

Ministers-at-Work

*The Journal for Christians in
secular ministry*

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Editorial

As some of us emerge from home-working hibernation into the sunlit uplands of cafés, beer gardens and holidays, others face the collapse of their businesses and dreams, or an ever increasing set of demands on a shrinking and readily replaceable workforce. Almost no-one finds themselves doing the same job precisely as they were just 13 months ago. Everyone is coping with change – not just the headlines but the details.

And life moves on. People have died and families have mourned, in small groups. Loneliness has become endemic. Technology has offered a tenuous bridge for many. Children born during these past months have hardly encountered a

strange adult. Many more children have found themselves living in poverty. Workers young and old (more so than middle aged) are deemed surplus to requirements – and struggling to recapture a sense of purpose.

From where we now stand, many of us I suspect are quite anxious about trusting the way forward, uncertain what twists and turns of vaccine or variants may lie ahead between us and something like normality. And so much has changed – so much been learnt – during this time, that most of us are wondering just what that normality will be – or should be - like. For some people, normality will never be even close to what it was.



The questions arising from this turbulent period form the backdrop to our planned Day Conference which will take place in July, and which, as we explain later, will be an online event on Zoom.

In this journal we first of all explore the journeys we have made to date in our work and our calling, with an account of our very successful Reflective Day with Gill Frigerio in February. Ruth Brothwell describes her musings on Justice, an

important motivational thread for most of us. Dorrie Johnson takes a look at some of the words we use in describing our work, and asks just what it might mean for an MSE to be unemployed or non-employed. She leaves that question hanging. Later she examines the idea of work further in a kaleidoscope of contexts. We also have a tribute to Mark Thompson-McCausland, who was of that early generation of worker priests who wrestled with the limitations of the institutional church and moved out into the challenges of the wider world – in his case with London Transport.

As ever, I hope you enjoy this journal, and would welcome your thoughts and contributions for the next one.

Pauline Pearson



Career, Calling and Vocation

CHRISM Reflective day, 13 February, 2021

Led by Gill Frigerio, CHRISM's first virtual Reflective Day, was a success on every level. Having built up some experience in organising Zoom events with the Theology group evening meetings, the challenge of running a whole day was risen to, with Margaret Joachim's slick working of the breakout groups a great help.

Gill showed she is an accomplished communicator. She is an Associate Professor at Warwick University's Centre for Lifelong Learning and is currently working on Action research project for a Doctorate in Education that will identify ways to equip and support lay Christian women in their working lives, particularly in integrating this with their understandings of calling and career. Prior to joining the Centre in August 2010, Gill worked in career development practice and management, and most recently was Head of Careers in the Centre for Student Careers and Skills at Warwick. Gill's teaching interests cover theory and practice in career coaching; vocation and calling; learning from work experience and its contribution to career development; theoretical perspectives on employability and implications for policy and practice; placement design and management of higher education career and employability services.

The day was arranged into 6 main sessions:

- Career and Calling
- Calling or Falling?
- Call me: a individual reflective exercise (including lunch)

- In pairs – discussion
 - Calling all the People
 - Calling, work and mission
- 1. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. (Psalm 20: 7)**

In the opening session Gill led us through reflections on the subject attendees were asked to send to Gill in advance. The responses, and experiences of Career, Calling and Vocation, reflected a broad but experience based range, including:

- Fresh insights on the relationship between career and vocation.
- Spend time being with God, quiet and reflective.
- Opportunity to reflect with guidance on how career to date has been a fulfilment of ministerial calling.
- How calling and career relate and can complement one another - how both of these continue into retirement.
- Opportunity to think about what God is doing, what that might mean for my calling and to identify a next step in exploration and listening.
- Listening to discussions around calling and being part of conversations that might help to define and reflect on my own journey.
- Thought provoking discussion of / reflection on how the secular concept of career and the theological ideas of calling / vocation relate to each other, how this relates to our own occupational journey, and how this might be used to help others on theirs.
- Thinking of other things rather than pandemic!

