes on possession also have a long history – Window Tax being a notorious example; they remain with us in the form of Vehicle Emissions Duty, Council Tax and the Television Licence Fee. All forms of taxation can be located within this four-fold pattern.

Taxes cannot though be viewed in isolation from their purpose, and again there is a straightforward pattern to this: it is to either raise revenue or to change behaviours, or both. This inevitably gives rise to two reasons for the unpopularity of taxes: disagreement with how the revenue raised is spent or that a behaviour needs to be changed. A third major motive for disliking taxes can readily be added to these - it is 'my money', so why should anyone else benefit from it?

Resistance to taxation leads to avoidance and evasion. It is not difficult to see the more obvious examples, such as high income individuals moving to low tax countries, or groups of companies locating members offshore to low tax regimes and moving profits there. At a more mundane level there is the offer to do a job more cheaply 'for cash', a win – win offer that is difficult to refuse. But although there may be winners from avoiding or evading taxes, there are also losers. These range from those whose taxes are increased to pay for the leakage, to the reduced public expenditure that will impact on lower earners more than the higher, to the developing country that is denied the taxation income it relies on because multi-nationals either move their profits out of the country or use their muscle to 'negotiate' tax breaks. It is an exaggeration that, in the words of the old ballad, 'the poor man pays for all', but very often the burden of taxes falls more heavily on those unable to afford 'good financial advice' than those who can.

I find myself currently in the intriguing position of working for the States of Jersey (on a two year secondment), a pocket state recently removed from the list of the world's top tax havens, if only to the second rank. It is an island of low taxation, packed marinas and expensive cars pootling along at the maximum speed limit of 40mph. A Lamborghini makes an unpleasant banging sound in first gear. It is also an island where ostentatious wealth rubs shoulders with pockets of real poverty. I'm here to help introduce Goods and Service Tax, a simple form of VAT. It is a type of tax that is slightly regressive – those with below average incomes tend to pay more in this type of tax as a proportion of their expenditure than those with higher incomes. The States recognise this and to coincide with GST's introduction there is an increase in income support.

This juxtaposition is an all too uncommon example of the link between income and expenditure being made explicit. Taxpayers are seldom conscious of a nexus between the taxes they pay and the spending it funds. There have been and are examples of hypothecation – where a tax is designated as paying for specific service. A notorious historical example was Ship Money, the extension of which to inland counties of England by Charles I was a contributory factor to the unrest that led to the Civil War. A contemporary manifesta-

tion is the Congestion Charge in London, where the moneys raised go towards improving public transport (yes, really!) The lack of connectedness between taxes and what they fund is a by-product of the growth of 'the state', which we can take to include here any taxing authority in a modern society. As the mechanism of government has grown in size and complexity, so it is much more difficult for the taxpayers to say to themselves as they look at the tax deduction figure on their pay slip: "That is paying for the extension at my local hospital."

Time now for the Biblical perspectives – and note the plural. One of the key bases for taxation in the Old Testament is to link 'taxation' to its purposes. So, for example, landowners were not to reap their fields or harvest their vineyards thoroughly, but to leave enough for 'the poor and the sojourner' to glean and live off (Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-22). A further portion of taxation went to maintain those charged with leading the worship of God, the Levites, who were provided for from the tithes levied on the people (Deuteronomy 18:1-5). In a relatively simple society such as then, the nexus between taxes and what they provided was simple and immediate, as illustrated in the story of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 2). To pay taxes in this way was not just to be in society but to participate in community. To avoid taxes was a direct rejection of family, friends and neighbours. To opt out was a serious crime.

The coming of the kings was accompanied by a warning of the consequences. When the people asked Samuel to choose and anoint a king to lead them his response centred on taxation. A king would conscript the sons into his army, tithe the produce of the land, requisition the best fields, orchards and vineyards, and take a tenth of the flocks (I Samuel 8:4-17). The nexus between taxation and community would be broken; the people would no longer directly benefit from what they contributed. As Samuel's prediction came to pass (see, for example, I Kings 4:7-19, 5:27-28 and II Kings 15:17-22), the people were alienated from the taxes that were now seen to be imposed upon them. And this taxation could fall most heavily on those who had been beneficiaries: '...because you levy taxes on the poor and extort a tribute of grain from them, though

you have built houses of hewn stone, you will not live in them' (Amos 5:11).

By the New Testament period, the alienation between taxpayers and taxes had developed to the point where tax collectors and sinners were linked as social pariahs (see Luke 3:12-13 and 5:27-32). Jesus was castigated for associating with tax collectors, yet he, as always, looked past the prejudice to the person, calling Matthew as one of the Twelve, and Zacchaeus from his tree (Luke 19:1-10).

Three episodes in particular help illustrate how Jesus' approach to taxes was as a contribution to the well-being of those with whom we are in community, a re-emphasis on the 'we and us' over against the 'I and me'. The first is at Luke 21:1-4, where he sees a widow donating two small coins to the Temple treasury. Jesus compares her action to the rich he had seen contributing, saying: "This poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living she had." Put another way, she contributed willingly and sacrificially as she saw the consequences of her action, something missed by those who could afford to. It might be objected that this is an example on voluntary giving. This is to miss the point by adopting a contemporary mindset. Contributing to the Temple treasury was seen as an obligation.

The next is the question of paying taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:14-17, repeated by Matthew and Luke). Commentators usually focus on Jesus deftly answering a trick question, occasionally venturing into 'respect authority' territory, but there is rather more to it than that. It is not simply that Caesar has had the coin struck, remember that the question is about taxes, and Jesus implicitly affirms that Caesar has the right to raise taxes. More than that, the taxes are the property of the taxing authority, which in a modern democracy it holds on behalf of the people. This is most true in respect of the type of tax Jesus was being asked about, an ad valorem tax. Yes, the Roman Empire had a form of VAT, and, incidentally, it was the erosion of revenues from this tax that resulted four centuries later in the Empire being unable to either buy off the 'Barbarians', or pay for them to come over as mercenaries. In this type, the tax never be-

longs to those from whom it is collected: businesses, but, once the consumer has paid it, it belongs to the taxing authority. So the coin Jesus held up, when it was collected as tax, belonged to Caesar, and to avoid paying the tax when it was rightly due was theft. Drawing the modern parallel, VAT fraud is quite simply theft from the people, on whose behalf the taxing authority acts.

