Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in secular ministry

Number 115 October 2010

To help ourselves and others to celebrate the presence of God and the holiness of life in our work, and to see and tell the Christian story there.

CHRISM is the National Association of CHRistians In Secular Ministry

for **all** Christians who see their secular employment as their primary Christian ministry, and for those who support that vision.

To further this aim, CHRISM publishes a quarterly journal, releases occasional papers and organises an annual retreat. Conferences are held regularly and worldwide links pursued.

CHRISM welcomes members, both lay and ordained, from all Christian denominations, encourages them to be active within their own faith communities and to champion ministry in and through secular employment. If you would like confidential support as an MSE, please contact any member of of the Committee (see inside rear cover).

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

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www.chrism.org.uk

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Copy deadline for the next edition: Friday 14th January 2011
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Editorial

Yet again I apologise that this edition of Ministers-at-Work is rather late but I hope it reaches you by Christmas. This edition contains an important notice about our forthcoming Reflective Weekend which is fast approaching and a booking form is enclosed. It also contains a notice about changes to CHRISM subscriptions, and a subscription form, a standing order form and a gift aid form for you to fill in and send back to our Membership Secretary, are also enclosed.

The season of Advent ought to be a time of quiet reflection in preparation for both the celebration of the birth of Jesus and his second coming but, for me, it seems to have meant even more rushing around than usual. All this activity and what is it all for? Does God actually need us to do all this stuff for him I wonder?

This brings me to the age-old question of whether MSE is being or doing? Franz Segbers at our Annual Conference in the summer invited us to ask ourselves 'How can I become more of a human being at my workplace? What do I need to do?' (page 34). But are we not - like Mary who seems to be particularly on my mind this Advent - just called to be rather than do? Was Mary required to do anything? Oh, yes just give birth!

Even so I suspect that God is generally calling us to do more waiting and less rushing around in preparation for his coming. And on this basis I am planning on making lots of New Year's resolutions about doing less rather than doing more in 2011. One of these resolutions will be to hand over the Editorship of this journal to someone else! So if you would like to take on the yoke - it really isn't that onerous – or know of someone who might be persuaded to – please contact me or any other member of the CHRISM Committee.

Happy Christmas and Good New Year's Resolutions!

Mike Rayner

Letters to the Editor

From Deirdre Palk

On our return from France I've been sorting out some books which I left in the loft here before we went away and I had forgotten about. There were just a few (seven) MSE type books that I don't need to keep. I've contacted Margaret Joachim and looked at the Memorial Library catalogue but of course they are all duplicates of what they already have. Margaret suggests that I might let you have a list of these books and you might consider putting them in the journal with a message that they are available free from me (I'd cover postage too) or in exchange for a little donation to CHRISM perhaps. Here is a list of the seven items.

- Clark, David, ed., Changing World, Unchanging Church: an Agenda for Christians in Public Life
- Cotter, Jim, Yes... Minister: Patterns of Christian Service
- Francis, James and Francis, Leslie, eds., Tentmaking: Perspectives on Self-Supporting Ministry
- Fuller, John and Vaughan, Patrick, eds., Working for the Kingdom: The Story of Ministers in Secular Employment
- Hurst, Antony, Rendering Unto Caesar: An exploration of the place of paid employment within the framework of Christian belief
- Paton, David and Long, Charles, eds., The Compulsion of the Spirit: A Roland Allen Reader
- Syms, Richard, Working Like the Rest of Us: An alternative ministry

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CHRISM Notices

Officers and Committee for 2010 - 2011

Presiding Moderator:	Hugh Lee (elected in February 2010)
Moderator:	Rob Fox (elected July 2008)

At the 2010 Annual General Meeting the following were elected:

Secretary:	Margaret Joachim
Journal Editor:	Mike Rayner
Committee members:	Catherine Binns
	Sue Cossey
	Wendy White

There were no nominations for a new Moderator. Accordingly, an Extraordinary General Meeting will be held at the Reflective Weekend in February 2011 to elect a Moderator who will take office immediately and serve as Presiding Moderator from July 2011.