Gill reminded us of some of the models of career, calling and vocation, using images to illustrate, then invited us to reflect on our own journeys using a critical decision we had faced:

- What was it about YOU that was making you a unique factor in this decision?
- Who were the significant others who were having input or you were taking account of? And what role were they playing in the decision?
- What else you had to consider?

2. Calling or Falling?

Gill observed that in general use ‘calling’, ‘career’ and ‘job’ are used to mean different qualities of the same concept, and referred to research suggesting that “Generally, perceiving a calling has been linked to greater career maturity, career commitment, work meaning, life meaning, job satisfaction and life satisfaction” (Duffy and Dik, “Make your job a calling”, 2013).



She then went on to contrast the religious and secular views of calling:

	Religious view	Secular view
Source of calling	From God/higher being	Within the individual
Who is served?	Community	Individual and community
Method	Discernment (prayer/listening)	Introspection, reflection, meditation, relational activities
Meaning	Enacting God's purpose	Enacting individual's purpose

Followed by a comparison of the historic / classical understanding of calling with the contemporary:

We are destined to play a specialised role for the greater good.

Individuals have God given gifts, talents and opportunities

Duty: a solemn obligation to seek and respond to calling

Sacrifices required, enabling

“the idea of duty in one’s calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs”
(Max Weber, 1930)

Self-fulfillment and personal happiness

Calling as something performed for its own sake

Self-actualisation from following personal passions

Work that a person perceives as their purpose in life.

A self-directed search for ‘bliss’ at work

A personal life choice - my commitment to make or break

Gill identified that in the classical model there are 3 key features of calling:

- An external summons
- Sense of purpose
- Pro-social orientation

“... a calling might best be defined as an approach to work that reflects the belief that one's career is a central part of a **broader sense of purpose and meaning in life** and is used to **help others or advance the greater good** in some fashion.” (Duffy & Dik, 2013: 429)

A calling source is integral to most conceptualizations of the term but is variable, and may arise from an external summons,

a sense of destiny, a sense of fit with one's passions, or other areas which have not yet been assessed. The role of the perceived source in how a sense of calling develops is not yet well-understood

“... the perceived source of an individual's calling appears to play very little role in the degree to which an individual is living out her or his calling or is satisfied with work and life.” (Duffy & Dik, 2013: 429)

Calling: problems and pitfalls

- Role of social structure and structural inequalities

Poverty dramatically affects the pursuit of paid work as a vocation, both in the ways that it limits experiences that might otherwise contribute to vocational development, and in the simple fact that survival needs take precedence over needs for self-fulfilment (Ebberwein, 2009: 1027)

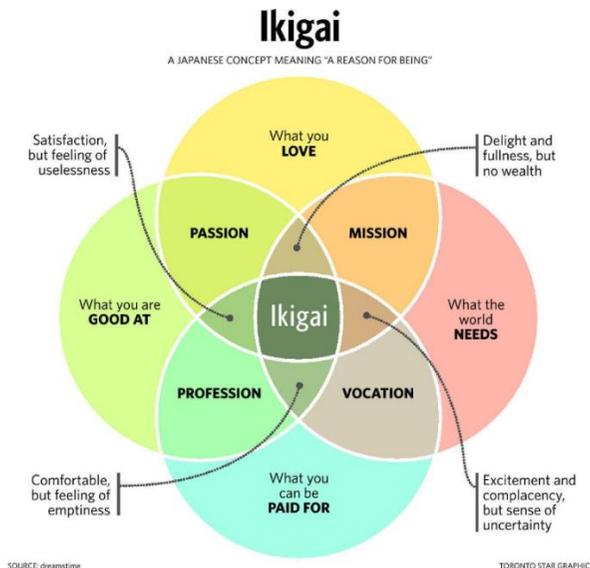
- Risk of exploitation, neglect of other life domains and burnout

*“Individuals with a stronger sense of calling toward their work tend to have higher work and life satisfaction, find work more meaningful, put forth greater effort at work, feel their work makes the world a better place and feel more motivated to remain in their specific jobs **even if they were no longer paid** (my emphasis)” (Wrzesniewski, Dekas and Rosso 2009: 324).*

We were then invited to plot the peaks and troughs of our calling and career – an interesting reflective exercise!