The last example is from a volley Jesus aimed at those who were hypocritical in their religion: 'You say, "If a man tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is corban" (that is, given to God), then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God...' (Mark 7:11-13). This might, at first sight, seem to have nothing to do with taxation, but it demonstrates both Jesus' concern to reconnect actions with consequences and charges the religious authorities with, in modern parlance, facilitating tax avoidance by devising a scheme to do so. In this case 'corban' was used as a device to avoid social responsibilities, in effect by setting up a trust, where the beneficiary – supposedly God but in fact the donor – reserved that which they were expected to use responsibly for the benefit of others to their own use. In our day trusts are a widely used tax avoidance vehicle. Not all trusts are for tax avoidance by any means but many are. As part of introducing GST in Jersey the States has been learning a great deal about just how many trusts there are in the island. In January the estimate was about 30,000; by Easter it was over 500,000. The great majority are 'off-shored' from the UK and many are means of avoiding one tax or another.

Jesus' concern in these examples was consistent with a theme that runs throughout his words and deeds, of re-connecting people with the consequences of their actions. In the case of taxes this meant not so much paying out of respect for authority but from a commitment to the good of 'the other' with whom we are fellow members of society. Those who sought to evade this social obligation, and those who abetted it, were roundly criticised.

Then there is Paul's take. The great collection for the church in Jerusalem is the usual starting point here, so let's begin with the familiar. Whilst not a tax as such this voluntary levy was called for

because the 'mother church' had fallen on hard times – resources did not meet demands on them. Here again some commentators have pointed out what they see as at best a lack of financial acumen, at worst irresponsible profligacy, on the part of the Jerusalem church. Wealthy converts sold their capital possessions and gave the proceeds to the church, but would the assets not have been better invested to provide a long-term income (Acts 4:32-37)? And why allow so many consumers of resources, such as widows, to live off the church without some kind of limit or means test (Acts 6:1-6)? Valid points, but to Paul the sole concern was that those with more than enough had a moral responsibility towards those with too little to live by. This comes out most strongly in his castigation of the 'strong' (and evidently wealthier and of higher social status) in the Corinthian church for selfishly overlooking their obligations as fellow members of the body of Christ to those of lesser means and lower social standing (see, for example, I Corinthians 11:17-34).

Paul addresses responsibility to pay taxes directly in Romans 13. The immediate context is 'let every person be subject to the governing authorities', but there is a wider context that is more pertinent. Paul starts a fresh section of his letter at chapter 12, setting out believers' position in Christ: '...we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.' The obligations and benefits of mutuality is his theme. It is within this that Paul tells his readers: 'For the same reason [mutuality] you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due' (Romans 13:6-7; a most meaningful passage for me!).

So where does this lead us? The conclusions I draw are quite clear – by all means feel free to differ, but be prepared to defend an alternative view! Firstly, the taxpayer should recognise the nexus between the taxes they pay and the reasons why they are levied. In modern societies many of the functions of social mutuality have been taken on, or at least are financially supported by, the state – nationally and locally. That aspects of the mutuality we as members of society owe one another, may now be several stages removed from

us as individuals, does not absolve us of our responsibility towards one another. I may disagree with how some of the revenue raised in taxes is spent, but my recourse is through the democratic process, not by avoiding paying the taxes. To pay taxes is to participate in society and to be in community.

A few months ago a Premier League footballer's income and tax details were inadvertently made public; it was notable that much space was devoted to the surprise that he appeared to be paying the appropriate amount of income tax for his income. Why wasn't he avoiding tax like many other high earners? After nearly three years of avoiding releasing figures, H M Revenue and Customs published its estimate of tax lost through avoidance and evasion, albeit for 2005. Direct taxes, principally Income and Company taxes, yielded £42bn less than they should have. A further £12bn was lost to VAT fraud and avoidance. In total this is more than the Government's budget deficit, and, when it has been acknowledged that the target of eliminating child poverty is nowhere near being achieved, enough to do this ten times over.

So what about avoiding taxes? Let us first draw a distinction between avoidance and evasion. The first is to avoid a liability to tax that would otherwise arise by means within the legal framework, evasion is to do so by illegal means. To take this further, tax avoidance is carried out by putting arrangements with a form complying with legal requirements into place that add nothing other than postponing, reducing or negating a tax liability that would otherwise have arisen. However just because the form of an arrangement lies within the law, does this make it morally acceptable? The use of 'corban' in Jesus' day was legal, but as he pointed out it was used to avoid mutual social obligations. To extend the analogy, the consequence of the tax avoidance that contributes to the yield shortfall above is that we will live with child poverty for many years to come. The income salted away through an offshore bank account or BVI company to avoid taxes is taking bread from the mouths of children. It was not morally acceptable as a result. And morality here was / is not something personal to the individual, but mutual and shared.

The same criterion applies to artificially constructed frameworks enabling individuals and businesses to avoid a liability to tax that would otherwise have arisen, whilst staying within legal forms. A test similar to that applied to determine if advertising is acceptable can be used here: is it legal, decent, honest and truthful? If not, it is unacceptable. And of those who move their income offshore, or set up trusts, or who move abroad to avoid tax? A friend of mine once referred to a fellow countryman, big in motor racing, who had relocated to Monaco to avoid taxes as a 'social criminal'. This is a view consistent with, if not conscious of, the theme of mutuality running from Samuel to Jesus. And the industry that thrives on devising ways for higher earners to avoid taxes is no different from the Pharisees who approved 'corban'. H M Revenue and Customs also estimates that half the fees earned by the 'Big 4' accountancy firms, KPMG, Ernst & Young, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Deloitte – 'all renowned tax dodging experts' (according to Private Eye) – come from tax avoidance advice, that is about £1bn a year. To opt out of paying taxes is also to opt out of the mutuality we owe one another, to opt out of society. To abet it is to do the same.