At the October committee meeting we agreed to co-opt the following members to the committee:

Membership Secretary:	Lyn Page
Publicity & International:	Phil Aspinall

Susan Cooper continues as Treasurer (this role is taken by the Treasurer of CHRISET, the charitable trust which looks after CHRISM's financial affairs.)

Holland House

Extraordinary General Meeting of CHRISM

Notice is hereby given that an Extraordinary General Meeting of CHRISM will take place on Saturday 26th February 2011, at 2pm at Holland House, Pershore, Worcs.

Agenda:

1 Election of a Moderator to serve from 26th February 2011 until the 2013 Annual General Meeting, and preside for one year from the 2011 Annual General Meeting.

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

Apologies for absence may be sent to the Secretary: Margaret Joachim, 8 Newburgh Road, London W3 6DQ.

CHRISM Reflective Weekend, 25th - 27th February 2011

Minding the Threshold

Thresholds: Standing on the edge, at an open doorway looking out. Where do we stand on the edge? In an isolated role at work; on the edge of the church structures; on the edge of theological thought; in places and companies you don't know. What do we see when we look out? Dare we venture out? What happens when we step out?

What do we find out there? Places where we take off our shoes because we discover they are Holy? We find ourselves taking off our shoes in places that we did not think were Holy. We suddenly see the bush that bursts into flames – the Burning Bush – the sign of the presence of the Glory of God. And we know we are in the place of encounter. We are startled and shaken – and changed.

Morphing: What is the nature of transformation? How are we changed by the things, the people, the events that we find and encounter? How are those things, those people changed? How can the processes of our work be changed? How can we change them?

Providence: "The Lord will provide" – but how come we don't talk about it? It doesn't always feel like it when times are hard, when we are faced with, overwhelmed by, something awful – a travesty. Yet we have all those stories in the bible about those people who are all but destroyed by events, but who emerge to a good that could not have been expected.

Blessing: We send people out with a blessing. What are we really doing? What is the nature of blessing? In the Old Testament people are always blessing God. We look for God's blessing on us, on events, on others. "Oh, bless" has become a common expression. Where is blessing out there beyond the threshold?

Pebbles dropped into the water: The ripples spread out, spreading further and further. They bounce against the edge of the pond – the ripples come back from different angles. The interference patterns become more complex as they play with each other. New thoughts, new possibilities leap out – or might be discerned in the complex interactions.

If any of these thoughts interest, stimulate or challenge you – if you are willing to take a step over the threshold – then come and explore them further at the 2011 CHRISM Reflective Weekend taking place over the weekend of 25th – 27th February at Holland House, Cropthorne, Worcestershire, WR10 3NB.

Holland House is situated looking over the Avon valley between Pershore and Evesham. Lifts can be arranged from local train stations. The accommodation offers single rooms and up to eight double rooms. You can see more at www.hollandhouse.org

Our weekend will be led by The Revd Donald Eadie. In the usual format of a relaxing weekend there will be time for both reflective

silence and companionship, and the opportunity to explore the Avon valley, or simply have some free time. There will be times for communal worship or space to be on your own.

For more details, please see the enclosed flyer, or contact Sue Cossey (details inside the back cover) for more information.

Changes to CHRISM subscriptions

Running an organisation like CHRISM incurs costs. The two weekends each year – the Reflective Weekend and Summer Conference – broadly break even with the fees charged. This leaves the journal, occasional papers, website and Committee travel costs to be paid from the annual subscription and donations. Thank you for your continued support which has helped us to provide support to MSE's.

The last AGM asked the Committee to review the level of subscriptions and authorised an increase of £5, if thought necessary. We are happy to announce that the main subscription rate will not increase for 2011 and will remain £35.

The Committee also agreed to replace the retired rate with one for members whose earnings are below the UK income tax threshold, and to continue the existing student rate.

The 2011 CHRISM subscription rates are therefore:

£35 Standard Subscription
£15 Reduced Subscription (incomes below UK tax threshold)
£15 Student Subscription (maximum of 3 years)

Please note: A Standard Subscription of £35 is worth £42 when you sign a Gift Aid form, because CHRISM can claim an additional £7 of tax rebate.