- Plot the times in your life when you were at your best, ‘in the zone’, ‘in the flow’, ‘at peak performance’, you were energised and highly motivated
- Plot the times when you were at your worst, made mistakes, problems occurred, you were dissatisfied with your performance and de-motivated
- What are the themes which connect the high points, and what are the themes which connect the low points?
- The high points may indicate you were living your purpose and honouring your values. The low points may indicate that your values were being compromised and/or your purpose was not being fulfilled.

Gill then introduced us to the Ikigai concept for integrating our life elements:



Well worth using to reflect further on our paths.

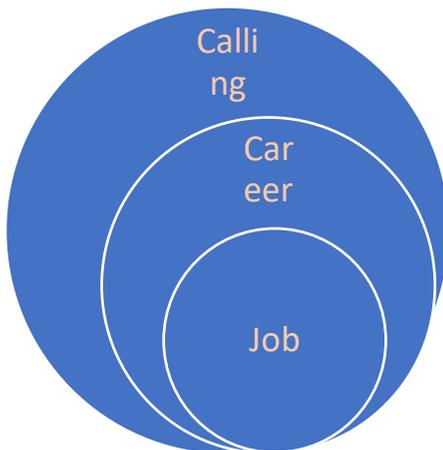
3. Call me

Gill used the systems theory framework to illustrate how the various elements of our biography link and build up, starting with our individual attributes, characteristics and interests, through immediate outside influences (family, peer groups), external influences (education, media, economic factors) to the influence of our past, present and future.

Using the illustrations, Gill invited us to map our own circumstances and reflect on the factors that have influence our calling career and vocation.

4. Calling all the people

Gill represented the relationship between calling, career and job thus:



And talked us through the following models, comparing and contrasting the approaches:

Career Self Management (King, 2004)	Planned happenstance (Mitchell, Levin & Krumboltz, 1999)	Anti-oppressive practice (Mignot, 2001)	Fruits of the spirit (St. Paul, AD60)	Marks of Mission
Positioning	Curiosity	Welcome	Peace & Patience	Tell
Influencing	Persistence	Image	Kindness & Goodness	Teach
Boundary-managing	Flexibility	Support	Love & Joy	Tend
	Optimism	Empowerment	Faithfulness & Gentleness	Transform
			Self-control	Treasure

Then challenging us to reflect on the following questions:

- How can we bring together career development and theological understandings of calling?
- How can we use these ideas to support the careers of others at work?

After suitable reflection and discussion, we fed back

- Fresh insights on the relationship between career and vocation
- To spend time being with God, quiet and reflective.
- Opportunity to reflect with guidance on how my career to date has been a fulfilment of my ministerial calling.
- How calling and career relate and can complement one another - how both of these can be continued into retirement.
- Opportunity to think about what God is doing, what that might mean for my calling and to identify a next step in exploration and listening.
- Listening to discussions around calling and being part of conversations that might help me to define and reflect on my own journey.
- Thought provoking discussion of/reflection on how the secular concept of career and the theological ideas of calling/vocation relate to each other, how this relates to my own occupational journey, and how I might use it to help others on theirs.
- Thinking of other things rather than pandemic.

Conclusion

Gill is clearly an expert in her field and gave us much to think about. She is making a significant contribution to the current

re-appraisal of how the Church of England approaches calling and vocation (and I hope more widely too). This was a really useful and informative event and the format worked well, offering access to many attendees who may not have been able to attend a CHRISM Reflective weekend. With the right speaker and topic, well worth repeating.