Further, tax avoidance distorts not just the tax base but society itself. Opportunities for tax avoidance don't fall exclusively on higher earners, but do occur more where income is not subject to deductions at source. A self-employed plumber as well as a share-owning company director will thus have greater opportunity for avoidance than an employee on PAYE, though the director may be more able to afford 'advice' than the plumber. Where tax is avoided this erodes the tax base and leads to a shortfall in anticipated revenues. In 2006 it was estimated that VAT revenues were short by about 14.5% due to avoidance or evasion; estimates for income tax were similar. To make up the shortfall either the rates of tax must be increased, falling disproportionately on those who do pay, or new taxes introduced, providing new opportunities for avoidance, and more income for the advisors. Those who pay, pay more, those who avoid, avoid more. And in avoiding opt out not just of taxes but also of the privileges and responsibilities of community.

So next time you look at your pay-slip, think about the value in the 'Deductions' column not just in terms of money, but as your 'fair

whack' contribution to the well-being of our community, the common-wealth. You could also go one further and end or minimise your expenditure at businesses that indulge in tax avoidance, whether it be the supermarket diverting revenue to no-tax Cayman Islands, the high street empire owned by a family residing – for tax purposes – in Monaco, or the banks and accountants that facilitate it.

Confessions of a failed MSE

Alan Crawley

Quite what a never really was and never will be MSE is doing writing an article in this magazine I don't know, but your editor invited me to contribute, and as I had time on my hands (just don't tell anyone else that) I thought why not!

The question that I want to explore in this article is whether it is possible to be an MSE in every kind of industry, or whether some roles are less amenable than others to being an MSE.

To give you an idea of where I am coming from and my biases I will briefly describe my history. I am currently a Minister in Secular Unemployment, having been made redundant about two months before ordination and having worked throughout my part time training. I was an IT manager and had worked for the same food manufacturing company (through a couple of takeovers) for 28 years. During that time I have seen a variety of management styles, from those which I thought essentially spiritual to those which I thought not. I worked nearly four months of my notice period as a deacon and now have a stipendiary curacy which I will be taking up at Michaelmas. Although at the start of my training I had intended to continue working through my curacy I felt that my call was to the parochial ministry, and not MSE.

So what went wrong?

Let me start with a story – a wise old man moved into a new house

during the summer and spent an idyllic couple of months there. Then the school holidays ended and the children started back to school and every day two boys ran down the street banging every bin (you can tell it is an old story) and making a terrible noise. The old man was annoyed, so one morning he went out and spoke to them. He told them what a wonderful noise they were making and if they would only do it every day he would give them a fiver a week. After a couple of days he went out again and explained that times were hard and his pension hadn't gone up much, so he could only afford a couple of quid – the two were not happy, but agreed to accept the £2. A few more days passed and he went out again and said that things had got worse and that he could only afford £1 – they turned on him and said if you think we are going to bang the bins for £1 you can forget it (or, updating our story, some other phrase beginning with f).

For about 23 of the 28 years I was like the boys, happily banging bins, although I was also getting paid for it. I can even remember a debate around the lunch table where I said that I would carry on working if I won the lottery for the enjoyment it gave me (a little difficult as I don't buy tickets – but the principle holds). For years I had been working in one particular subsidiary of the company and eventually became Head of Department. In this company "Total Quality Management" ⁱ had been implemented in the early 90's and had survived a managing director antagonistic towards it because the rest of the company supported the approach. This approach fitted well with Miroslav Volf's view ⁱⁱ that God calls us to use our gifts rather than Luther's finding our vocation and sticking to it. Although there were jobs within the company, the job descriptions were written to suit the gifts (or competences as our human resources colleagues would have it) of the job holder rather than to describe an unvarying role, and when someone left they were rarely replaced by a like for like substitute – for who could replicate the gifts of another - instead the work was reallocated among other workers and someone new would come in to a new job (obviously this is vastly simplified – but I am a great believer in truth through fiction).

When something needed doing in the company people worked together to make it happen and when there were problems it was

more important to fix them than to blame someone else for creating them, although making sure that they didn't happen again was important.

It was whilst working in this environment that I discovered my vocation, and in which I expected to continue working after ordination. However, as Woody Allen said, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans." Between selection and starting training it was decided to divisionalise IT and during training it was further centralised to the company level and we were then taken over and merged into the other companies IT department. With each of these changes the management style moved further away from the TQM approach towards a more Lutheran approach where everyone had a job description and wasn't expected to deviate from it. It became a commonplace for two people to find that they had been given tasks which required a common resource, and they were expected to fight amongst themselves to obtain it. One colleague was even told that in an appraisal that his problem was that too many people liked him – if they liked him he couldn't be doing his job properly.

Don't misunderstand me – I believe that this style of management is common, and I am not suggesting that the company was doing anything wrong. What I am questioning is whether this approach is consistent with Gospel values. As a manager my role changed from one of helping people to discover their gifts and use them to one of enforcing uniformity. I also do not know whether I would have found the change in style easier to take if I had not at the same time been undergoing ministerial formation – I am aware that the person who came out the end of the training was far from the person who went in the beginning and it is difficult to be certain whether it was the change in the job, in me or in both that caused me problems.