Lyn Page, Membership Secretary
e-mail: lyn.page@willow-bank.co.uk

Take care - take risks

Jim Cummins

He signed off his letters 'Take Risks'. There will be many people who recognise the hand of Michael Ranken behind that opening. It was his inspiration that brought a number of Ministers in Secular Employment together to discuss what they were doing. That was the beginning of what was to become CHRISM. Michael was less than happy with the fashionable greeting 'Take care'.

By and large the society of which we are a part and with which we live, yearns for safety and security. When faced with trouble – with political, industrial or social unrest – we look for the peacemakers, those who can 'pour oil on troubled waters'. Now that British Petroleum has stood that saying on its head we should perhaps bring to mind how, once upon a time, it was the Christians who were the 'stirrers'. They were the people who 'turned the world upside down'. They were the risk-takers – big time!

There must sure be a distinction between one sort of risk-taking and another. Certainly there are those - and the oilmen are not alone in this – who will deliberately ignore 'safety measures' for convenience or, worse, in the hope of extra personal gain. On the other hand there are always those who, regardless of their own personal safety, will leap into floodwaters to save those who are drowning – or who will scale the cliff to rescue some beleaguered sheep or wayward puppy.

The Christian Church, (although proud of its martyrs) seeks for the most part to offer security, a safe haven for its members and itself as an institution –I t is expected to 'take care' of its members. Is this what is wanted of us?

A memorable sermon from many years ago (it can be exactly dated from a couple of 'asides' in the text throws clear light on this subject). Alan Robson, who delivered this address, was at that time a lecturer at Keswick Teacher Training College in Norfolk and he spoke of the temptation stories in St Matthew's Gospel,

recognised as a commentary on the Easter story. Slightly paraphrased it is presented here.

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'Jesus is in the wilderness, face to face with the Devil. God is absent. On the cross the situation is the same. Jesus is face to face with the powers of evil – alone. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

'The twice repeated taunt of the Devil in the wilderness: "If thou be the son of God..." is echoed by those who jeered at him on Calvary: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

'In the third temptation the Devil, taking Jesus onto a high mountain, shows him all the kingdoms of the world and promises, "All these things will I give you if you fall down and worship me." Jesus refuses.

'Similarly, in the story of the crucifixion, Jesus never compromises with the forces of evil. They have their way and he dies. But the story ends with Jesus – again on a high mountain – saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me."

'If I am right in thinking that the temptation story is a commentary on the Easter story then it must throw light on the meaning of the death and exaltation of Jesus – and on its significance for us. It must reveal what it is about Jesus that makes him good news for us. The details of the temptation story are strikingly peculiar:

The dialogue between Jesus and the Devil.
The suggestion of turning stones into bread.
The picture of them standing together on the pinnacle of the Temple.
The absurd notion that from the mountain-top they could see all the kingdoms of the earth.

'The story is highly imaginative, extravagant in its imagery; it is the stuff that dreams are made of. Yet the essence of it is clear enough. There are three temptations and they correspond to the

basic needs we all recognise in our lives:

- I want bread – or economic security;
- I want protection from life's dangers – like falling from the pinnacle of the Temple;
- I want to rule the world or, in more modest terms, I want to belong – to have power or status.

'Whether or not it is right in this way to find a particular significance in each of the three temptations I am not sure, but it matters little because in the end they all end up to one fundamental need – the need for security.

'Any word which speaks to us of a way of acquiring a sense of security will come as good news or, put negatively, any word which offers us a way out of our deep-seated sense of insecurity will come as good news.

'We believe that <u>that</u> word is to be found in Jesus – and only in Jesus, and it is that word which we are commissioned to preach. But the word is so difficult, so paradoxical, that *all too often we ourselves neither believe it nor preach it.*

'We are all looking for a life of absolute security, but in our anxious pursuit of security, life itself is passing us by. It is the Devil who tempts us to look to ourselves and our security. God, in Jesus, calls us to forsake our security and get on with living. What the Devil promises in terms of bread, protection and status is only an illusion of security, his promise is never fulfilled.

'We are called to live, as it were, in the wilderness, deprived of all the usual comforts and securities on which people rely. We are called to the life of faith – where faith means 'living in the wilderness'. (I sometimes think that students who take 'divinity' as their main subject would learn more about faith, not by sitting in their lecture room analysing the subject, but by joining the PE students in their periodic jaunts across the unchartered wastes, the minefields and bombing areas of Thetford Chase; or perhaps we ought to have joined those three men who, this afternoon were swept up from the Earth, like Elijah, in a chariot of fire, to explore the wilderness of the moon.)