Rob Fox

Gill's recommended further reading:

- BUNDERSON, J. S. & THOMPSON, J. A. 2009. The Call of the Wild: Zookeepers, Callings, and the Double-edged Sword of Deeply Meaningful Work. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 54, 32-57.
- DIK, B. J. & DUFFY, R. D. 2012. Make your job a calling how the psychology of vocation can change your life at work. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press.
- DUFFY, R. D. & DIK, B. J. 2013. Research on calling: What have we learned and where are we going? *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 83, 428-436.
- DUFFY, R. D., DOUGLASS, R. P., ENGLAND, J. W., DIK, B. J. & VELEZ, B. L. 2018. Work as a Calling: A Theoretical Model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 65, 423-439.
- EBBERWEIN, C. 2009. Vocation. In: LOPEZ, S. (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- GOTHARD, B., MIGNOT, P., OFFER, M. & RUFF, M. 2001. *Careers guidance in context*, Sage.
- HALL, D. T. & CHANDLER, D. E. 2005. Psychological success: When the career is a calling. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26, 155-176.

- INKSON, K., DRIES, N. & ARNOLD, J. 2007. *Understanding careers: The metaphors of working lives*, Sage Publications Thousand Oaks, CA.
- ISAY, D. & MILLETT, M. 2017. *Callings: The purpose and passion of work*, Penguin.
- KING, Z. 2004a. Career self-management: Its nature, causes and consequences. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 65, 112-133.
- MITCHELL, K. E., AL LEVIN, S. & KRUMBOLTZ, J. D. 1999. Planned happenstance: Constructing unexpected career opportunities. *Journal of counseling & Development*, 77, 115-124.
- STEIB, M. 2018. *The Career Manifesto: Discover Your Calling and Create an Extraordinary Life*, Penguin.
- WRZESNIEWSKI, A., DEKAS, K. & ROSSO, B. 2009. Calling. In: LOPEZ, S. (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.



Some musing on MSE * :

Dorrie Johnson

Ministry	minister meaning	manage moral	minimal
moonlighting	misery missing	ministration miserable	misuse
mistake	money ministry	material	mission
Secular	sector sense	sabotage system	stress
success	secrecy science	space selling	society
semantics	structure service	sack spirit	suppress
Employment	employ empiric	employee economics	equality elect
experience	empower expectation	emphasis eject	explore examine
exact	environment	envy	ethics

What does it mean for an MSE to become un-employed / non=employed (not retired)?

* I have deliberately not included overtly church words.

Justice - Ruth Brothwell

In our recent Theology Discussion Group, we talked about Justice – in particular of course, justice in the workplace. How and where we see it at work and whether there are injustices that we can stand against, as Christians and as MSEs.

I made my preparation for this and recalled the reading I had done on this subject. It brought to mind the subject of the *Mishpat* and *Tsedaa* in the Old Testament and of both Klaus Koch's excellent volumes on The Prophets (SCM 1982) and also The Prophets (volume 4) in the series Exploring the Old Testament by Gordon McConville. (SPCK 2002)

I worried that even though we are 'theologians' and trained in items such as biblical criticism, we might degenerate into 'bible study' and think a little too cosily about this subject. I had always been hugely informed by and in many ways changed by my learning about the *Mishpat* and *Tsedaa*. Much of Koch's exploration echoed the background to the subject of Justice ably provided by Mike Rayner who led our group's discussion on the subject.

The words of Amos, the prophet rang out to us:
"Let Justice flow down like mountains and Righteousness as an everlasting stream." (Amos 5:2ff - Hosea also mentions it!)
However, Koch would argue that our belief in Justice and Righteousness depends so much on our biblical translations and especially our western philosophical tradition. By taking a more original view of Amos we see that he sets it against the practices of the Jewish cult religion of his day. It was not so much a criticism of society as of the 'cult' or faith system.

Mishpat and *Tsedaga* are both spoken of as powers that a person needs by which to live.

They came to each man through the festivals of the cult – by the gatherings and sacrifices in line with God’s word to them – they were absorbed almost by osmosis. They belonged to the Jewish nation. The people did not possess them but were ‘in’ them.

What was received in the gatherings together, enabled faithfulness to the community (*Mishpat*) which was constantly renewed at the city gate (like today’s law courts). It was how the people of God lived – people would live morally because they were filled with the salvic gift of God obtained through the sacrifices and gatherings together, in faith.