This leads to the crux of my question – are some roles incompatible with Christian ministry? And if they are what does that say about lay Christians working in the same environment? A large part of me wants to say that there should be no 'no go areas' (bit of an in phrase as I write) in legitimate secular employment – just as Christ

is incarnated into the messy world as it is, so Christians should be part of the world as it is and not withdraw into a holy huddle ignoring vast swathes of life and experience. Robert K Greenleaf records that as a young man he was told 'Now, you can ... stand outside and criticize and bring pressure; but nothing constructive will happen until someone who is inside and has her or his hands on some of the levers of power and influence decides to change something'ⁱⁱⁱ and as a result he joined AT&T, although his influence was not sufficient to achieve the things he wanted. However, there is surely a point at which you have to say so far and no further and feel that the cost of collaboration with the system is a step too far. For me that point came and when the offer of redundancy was made I was happy to take it – but I have left many friends behind with similar ambiguous feelings who, like me, are of an age when alternative employment is not certain and who do not have the luxury of a plan B. Have I copped out and taken the easy route, failing as an MSE, or have I stood up (well hardly, as it was redundancy – but my longer term plan was to resign to go stipendiary when my children had left school and you know what I mean) against something untenable? You decide – not just for me (but please remember what Jesus had to say about judging others) but for yourselves – are there places where MSEs should not go, or should they be in all legitimate places of employment – living with the conflicting demands of the job and the Gospel and finding ways to reconcile them?

Alan Crawley is currently unemployed and is NSM Assistant Curate in the Parish of Great Marlow with Marlow Bottom, Little Marlow and Bisham. He is moving to be Assistant Curate at St Michael and All Angels, Amersham on the Hill in the summer.

- i. 'TQM is a management approach for an organization, centred on quality, based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long-term success through customer satisfaction, and benefits to all members of the organisation and to society.' – Wikipedia 29/2/2008
- ii. Work in the Spirit, 1991
- iii. Reflections on Leadership: How Robert K.Greenleaf's Theory of Servant Leadership Influences Today's Top Management Thinkers, Larry C. Spears, 1995

God calling

Jim Cummins

Once in a while, the most mundane event can appear to have overtones that carry divine hints, or even orders.

For the past few years Esther and I, have been engaged in a 'Whole Herd Health Scheme.' This followed the discovery that some of our cattle had contracted Johne's Disease. Baby calves can pick up the infection once it is in the herd but it may not show up for five years or even longer.

Our first test showed three cattle were infected and had to be culled. That was no great surprise and the next test, a year later, was clear. Our hopes soared. But another year went by, and one young cow had to go, which was a blow. We awaited this year's results with fingers crossed. Our disappointment to find three of our best cattle had succumbed was obvious. It is not only those cows that have to go, but their offspring could not be kept for breeding, because of the likelihood that they too would be infected. The herd had already been reduced in numbers: this would deplete it by almost 50% again.

We looked at each other and knew that the herd was no longer viable. The Welsh Blacks, kept continuously on this farm for more than 50 years, would have to go. It will be a great wrench having to say goodbye to them all; they have been so much part of the family for so long. The parting will be gradual, over a period of 18 months or more. But then, after the initial shock, we looked at one another again. We are, between us, 145 years old. Is this, we wondered, a hint from on high, so to speak? It has happened before.

Soon after arriving home, following our departure from Norfolk after 13 years working in a group of parishes there, I had to start looking for a job. With our address, being in Wales, but living on the English side of the border there was confusion between different job centres, and with no encouragement from either side about

the possibility of finding work anywhere near home, I felt the best thing to do was to drive to Llandrindod and see their helpers face-to-face. I'd gone as far as Penybont Common when our car seized up, and I hitched a lift home. On that occasion also I had the feeling that perhaps someone was trying to tell me something. The next morning I walked to Knighton and I found a very suitable job at the first place that I called at. That proved to be the start of my ministry as a priest worker. The next 25 years were, I guess the most fruitful period of my whole ministry.

Two other events come to mind. When I left the army after four years service, I was uncertain what was going to come next, but I had this nagging feeling that I ought to be following up my new-found Christian faith. I had no idea what that might involve. I went to stay for a few days with a cousin: a very good pastor, as well as a lifelong friend. I came away with the near certainty that ordination must be investigated. A couple of months later, I had gone up to our local church one Sunday and settled into the familiar discomfort of the family pew. 11 o'clock came and went. I heard some mumbling going on in the porch, and being inquisitive as ever, I went to investigate. George Bright the church warden, and Bill Evans, sexton and organ blower etc. were there but no vicar. That was the problem and poor old George suffered a very significant impediment in his speech. He said, "Well Jim, I can't read the blessed old lessons. How about you? You're going to be one o'them things aincha. Can you do it?" So I did. I remember being very anxious about what was permitted for a layman and what wasn't (as if it mattered!) So I went to the lectern and found the lectionary with the correct readings for each day. It was Trinity Sunday but that meant nothing to me. (It was Authorised Version in those days, of course, and none the worse for that.) I found Isaiah Chapter 6, and I read:

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ...And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I

dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

I guess that settled it.

And then, just over a year later, there was, at perhaps a more mundane level, (though I'm not sure about that) the remarkable 'historic' meeting up on the hill behind this house. I was working with old Frank Adams in a field of what should have been oats but wasn't. (Remember 'the wheat and the tears'? The tares were very prickly!) Just now I saw, upwards of half mile away 'alone and palely loitering', a girl. I felt I had to go and investigate, so I left poor old Frank and the thistles and went. It soon became clear that she was a student of geology, mapping the area. What was also instantly apparent to me was a magnetic attraction. Drama and romance followed. Now, more than 50 years on, my wife and I still walk that hill in fair weather and foul and we reflect with gratitude and joy on that happy chance (chance?!) that brought us together.

How often, I wonder, as I go about my business or leisure, (fussing or grumbling perhaps, over small details), do I fail to recognize the hand of God or the voice of the Spirit guiding or calling: "Come, and see."?