'God calls us into the wilderness – to the life of faith. He does not call us into religion, or rather, to make the point more clearly, the life of religion is not necessarily the same as the life of faith and I think it is true to say that Christianity has more often been identified with religion than with the life of faith.

'What I'm driving at is that all too often when we turn to God in so-called faith we are not forsaking our anxious search for security. Rather we are turning to God in the hope that he will provide just that kind of security. That is 'religion' – just what the Devil wants. It is not the 'life of faith' to which God is calling us.

'This comes out very clearly in the temptation story. Jesus is a main of faith. The Devil is tempting him to become a man of religion. The Devil is not tempting Jesus to turn against God, as we might have expected. He is tempting him to look to God for his personal security – to make use of God to fulfil his own needs. Jesus is in the wilderness; he is hungry and there is nothing to eat. "Go on" says the Devil, "You're the Son of God; make use of him." Jesus is on the pinnacle of the Temple – a desperately dangerous place to be. "Go on" says the Devil, "You're the Son of God; make use of him." But Jesus will not put God to the test. God sent Jesus into the wilderness not that Jesus might test him, but that he might test Jesus. In the wilderness he's on his own, face to face with the Devil, face to face with the temptation to seek his own security. God is nowhere about. God waits on the other side of the wilderness.

'This is what the cross is all about. It is the ultimate wilderness experience. Jesus is on his own, face to face with the forces of evil. God is nowhere to be seen: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God is found on the other side of the wilderness of suffering and death: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me."

'We live at a time when Christianity is at a discount. There is widespread disillusionment, apathy, and sometimes open hostility. And when we've served up all the usual reasons for this – economic, sociological and so on – I believe the fact remains that

people have discovered that the gospel that we have traditionally preached is not true. We have been offering 'instant security' of the kind we know they want, and they've discovered that it doesn't work. Putting it bluntly we've been doing the work of the Devil: promising that if only people will turn to God all their problems will be resolved. The stones will become bread; they will be protected from all dangers; they will enjoy security and status. This isn't true, and people know it isn't true – but then *it isn't the Gospel either.*

'And then, coming nearer home, we also live in a time whether there is widespread depression and disillusionment among the clergy, particular the parish clergy, as witness the increasing drift of priests away from parochial ministry into specialist ministries (of whom I am one!) The reason for this is uncertainty as to what the 'role' of the parson really is. What is his job?

'I myself don't believe his role to be any different from what it always was – and I certainly don't subscribe to the view that the parochial ministry is an anachronism. Far from it. This question has arisen because the world has chosen to adopt certain criteria by which a parson's role is to be defined, measured and assessed. These criteria are productivity, scientific and technological invention and know-how, and statistics.

'Unless you are engaged in performing miracles of productivity – turning stones into bread – or in performing miracles of scientific progress – falling off the pinnacle, safely (only now it is 'getting to the moon and back') and unless your contribution can be assessed statistically, you don't belong, you have no role, no status.

'In terms of these criteria the parish priest has no role in society. Hence our discomfort – and hence the fact that whenever anyone asks me what my job is, my first inclination is to say 'college lecturer'. This is acceptable, it gives me status. But if I say I am a priest, people look at me as though I were some sort of drop-out from society.

‘Our role is to lead people through the wilderness. This means that first we must accept the fact that life is a wilderness – the wilderness of poverty, homelessness and starvation of body and soul; and also of alienation, estrangement, doubt, anxiety and despair in which not only the poor but the affluent find themselves. We must not pretend to ourselves or others that the world is anything other than it is – a wilderness.

‘Yet we are optimists. We have a Gospel: we have a word of good news – for those who can take it. But it is a hard word: a stumbling block to some and foolishness to others. The word is that it is in losing our lives that we shall save them. It is in dying that we live. It is in forsaking all desire for security that we shall find our ultimate security. The Old Testament affirmation: ‘No man shall see God and live’ becomes in the New Testament, ‘No man shall see God except he die’. This, it seems, is the word we find in Jesus.