Put all that in twenty first century terms and we have simply a notion that as people made right to God through salvation – our very ‘rightness’ will result in moral order – the doing of what today we would call justice. The notion of receiving of God’s gifts, is no stranger to us.



Our right position with God had always been intended from Eden. Because of salvation we are back in that position and can once again enjoy the *Tsedaga* of God.

So, both Justice and its sister Rightness are spheres of activity not just concepts. They are things to exercise as good Christian folk. If we take anything from Amos then it must be that Justice might no longer exist because people are no longer receiving the gifts of God.

In today's post Christendom world, we are perhaps a long way from the Justice and Righteousness perceived by Amos and the prophets. We, as MSEs stand in the workplaces as examples of what life should really be. We have accepted and go on receiving the gifts of God. Our challenge is to grasp this, exercise and receive the *Mishpat* and *Tsedaga* in today's world.

It is quite a challenge and responsibility for us as Christian Ministers at Work!

A song about work: from Rob Fox

Rob says: 'The Chemical Workers' Song' was written many years ago by Ron Angel (one of the *Teesside Fettleers*) and has been performed since by the likes of *The Young 'Uns* and the Newfoundland band, *Great Big Sea*.

[A way for many of reflecting on their work. Ed]

The Chemical Worker's Song - Lyrics

Chorus:

And it's go boys, go

They'll time your every breath

And every day you're in this place you're two days nearer
death

But you go...

Well, a process man am I and I am tellin' you no lie

I work and breathe among the fumes that tread across the sky

There's thunder all around me and there's poison in the air

There's a lousy smell that smacks of hell and dust all in me hair

Chorus

Well, I've worked among the spitters and I breathe the oily
smoke

I've shovelled up the gypsum and it nigh 'on makes you choke

I've stood knee deep cyanide, got sick with a caustic burn

Been working rough, I've seen enough to make your stomach
turn

Chorus

There's overtime and bonus opportunities galore

The young men like their money and they all come back for
more

But soon your knocking on and you look older than you
should

For every bob made on the job, you pay with flesh and blood

Chorus

Well, a process man am I and I am telling you no lie

I work and breathe among the fumes that tread across the sky
There's thunder all around me and there's poison in the air
There's a lousy smell that smacks of hell and dust all in me hair
Chorus (x2)



Work – a paradox

I am descriptor of a million projects
without shape or density
but multiform effects
unconstrained by age or gender.
I am loved and hated,
addictive and shunned,
sometimes shy, at times a collective force.

My party has no frivolity,

my horse is done to death,
my house the pit of despair.
I can be found by a shop,
defined by a box,
controlled by rule,
but out - I regenerate, excite, rebuild.

I have mates,
define their place to be.
I have principles
precede prepositions -
at, on, in, out, against -
to qualify my role.

I metamorphose to appear between hard covers
appear on stage
or on gallery wall.
I have rooms and studies
dedicated to my purpose.

I am known colloquially as 9-5.

Dorrie Johnson

Mark Thompson-McCausland RIP

Born 1931 – Died 7.2.2021

A few memories: -

In 1949 during his training in National Service, Mark was in the same Passing-out Parade as my husband Theo Christophers. Because they were both well over 6 feet in height they had been chosen as the linesmen for this event. They had also by then become friends, before going on to serve in different regiments.

Their friendship was renewed when they re-met, at Cambridge in 1952. Mark was a glamorous figure at that time, delightful and lively company. At one stage he was often seen around with an elegantly beautiful Newnham friend of mine! He went on, I think, into high-powered banking in the City. Then, to the surprise of his family, he threw in this promisingly lucrative career to train for the church's ministry at Mirfield. In 1959 he served his curacy in Perry Barr, Birmingham, and in 1965 he went on to be Vicar of Rubery, the parish including the Longbridge Austin Morris car works. He loved his time there, and being involved with people facing the complexities of manufacturing. It also gave him a life-long interest in tinkering with cars!