Jim Cummins is a farmer from Skyborry, Knighton, Powys,

A letter from Jersey

Rob Fox

“What we need is a good murder. Bad news sells papers!” So the vendor told me as I bought a copy of the Jersey Evening Post. Just a few days later news broke of the police excavations at the former children’s home at Haut de la Garenne, so in a way he got his wish. It didn’t take long for the accusations of cover up to start flying, and morale in the Health Department has hit rock bottom. Even though no-one was around when the home closed 25 years ago, it was still Health that was to blame. And someone had to be blamed.

Over among the Goods and Services Team we were largely insulated from the commotion. It did at least distract the regular sniping of the few remaining opponents of the new tax. The closest we have come has been Katie the Communications Officer taking refuge in the warmth of our small and supportive team after attending to the needs of the world’s press. There has even been a little dark humour. Those who remember the 1980s TV detective series Bergerac might recognise Haut de la Garenne as the building used as the police headquarters. So Jim Bergerac can’t have been much of a detective – missing what went on right under his feet....

Keeping one’s head down has not been an option (not that I’d take it anyway) after the Comptroller of Income Tax had emailed all the staff about my arrival and being an ordained minister. It has made introductions rather easier, and led to plenty of ‘what does it all mean?’ questions. The most important thing has been to do the job I was recruited for effectively, and in a way that is a good role-model for those among whom I work. The next has been to listen and learn from them! There is definitely a ‘Jersey way’, which is not always as laid back as you might expect in what is really a big village, albeit with an island population of about 90,000. Nearly everyone has an opinion about nearly everything, and they the ‘Beans’ (Jersey folk) are not shy in expressing themselves.

Another feature of Jersey life is the relatively high level of church involvement, with plenty of co-operation between the churches too.

Having an MSE on the island is clearly a novelty – the Dean was intrigued as he'd heard about these strange folk but not met one before. There is some effort going into making the links between faith and work, the Parish Church of St. Helier, for example, runs Wednesday lunchtime talks and discussions. Commendable, if still more about being church than applying faith to work. There is an unpretentious exuberance about faith here; churches and individuals are quite open about what they believe and do, which makes a refreshing change from what so often transpires in the UK.

Early days in Jersey, but promising ones, as I commute between the Pennines and my rented cottage at the most southerly point of the British Isles, and most southerly parish of the Church of England. And on a clear day you can just about see France.

'Ministry beyond...secular employment'

**Two reflections on the CHRISM Reflective Weekend:
Hinsley Hall, Leeds, 15th -17th February, 2008**

**Personal reflections in the context of a ministry in secular
employment rediscovered**

Roger Nelson

It seems that I had the good/misfortune to 'draw the short straw' being the one who undertook, in our group, to submit a written summary of our findings over six separate sessions at the CHRISM weekend in February. Besides myself, our group consisted of Rob Fox, Felicity Smith, Margaret Joachim and (for part of the time) Stan Frost. As a 'price' of that undertaking, I trust you will forgive me for taking the liberty of setting this in the context of certain biographical material.

I sought ordination as a priest with the sole purpose and intention of ministering in a secular occupation. At the time I was, and had for upwards of 20 years been, a litigation solicitor having the day-to-day conduct of court cases in the fields of divorce, civil accident

claims, some heavy, and latterly, advising and representing persons detained under the Mental Health Act in their appeal to be released.

I had stumbled upon this last area of work not long before, and was so taken by it, professionally and theologically, that in 1994 I set up my own sole practice representing patients in hospitals nationwide. Because there were (and still are) so few specialists available and willing, the work 'took off' at a breathtaking pace, which I managed to sustain so long as I remained 'on a high'. When the 'honeymoon was over', however, amidst countless other problems, 6¼ years later I was forced to stop, and, my wife and I having moved North to be closer to family, almost straightaway I became (ironically) a patient myself, though not a sectioned one!

I could not see myself becoming a solicitor again, but being (still) a priest, I found the opportunity, more often than ever before, to function on a Sunday under the auspices of the Bishop's Permission to Officiate. Increasingly satisfying and fulfilling though this undoubtedly was, I still felt strangely out of place in a church which has, as I see it, sought, unwittingly or not, to distance itself from a rapidly changing world. Frustratingly too, I felt there was little I could do except attempt to bring former insights to bear upon my preaching and to encourage good ordinary lay men and women to recognize for themselves the value and validity of their own ministries.

A chance 'placement' starting in October 2006, lasting just nine months, in a large town church going through an interregnum opened up the opportunity, when required, to take funeral services of persons resident within the parish. A handful took place in church; the vast majority at the local crematorium. After the new incumbent was appointed, I showed myself as willing to take funerals in the wider community upon the understanding of course that 'parish protocol' was observed. The frequency of such funerals has varied widely, but it is so good to feel that, in an important sense, I am 'back at work', and to have a chance again to work through and explore what MSE means in this particular context. Perhaps one or two years 'down the line', I might write more fully on the subject, but for the time being I have discovered some fascinating parallels with my 'old' work, and the exploratory process never stops!

Against that background (and I apologize for having gone on somewhat), I felt that I could come along with head held high to what I found to be a creative and fascinating weekend at Hinsley Hall in February. 'Retirement' from MSE will probably never do for me! I have found through bitter personal experience that, whatever the books say, people, no less priests, usually define themselves by what they 'do' rather than what they 'did', and it can be hard holding on to an acquired definition. Women used to define themselves more by what they were, but thankfully that has altered radically. One of our group members raised the question of 'ubuntu' (the African sense of identity signifying "I relate therefore we are") in the context of our discussion.