‘There are no convincing arguments for its truth; there is no empirical evidence for its truth; there are no built in guarantees. We are given this word in Jesus: we either trust him or we don’t; it is a step in the dark; we either trust him blindly or we don’t trust him at all’

(That was followed by a meditation on the poem by Leonard Cohen, ‘Jesus was a sailor when he walked upon the water’).

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What brought all this to mind was a personal feeling that a change had taken place within CHRISM since the heady days when a number of individual priest-workers met and discovered a common denominator that was based on the simple realisation that we were not alone. There was a sense of fellowship, of belonging, that gave strength to our ministry – a ministry exercised within a wide variety of jobs. What we held in common was simply that wherever our employment found us or led us was where we were to witness; where we were to live and share our Christian faith. Most of us ‘helped out on Sundays’ in our ‘home churches’. What was

different was, I believe, the freedom simply to live our faith and find our ministry within our secular work. It may be inevitable that 'Authority' will seek to reign-in any offbeat spreading (or living) of the Gospel – a desire to control 'the how, the where, the what and the when' of our preaching is strong but should, generally speaking, be resisted.

An experiment in local ministry comes to mind from long ago. January 1964 saw the publication of the 'Paul Report' pointing to the uneven distribution of parish clergy. Ever since the Industrial Revolution the rural population had decreased (and rural poverty had increased) as industry developed and work and wealth brought the population to the factories (and of course the slums). The country parishes remained largely unchanged while the old parsons gently decayed in poverty and loneliness as 'pluralities' enveloped them – a situation that could be literally suicidal.

A new diocesan bishop appointed to the 'Dead See' of Norwich (Launcelot Fleming) set about tackling the problem. He made himself part of a team – with his three archdeacons (two of whom became assistant bishops). They recognised that whereas one priest, trying to care for four parishes was (it seemed then) a hopeless task, three priests working as a team could quite well serve a group of twelve. The problem had not then come to light that the writing was on the wall – or in the Paul Report – and that far more severe cuts in staffing were on their way.

One of those teams, aware of what was to be expected, looked ahead as best they could. They recognised that within most parishes there are already natural 'leaders' to whom the village community would turn 'when things need doing' or when problems arose. On further examination it was found that these natural leaders were also, in many places, the leading lights within the churches. With this in mind the clergy team spent roughly the next ten years gently preparing the parishioners of their Group to recognise, support and use those natural leaders.

The upshot was that three men were brought together to consider how best their talents could be expressed and focused. They were

a farmer, a publican who was also a skilled engineer, and a nurse at a local hospital. For each of them their work and their homes were all within the same group of parishes. (There should also have been one women who was a natural choice but in those days 'the gender thing' would have caused too great a distraction.) The next question was, 'what training was required?' To the team the answer was simple. These men already possessed the necessary gifts of leadership – regular meetings for prayer, Bible study and other aspects of ministry could readily be arranged. The team could grow together.

The Bishop and his team were delighted with what must have seemed a splendid solution to a small part of their big problems. But there had been a change of bishops and very soon the message had been passed around and an elaborate training programme descended on the 'The Candidates'. So many hours per week; residential course and so on...! Who was to milk the cows? Who was to pull the pints? Who was to care for the patients?

Not only was the suggested course impractical. It threatened to destroy the very gifts that were in the nature of these men. They were to be taken away and turned into something else – a second class imitation of 'a proper parson'. In the end one of three was ordained (without having to go away, and he did a marvelous job through a very critical period in the subsequent life of that Group of parishes). All three of them continued doing stalwart work for their parishes and their community.

The point that needs to be stressed here is that the 'priest-worker', 'minister in secular employment' or whatever, should be prepared to resist the pressure, quite often subtle or hidden, that threatens to squeeze him or her into that 'parson-shaped' hole, leaving him or her a diminished, cartoon character. The pressure is there. The licence, the attachment to a parish or parishes, the commitment to x hours per week on 'parish duties' – all these parochial activities have their importance but they do not necessarily belong to those whose focal point of ministry is within their place of work.