During this period our lives crossed again as my husband's office was in Birmingham and our home south of the city. Mark would come over for supper now and again, and our three young children always simply loved his visits. "The Sound of Music" film was released in 1965, and Mark had watched it several times, loving it as we did. But he explained to our

children there was one error in it, just two words which he longed to correct! “Something Good”, sung by Julie Andrews, has the words, “Nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could, so somewhere in my youth or childhood, I must have done something good.” Mark told them it should be, “*There must have been something good.*” It started a deep and thoughtful discussion with our young ones, then probably aged about 7, 9 and 10, about grace!

Mark’s family were well connected in Northern Ireland. It was through his aunt there, and his visits, that he knew the Jesus Community, a small group with a ministry of healing and deliverance, based in Port Ballintrae. Through this connection, my own sister Ruth spent a significant 6 years there, and we as a family joined her there for several memorable summer holidays.

Mark left Rubery in 1972 to become Priest-in-charge of the rural parishes of Mathon and Cradley, just west of the Malvern Hills. He had been struggling with what he saw as the limitations of the institutional church, and found it liberating to be walking and praying his way around the country lanes. Dressed in cassock and bearing a large staff, he appeared rather like an Old Testament prophet! His vicarage drive was filled with several dilapidated cars he was tending with loving care, too!

Mark was married to Betty. She had been an unofficially adopted daughter in his own childhood family home. It was in their middle-aged years that they recognised they were life-long soul friends, and there followed a wonderfully beautiful married partnership. Betty latterly suffered from extreme

rheumatism and died some years before Mark, totally adored by him to her life's end.

Most significantly for us in those early 1970's, Mark introduced us to the writings and teachings of Robert Coulson, and the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer. This was a wonderful way into a new chapter of prayer and discipleship for Theo and me, which profoundly shaped the rest of our lives. When Mark led Fellowship retreats, he was always original and stimulating in the way he witnessed to God's dominical words from the Bible.



One picture that sticks in my mind is of Mark describing the Church as travelling on a train that has reached its terminus: instructions are being given to alight onto the platform and board the awaiting cable car, but the passengers doggedly sit on in the train, mistakenly expecting it to move forward again on the same old track...!

Possibly connected, after ten years at Mathon, Mark finally left stipendiary ministry. He became a worker priest in London for five years, a motor mechanic with London Transport, whilst also assisting in a priestly capacity at St Giles', Camberwell. He finally returned to rural life in Herefordshire at Leintwardine near Craven Arms, still enjoying car maintenance with his own little business **Rev up!** There he

also hosted a contemplative prayer group, and served in local churches until eventually he became very arthritic and less mobile. He never lost his sense of delight and wonder in the mystery of life itself, and continued to radiate a transparent joy even in infirmity. He must have touched unnumbered lives with grace!

The three words in his short Times obituary notice were most apt, “So greatly loved.”

Rachel Christophers 14.2.21

Mentors

Do you feel on your own in your situation / job / diocese? Do you think you might benefit from connecting with a mentor? Or have your experiences as an MSE given you a wealth of insights which might support someone else newer to the role? If you fit either of these and would be interested to look at opportunities for informal mentoring, please get in touch with a committee member, and we will get you connected!



Forthcoming Events

CHRISM Summer Day Conference

Saturday 17th July 2021

Making New Better

- **Living post COVID in our workplace**
- **Changes in society and the impoverishment of many**
- **How do we live and serve in this new context?**

Though we had hoped to hold a real, physical weekend at Sarum College we have decided that we are not sufficiently confident to take the risk of booking when we think that many people will be reluctant to use public transport over long distances. This will therefore be a day conference, including our AGM.

John Goddard will lead us to reflect on changes in work, family life and the functioning of civil society that have been accelerated by the COVID pandemic and further complicated by Brexit. At the moment, it is unclear what the response of Government is to the immediate challenges of rising unemployment, and social and regional inequality, as well as dealing with climate change and an ageing population. How do and should we live, work and serve the community in this turbulent environment?