A painting by Maddox-Brown was a useful 'tool' with which to open our second session: how could we most effectively identify with one or more of the figures depicted in it? Individual suggestions were offered; but generally, we thought it unfair for some to stand by and watch others 'slogging their guts out' on a minimum wage whilst at the same time professing to be concerned. (It crossed my mind that an uneasy parallel here might be drawn with the attitude of some stipendiary clergy towards MSEs and lay people!) One of our members was able to share his experience of being involved in a new community enterprise, a unique opportunity for him, he having now retired from his 'main' work. Voluntary work need/indeed should not imply that MSE is not viable.

The 'how' was less easy to define: surely the main 'thrust' of MSE is that it is totally unstructured, that it is impossible to 'prepare for the unpreparable'? It is in the unexpected, the interruptions, and in the occasional unforeseen moments that this distinct ministry comes into its own. One of the principal goals, everyone agreed, is somehow to 'make a difference' by simply 'being there' rather than necessarily 'doing'. 'Space' does have to be made available. Speaking personally, I have always felt that the Church, for the sake of its own vested interests, has, traditionally, grossly undervalued the ministry of the laity. What such ministry does not mean is 'helping the vicar' to undertake clerical tasks. Amongst other things, it is the vocation of the MSE, wherever he/she can, to ar-

ticulate the wealth of Christian love in the world, draw it out, and praise it. More than anything else, the MSE has to be an opportunist.

Prayer was widely regarded as a 'sustaining influence'. However, opinions on how it should be 'done' within the ruthless constraints of work varied widely. What seems certain is that the conventional clergy pattern is unsustainable. Amongst other sustaining influences suggested were family and other relationships, physical exercise, routine jobs such as gardening, and 'non-religious' songs and music.

Particularly, we are sustained for all work (which is by definition 'God's work') and not necessarily 'religious' work. We have not to forget, stipendiary and non-stipendiary clergy alike, that we are priests 'all the time'. Ideally, 'career clergy' and MSEs should complement each other; experience has shown that this rarely happens, and that clergy are not immune to professional jealousy! Indeed, it seems to me, the constituent of 'jealousy' is essential for MSE to 'work' (more on that later). An MSE cannot help but be subject to the forces of competition that prevail in our Western society, governed, as it is, by the incentive to make 'dirty money'!

The 'where' of ministry is as difficult to define as the 'how'. Do we actually need to know where or how? Should we not merely remain ready for the surprising, the unexpected and the unpredictable? After all, the God we know is a 'God of surprises' and we should not be trying to 'cut God down to size'.

Roger Nelson, is a retired Solicitor /Mental Health Act Advocate from Holme, Holmfirth

The CHRISM ministry rap!

Adrian Holdstock

A reflection on the discussion in my group which consisted of Mike Rayner, Pauline Pearson, Paul Romano and Phil Aspinall, helped along with the insertion of emphasis off the beat!

Hey! CHRISM brother and sister,
Listen, now, to my spiritual twister,
What are we doing in our ministry?
Specially called to a perfect dynasty?
Think again! My sister and brother,
Receive the ministry from the other,
What if everyone in all humanity
Are ministers call to do and to be?
People, we're in relationships,
People we like, and those who are shits,
Life is a set of dependencies,
Sister on brother and bro' on sis'.
How to minister? Our collect - ion:
Be there, listen, observe, reflect – ion,
Then appreciate what we see,
Offer to God, the you, the me.
When to minister? All the time!
Twenty-four seven would be no crime,
For others, for self, For God to stir,
Every breath is to minis – ter.
A final thought on our ideology,
Of twenty-four seven theology,
If any moment I'm not minist'ring,
The only conclusion, I must be sinning.
Continuous ministry – fresh expression?
Hold on, I can feel oncoming depression!
A new opportunity to do, to be,
Do be do, day by day, minister me.

Adrian Holdstock is a Life Coach from Burbage, Leicester

‘What feeds me?’

A report of the Spring Conference of the German Worker Brothers and Sisters, Frankfurt

Phil Aspinall

This theme for a church conference perhaps leads you to assume that it would be about spiritual nourishment of a devout and uplifting kind. But this was a spring conference of the German Worker Brothers and Sisters, so it was far from predicable, and, as always, challenging and demanding!

We started on the Friday evening with a paper plate. And we were asked to write on it what we had eaten that day, or for a typical evening meal. Thus we intentionally started with the material and bodily aspects of food – the purely practical. People talked of their rushed meals at the ends of busy days: ‘I eat what comes’, or of living off the land, or of creating family gardens for a local community. Some eat alone, some always in groups; many are vegetarian, many try only to buy organic produce ‘to eat without chemicals’ – or from farmers who come into cities with produce-laden cars. Some actually work in the world of food – in a soup kitchen, or in the canteen of one of the large Frankfurt banks. Many have so many other commitments in their lives that thinking of food at home is not their first priority.

The decisions about what we eat connect closely with our physical well being – with how we relate to our bodies and how we treat them. Do we listen to the signals from our bodies, and how do we respond to them? People talked about the impact of their shift working patterns on the times of eating, the nourishment gained from that food and the effect on the opportunity to eat with others. We talked of respect for others and for what they eat – either from medical conditions or from choice, or on religious grounds. Someone suggested that nutritional wholeness is ‘to have the food that one wants and needs, and to sit with it’.

From this beginning, we went on to explore firstly the social, and then the ecological and theological implications of the food we eat.

There were some challenging questions about the circumstances in which we eat our meals, and the form of community and type of conversation that goes with it.

I was severely taken to task by the working group in which I found myself on the Saturday afternoon. I work as a consultant, so I am often working away from home, staying in hotels and therefore often eat meals on my own (and, indeed, as a result of being away so much, am rarely able to organise meals with other people when at home). They considered that to eat a meal by oneself was anathema – a meal is a social event, food is a socialising force and we are born from a culture of shared meals. “So what do you do with your life that you are so busy and have no friends with whom to share your meals?”

An often-used word at these German meetings is *Compañeros* – those with whom we share our bread on our journey – and it also speaks of the life many of them have shared with communities in Brazil. The simple act of breaking bread which is global is without boundaries. A meal can be a place for ‘nourishing conversation’ as well as the sacramental sharing of food.