Most people's lives revolve nowadays around one or more of a number of 'spheres of interest' – our homes and families; our place of work (or our place in the queue at the job centre), our leisure activity or hobby; and there may be others including, perhaps, our church. I detect a considerable pressure being applied to MSEs today, somehow to clericalise them. It might be right for some but it ought not to be pressed.

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

MSE - spreading the word

Rob Fox

One of the main reasons for CHRISM's existence is to support and promote MSE, both as an organisation and through individual MSEs. This summer I re-visited how to accomplish this, particularly the second. The purpose of this article is to set out some of the ways we as MSEs can promote ministry at work on our patch, and how we can share lessons we learn more widely.

Firstly, join or form a local group. It need not be too formal, but when MSEs meet together we spark off one another. It is useful to have at least a loose agenda, if only a topic to discuss, and a venue that is reasonably accessible and congenial. This may be a home, a church hall, or a pub. Meeting over a meal is a relaxing way to get to know each other. Start with others you know who are MSEs, even if they don't self identify as such, and think cross-denomination: Methodist lay preachers, Baptist elders, Anglican Readers and URC NSMs, for example. The catchment area should be realistic and manageable, as the numbers; if the group grows much beyond a dozen, consider splitting into two smaller groups. CHRISM can give advice on how to nurture such a group.

Another route is CME (whatever ministerial development is called in your area). Does your Diocese or region provide training events and does the programme meet the needs of those ministering in secular contexts? If not, suggest topics that would be useful. And

if you have the skills and experience to deliver appropriate sessions, offer your services.

The same can be done for ministerial training courses in your area, perhaps the one you trained on. Most are only too happy to take up offers. One concern I have here is that the landscape of training has changed in most areas, with many courses and colleges being re-organised. In particular those dioceses that use OLMs tend to train them separately from stipendiary and other, NSM, ordinands. By its nature OLM tends to be parish-focussed, which is reflected in training, but the question should be put, "What is your ministry in your work?" Don't overlook Reader, lay preacher and lay ministry training either. Do you have skills and experience to offer?

Are you involved in ministerial discernment in your area? If so, is it as an MSE or for other reasons? If you have expertise and experience that might be useful to this process, why not offer your services? Offering to talk about MSE to enquirers, including at vocations events, is also useful.

Presenting MSE through written and spoken word is also valuable. Are there local or national church magazines and newspapers for which you can produce articles on MSE? Can you offer to give a presentation to a local ministers' event?

CHRISM can provide much information to help (much of it available on the website), or find a presenter for you. We can also find mentors for budding MSEs.

The flip side to this is that CHRISM is also a clearing house for information that MSEs themselves develop, or is used locally. We would therefore like – if can pass them on:

- Presentations you or others have designed that promote MSE in any way.
- Training or development materials on MSE that you or your diocese/area have developed.
- Articles you or others have written.

- An outline of any local training for ministry at work in your area, and who provides it.
- Whether you have contact with a local training course (and which one).
- Is there a local MSE group in your area? If so, how often do you meet and how do you support one another?

We would also like to build up intelligence on the church's attitude to MSE in your area. Is MSE actively encouraged? If so, how? Is it discouraged? If so, how and why?

By building up this information and understanding, CHRISM is better able to support us as MSEs.

Finally, don't forget the events CHRISM organises. In this edition are details of the Reflective Weekend at Holland House, Worcestershire, in February. If you've never been to one, think about joining us – you won't be disappointed!

Coventry Diocese Church of England

Reflections on Ministry in Secular Employment

This booklet was first produced in 2000 and was distributed widely within the Coventry diocese, and in many other places both nationally and internationally.

We therefore felt the time had come to reprint and reissue it, as we believe other people may continue to find it useful as they explore their own ministry. The real purpose of this booklet is to encourage other people to tell their stories of their work and reflect theologically on where God is in all this.

The book is structured to present personal stories on each left hand page and corresponding reflection on the right hand page. Some brief biographical details are summarised at the front of the book.

But time inevitably moves on: since the publication of the first edition many of us have changed our roles in work and life, some have retired from paid work and, sadly, two of the original contributors have died.

We have therefore updated the personal biographies - but the core of the document, the descriptions of the practicalities of our working lives and our theological reflection on the presence and activity of God in our work, have been left unchanged.