John Goddard, OBE, is an economic and social geographer, Emeritus Professor of Regional Development Studies and formerly Deputy Vice Chancellor of Newcastle University. He

has been active in connecting the worlds of thought and practice to address regional inequalities with a particular focus on the way our civic institutions need to change to meet the needs of the communities they serve, most recently to facilitate recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

Related to this theme, you might have heard the interview with Peter Hennessy on Radio 4 (World at One, Tuesday 16th March – although I realise that many of you would have been at work!). He has proposed five big themes for recovery after COVID:

- Social care
- Social housing
- Technical education and skills
- Preparing people and economy for coming of AI
- Combat and mitigate climate change

It has been suggested we might like to add a sixth: Health and wellbeing.

Perhaps these might provide a helpful framework for your thoughts in preparation before the day.

See below for the event link via Eventbrite. Further details will be posted on our website and via Eventbrite

<https://eventbrite.co.uk/manage/events/152421730499/tickets>

2021 International Worker Priest Conference: Phil Aspinall

In last October's edition of Ministers-at-Work we reported that the 2020 Worker Priest conference was cancelled due to COVID just a few days before it was due to take place. We included details of the plans which were already being made for a gathering in 2021 and an optimistic assumption that we would meet this year.

Our German colleagues have made a booking for the weekend of Friday 3rd to Sunday 5th September 2021 at the Nell Breuning Haus in Herzogenrath close to Aachen, where we last met in 2019. The nearest airports are Maastricht or Dusseldorf, and there are train connections from the UK through Brussels

As we are all aware, the COVID rates continued to rise during the autumn and restrictions remain in place, and so at this point it is not possible to give a definitive confirmation for our international meeting. The Germans have proposed that we still have to wait, perhaps until the end of May, until we can make a decision. As I write this, the third wave of Covid is spreading across Europe, parts of France are going into another severe lockdown and Germany has been changing its plans repeatedly, so this seems a very wise precaution.

It is therefore not even clear whether there will be a preparatory meeting as usual and how the theme will be

decided. But there is a determination to meet if safely possible in order to maintain this vital network.

As always, I would encourage you to take this opportunity to come and meet with this interesting and committed group of people, who always challenge our way of life and our Christian living. So please make a note of the dates in your diary.

We shall, of course, circulate more information as the plan becomes clearer, but do please contact Phil Aspinall if you would like to be kept updated and if you would be interested in participating.

CHRISM Theology Discussion Group

This Discussion Group, which is open to all CHRISM members, provides an online forum where we can reflect on and discuss the theological aspects of our work. We meet monthly by Zoom for an hour and a half. Recent topics have included The Importance of our Work to God and Us, Rest, and What is Work?

If you are interested in joining this group and would like to be added to the invitation list and receive Zoom links for future meetings, please email me at

rev.julian.e.blakemore@gmail.com and I will send you details.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Revd Julian Blakemore

And Finally.....



Invisible

It began, quietly,
In that sunny spring,
When we could still see
Friends, sit together, talk,
Do crosswords and drink tea.

Then chatter stilled
No visitors allowed
Birdsong through the open window,
Sounded loud
In the silence.

Meals served and eaten apart

Familiar comfort.

The taste of tea

And scones;

Small sandwiches, filled

With meat or paste;

Red white and blue

Iced cakes too,

To celebrate Victory past

Sometimes, familiar voices

Echo from a screen

Sharing the news

Of births, and deaths ...

Too many deaths:

A cohort of companions

Lost.

An interconnected community

Of pain.

But now,
Light brightens.
Soon perhaps
We will reach out again
To a familiar hand,
Hear a child's laughter
Unrestrained,
Share companionship and bread,
Reach out and hug
Our neighbours,
Plant seeds for future flowers,
Sketch hopes, dream dreams,
And breathe love.

First published at <https://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk/post/lockdown-anniversary-marked-by-care-home-remembrance>

CHRISM is on Facebook, 'Ministers at Work':
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/129656640430436/>

and LinkedIn, at:

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

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)

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