The political took us into the questions of who controls what we eat, how advertising manipulates what we think we need to eat, and particularly the impact this has on children’s eating habits and their health. In Berlin, we learnt, the authorities are proposing a longer school day so that children eat a midday meal at school, better than that their parents would provide.

We talked of the impact of EU agricultural policy, the politics of biological (organic) food production, of GM food and the power this gives to world wide multi-national companies. We reflected on the control of people that comes from the chemical companies and bio-tech companies creating new dependencies.

We discussed the economic and ecological decisions we make about where our food materials have come from. Many of the participants are committed to only buying local products, with a concern for the miles food travels and the environmental impact.

There might have been a brief thought that imported food is helping to support farmers and economies in poor and developing countries – but this was quickly off-set by the concern for the exploitation of the producers and the money being made by other parties in the process. (Shortly after this weekend, I asked a woman in the queue for the till in a UK supermarket if the strawberries in her trolley were a sign that the English strawberry season had begun. It hadn't! And the poor woman went through her whole trolley and found that she did not have one item of local produce.)

And what about wasted food? Some of the participants grew up after the war in a time of great shortage, and so the culture of avoiding any wastage was the norm. At these weekends, I have always been struck by the way, during any meal, people make sure that they use up, for example, jam or butter half used by someone else – another sign of a meal as a shared activity.

There were tales of the all too familiar situation in the UK – price wars between supermarkets which seem to benefit the cost conscious (greedy) consumer, but pressurise the small family shops (mainly Turkish owned) and force them out of business, and at the same time put pressure on the farmers and reduce their ability to survive (in countries where there are still many smaller farms and small holdings).

So what are we to do: support local shops (although they do not often have the 'good' food materials). In supermarkets, buy the fair trade and organic products so that the supermarkets see that this is what people want. ("If fair trade coffee costs more, then drink less, and so you get a health benefit as well".)

I was reminded of some of these themes during our reflective weekend with Donald Eadie last year. The political - 'a billion Eucharists take place where we share bread, but we still refuse to share with the world' and the proposal for a moratorium on the Eucharist until the bread of the world is shared. The social - the image of naan served in a Birmingham Balti house 'broken and shared as each neighbour becomes aware of the needs of their neighbour'. He told the tale of the Methodist minister in Liverpool, set free to walk the

streets, who used to make bake, break and share bread with those she met, with those who do not trust the church – and when people made bread they would create one loaf to eat and one to give away. Making bread is a subversive activity. Or another story of a street party in a road, with food served to neighbours at the end of the garden path – a time to meet, stop and speak with people who usually just pass in their cars.

During the course of the weekend we did get to feeding by reading the Bible for 'spiritual calories'. And the Saturday evening Eucharist collected together some of these images with readings from Corinthians - 'your body is a temple' so what we eat is what we do to our body; the feeding of the five thousand, a sign of the sheer generosity of sharing food, and at the communion we had a time for shared reflections, profound and moving, on the meaning to us as individuals of 'bread' and 'wine'.

The German Worker Brothers and Sisters meet twice each year, in the spring and autumn, at a huge former monastery just outside Frankfurt. They are a mixture of Catholic and Protestant, lay and ordained, men and women, including some worker priests and little brothers and little sisters of Jesus (founded by Charles de Foucauld) but all are committed to living out lives of social justice following the pattern of Christ. And these are wonderful people with whom to share bread - you would be made very welcome!

**CHRISM Summer Conference, 5th – 7th September
2008, Leicester**

'Leicester – Working Life in a City of faith!'

The annual conference will take place at the University of Leicester and will explore the very timely issue of how to integrate the life of a city with its multi-faith witness.

Just how are we to meet the challenges of different expressions of belief in the workplace?

Are CHRISM members in a unique position to divine the mood of the times and act accordingly?

These and many other questions will be explored over the three days of the conference using the resources of distinguished speakers from the different faith traditions and leaders of local government.

There will be plenty of opportunities to explore the working life of Leicester by way of a number of planned visits to places of interest including the St Philip's Centre which is a national ecumenical training centre engaged in the business of multi faith witness and dialogue.

The conference will be based in the attractive and modern comforts of The John Foster Conference Suite of the University.

Enclosed with this issue are a number of flyers for you to use – pass them on to friends and colleagues who might be interested in attending, and use one to sign up yourself!

Don't miss this unique opportunity to shape the agenda!

Bookings and further information from Adrian Holdstock, 34 Herald Way, Burbage, Leics, LE10 2NX

Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (APT) Annual Conference, 24th – 26th October 2008, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Phil Aspinall

This year's APT annual conference is being planned to take place in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The group meets annually throughout the US, with 20-40 typically attending. The majority are Presbyterians, but they regularly collaborate with their Episcopalian counterparts – from the National Association for the Self-Supporting Active Ministry (NASSAM). For many years, members of CHRISM have also attended.

They are headed for the Ghost Ranch Campus, the Presbyterian seminary for the southern USA, in Santa Fe over the weekend of 24th – 26th October. CHRISM members are encouraged to participate – and will receive a very warm welcome. The cost will be approximately \$200 for the weekend.

If you want to find out more, APT now has a website: www.pcusatentmakers.com but here are a few extracts, for those of you who are not familiar with APT:

'The Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers is an association of ministers, members, congregations, and governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (USA) who are either tentmakers or have an interest in tentmaking ministry. Tentmakers are pastors who divide their work between two or more vocations – at least one of which is a ministry validated by presbytery and at least one of which is a secular vocation. APT exists to provide support for tentmaker, tentmaking congregations, and advocates of tentmaking in the PC (USA); and to promote tentmaking within the PC (USA).'