We dedicate this 2nd edition to the memory of Richard and Nigel.

If you would like a copy, please send a cheque for £5, payable to "CHRISM", to Phil Aspinall (details inside the back cover) and include your postal address. And please think about ordering copies to give to other colleagues who might be interested in MSE. For more information, or for larger orders, please email phil.aspinall@arcadis-vectra.com

Book reviews

'Transforming capitalism: entrepreneurship and the renewal of thrift', Peter S Heslam (Director, Transforming Business, University of Cambridge), Grove Books, 2010; 32 pages. ISBN 978 1 85174 745 0

Reviewed by Rob Fox

Grove Books is well known for producing short, practical, books on Christian living. In some respects this essay is a departure from the norm, as it summarises a much wider body of work, in a scholarly yet accessible way. Peter Heslam is a regular contributor to the work of the Ridley Hall Foundation, and a significant authority on faith and the economy. This book is an excellent introduction to the work of both.

Set against the background of the economic crisis of the last two years, he starts by welcoming the current debate on the future of capitalism, noting that "it is a dynamic process in need of constant review, critique, adjustment and development" (p.5). The book aims to "present a vision and rationale for 'transforming capitalism'" (p.5). Business lies at the heart of capitalism as its central institution, and attention is paid to an aspect often overlooked, "the creation of wealth through the service of people and the planet they inhabit" (p.6). In this, the relationship between entrepreneurship and thrift is highlighted.

Heslam notes that the word thrift is derived from the same Norse root as the verb to thrive, meaning well-being. In usage thrift is often associated with saving, but this is but part of the meaning, which is rather not wasting resources or energy, but using them effectively. Thrift is the opposite of profligacy, and seen as a virtue. The link between thrift and generosity is developed well (pp.10-11), with useful examples from John Wesley and Sir John Templeton (entrepreneur).

Chapter 3 explores entrepreneurship, with a brief historical sketch and acute observation that current developments in pioneer ministries are expressions of it! Heslam goes on (p.15) to observe that a question that has gone unanswered over the past century, 'What causes poverty?' may be better understood by being posed as 'What causes wealth?' "All attempts to solve poverty need to start by seeking to understand the creation of wealth." I think he has got this spot on. Poverty occurs as a natural product of the failure to 'do', to be enterprising. Wealth, or abundance, results from successful 'doing' and enterprise.

Heslam here notes the recent signs of the development community and agencies recognising the value of private enterprise in lifting people out of poverty. "Interest is generally restricted, however, to micro-finance, fair trade, social enterprise, corporate philanthropy and corporate responsibility (p.15). Whilst acknowledging that each of these has a contribution to make, he observes that, "of much greater long-term significance … are the core activities of mainstream commercial enterprises" (p.16).

Though not covered within this book, I think a comment about tax justice is relevant here. Organisations such as Oxfam and the Tax Justice Network have made much of the role of tax havens in siphoning off profits from 'developing countries', denying them tax revenues. Of much greater significance in transferring wealth from the poorer to the wealthier is transfer pricing – reducing the value of or profit on transactions in a country so as to reduce any tax liability (and indirect taxes are much more significant than those on profit). Of greater significance still is the 'spend' of commercial enterprises within these countries, in wages paid to employees and goods and services bought from local suppliers. Fair prices and fair pay spread wealth most effectively.

Chapter 4 examines the relationship between thrift and entrepreneurship, outlining how, in the past 100 years or so, "the thrift-based culture of prudence and moderation came to be replaced by the consumer culture of debt and excess" (p.18). Heslam notes that for much of the 20th century "nearly everyone in advanced economies had access to grass-roots savings and investment institutions", such as building societies or credit unions (p.19). The emphasis was on credit-worthiness. Today's fiscal landscape is quite different, with the de-mutualisation of risk, which has become personal, and taking out credit encouraged. The de-mutualisation of building societies and the 'theft' of the Trustee Savings Bank from its members were but symptoms of a deep malaise.

Another personal observation: during his term as Chancellor, Gordon Brown famously used the word 'prudence' to describe his fiscal policies. Yet at the same time those policies encouraged the growth of consumer credit (to over £1 trillion by 2008), and continued the dismantling of controls on fiscal probity and mutuality that marked the Conservative governments of the '80s and '90s. The hole we have dug is now deep indeed.