'Tentmakers follow the path of the Apostle Paul, the first "Tentmaker". Making tents as a living, he proclaimed the Gospel in every city and village he visited. Believing that "God has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work" (Ecclesiastes 3:17) tentmakers serve churches and Christian communities across the

globe - rural, urban, suburban, transition, yoked, clustered, or others., Tentmaking is a covenanted ministry of clergy and congregations. With special challenges and opportunities, members of the Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers support each other in this specialized ministry.'

They meet annually as a group for fellowship, advocacy, topical workshops with invited guests, networking, and particularly the sharing of tentmaking stories. Besides tentmaking ministers, attendees may typically include; Commissioned Lay Pastors, inquirers and candidates, seminary representatives and seminarians. They network with groups and organizations with whom they share common ground. – this includes contact with new immigrant ministries and other denominations.

I hope that whets your appetite. I am told that it's a great time of year to visit Santa Fe! Please contact Phil Aspinall (contact details inside back cover) if you would like more information.

Other dates for your diary

UK

Christian Association of Business Executives (CABE)

13th May 2008: CABE Paper and AGM: 6.00 pm at St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. Christina Rees, Director of The Churchfield Trust, Chair of WATCH and a member of the Archbishop's Council will deliver the 2008 Paper on 'What's God Got to Do With It? - A View from the Public and Voluntary Sectors'. Refreshments will be served. Please RSVP to info@principlesforbusiness.com.

11th June 2008: CABE Network event: 6.30 pm at the Hoop and Grapes, 80 Farringdon Street, EC4B 4AL. With Sheryl Haw, Humanitarian Aid Work Training and Consulting. (An opportunity to meet and discuss issues over a drink. Food will also be available.)

9th July 2008: CABE Network event: same time, same place. With Michael Schluter, Executive Director, The Relationships Foundation.

11th September 2008: CABE Network event: same time, venue to be confirmed. With Claire Pedrick, Co-Director, 3D.

15th October 2008: CABE Network event: same time at the Hoop and Grapes. With Chan Abraham, Group Chief Executive, Luminus.

Kent Workplace Mission in association with the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity and CABE

7th May 2008: Speaker: Paul Valler, former Finance and Human Resources Director at Hewlett Packard and author of the recently published book 'Get a Life'. 6.30 - 9.30pm at The River Centre, Tonbridge, Kent.

Christians at Work

28th June 2008: Annual Conference 2008: 'You shall be My witnesses'. 10.30 am at Rugby Evangelical Free Church, Railway Terrace, Rugby, CV21 3HN. Cost: £25 for non-associates; £20 for Associates; £20 for groups of our or more, £15 for first time attendees. Speakers: Roger Carswell and Richard Underwood. 'The whole event will be aimed at challenging and encouraging your witness at work or anywhere for that matter. We promise a good day of networking, fellowship, sharing and challenging teaching.' All refreshments and lunch are included. A booking form can be downloaded from: <http://www.christiansatwork.org.uk>

The Ridley Hall Foundation

23rd May 2008: Faith in Business Programme: Social Enterprise Workshop. Combining Profit with Social Impact: Holy Grail or Viable Business Model? 10.00 am - 4.00 pm at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, CB3 9HG. Cost: £95. This workshop will focus on the viability of social enterprise as a business model and the contribution of the Christian church to social enterprise e.g. whether the church could be doing more to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit in order to achieve social and spiritual goals. A booking form can be downloaded from: <http://www.ridley.cam.ac.uk>

Industrial Mission Association

9th - 12th June 2008: 2008 IMA Conference: 'Is Devolution a Winner?' At Stirling University. Cost: £230. A booking form can be downloaded from: <http://www.industrialmission.org.uk>.

Industrial Christian Fellowship

24th June 2008: Members and Friends Evening: Further details will be available soon from <http://www.icf-online.org>

Telos Programme of the Wales Management Council and the Church in Wales

9th May 2008: 'From the enlightenment to enlightened organisations.' 12.00 am - 3.30 pm at 39 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9XF. Cost: free (includes lunch). With Robin Morrison, Church in Wales.

13th June 2008: 'Spiritual Values in Career Management: Finding Purpose and Meaning in your Work.' 12.00 am - 3.30 pm at same place, same cost. With Antoinette Glynn, Managing Consultant, Sanford Career Management.

11th Jul 2008: Telos Business Retreat. 10.00 am - 4.00 pm. Cost: about £25. With Stephen Powell and Robin Morrison. A chance for busy people from any organisation to have a day out in beautiful surroundings, stepping back from normal pressures to reflect on direction and purpose. For further details contact: lisamartin@churchinwales.org.uk

International

8th – 12th May 2008: Conference of International Worker Priests and Meeting of French Worker Priests. Lyon, France. Cost: ~180 EUR.

5th – 8th June 2008: Old Catholic Church of Germany. Meeting of MSEs and stipendiary clergy. Pfalz, Germany. Cost: to be confirmed.

3rd – 5th October 2008: Autumn Conference of German Working Brothers and Sisters. Haus St Gottfried, near Frankfurt, Germany. Cost: ~70 EUR.

For further details of these international events contact Phil Aspinall (contact details inside back cover).

And finally

Not so very long ago a village in Herefordshire was afflicted with an unusual plague: the whole place was overrun by squirrels! Try as they might the villagers could do nothing about them, so a meeting was held between the three churches in the village: Methodist, Baptist and Church of England.

The Methodists urged that nothing should be done to harm the squirrels as they were God's creatures, so they prayed the squirrels might depart in peace. Instead even more arrived.

The Baptists then took charge, rounded up as many squirrels as they could find, laid hands on them, and with fervent exhortation commanded them to depart in the name of the Lord. The squirrels stayed put.

The Vicar then stepped in and explained that the solution was much simpler. He gathered the squirrels into the parish church, baptised them and had the Bishop come to confirm them. Thereafter the squirrels were only ever seen again at Christmas and Easter....

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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