The chapter continues with a good survey of Christian approaches to thrift and entrepreneurship, noting that many successful enterprises, both industrial and financial, were the result of Christians working with faith-based principles. And it is a return to

those principles that Heslam argues is the key element to pulling ourselves out of the current economic crisis. He makes an interesting comment (p.22) about one measure the last government took in an effort to alleviate the position: reducing the standard rate of VAT to 15% for 13 months. As he points out this was a 'spending is good' approach rather than 'thrift is good'. The evidence published since the book was written strongly suggests that the reduction had negligible beneficial effect on the economy, so it will be interesting to see whether the new government's contrary policy, of raising the standard rate to 20%, will have an effect. As is rightly pointed out here, Keynes saw both thrift and entrepreneurship as essential to a balanced economy, and never simply advocated unfettered spending.

The chapter ends with a series of practical proposals for encouraging thrift, including a 'shop better, not more' message from society's leaders, more thrift-based and mutually owned financial institutions, integration of entrepreneurship in education and economic development policy, a serious review of stewardship within banks, and more experimentation in how shareholder ownership might narrow the gap between ownership and responsibility.

In Chapter 5 Heslam goes on to develop the notion that capitalism is providential, as the most effective driver, historically, for the creation and distribution of wealth. He rightly points out that although entrepreneurship and thrift may be necessary for transforming capitalism, they are not alone sufficient. The reasoning here is essentially using virtue ethics, including a discussion of the relationship between the theological and cardinal virtues (p.26). In order for the agenda set out in the previous chapter to succeed, it is not only business that needs to be transformed, but the people as a whole. The demand for unbounded credit and the get-rich-quick of lotteries and gaming that we have become en-cultured in over the past generation must be replaced by a love of moderation, recognition of our mutuality, and a desire for the common good. Ultimately, this relies "on God's creative and transforming power" (p.30).

So, is this a book worth reading? Unquestionably yes. Not that each reader will agree with its central tenets or details. But it is tightly argued, the product of much research, and challenges the reader on many levels. If I have one small cavil, it is with the optimism. A great many influential people will need to act as set out here for the principles to make a difference, and for thrift to become a social habit. But that is – in part – what entrepreneurship is about, isn't it?

'The white swan formula: rebuilding business and finance for the common good.' James Featherby, LICC, 2009, 22 pages. £2.50 for hard copy, or download free from www.celluk.org.uk

Reviewed by Rob Fox

I'm becoming a grumpy old man: each time I read something and find my expectations dashed, I have a grumble. Not a good start to a review, I know, but I expected a measure of rigour, in even a short work on the economic crisis, when it is written by someone who has worked in the City of London for 25 years. On reflection, I think this booklet is best treated as a rhetorical tract. As such the author makes a number of perfectly good points. I would have loved more though.

The name is a deliberate contrast with Nicholas Teleb's 'Black Swan' theory – sometimes events have consequences that are beyond the realm of normal expectations, such as early explorers of Australia finding black swans. The impending crisis of capital, and the consequences for the world economy, was foreseen by few observers five years ago, though more than James Featherby thinks. It was not that disaster was not foreseen, more that the siren voices were ignored. For those who know the course of the Wall Street Crash, the signs were all too obvious.

The aim of the tract is to suggest a blueprint for re-building business and finance so that they act for the common good, "based

on a clear and shared set of common values, worked out and applied in practice by all of us" (p.1). This is a noble aim, and two pages are devoted to dozens of couplets setting out some of those values, such as "truth not equivocation" and "reward aligned with risk" (pp.12-13). Regrettably none of the couplets, or other references, is developed into a coherent framework of values.

That values might be shared is also problematic. British society has always been more pluralist than is commonly believed, but in the last fifty years this has become more active and obvious, fuelled by nationalism in the Celtic lands, increased immigration (especially where non-Christian) and greater emphasis on the rights of individuals and minorities. The same is true of the economy, which is global in a way inconceivable to most a generation ago. And the UK has played a leading role in making it so.

Many statements are made about the state of the economy, or rather international finance – which is implicitly, and mistakenly, taken to be the economy, for example, "the western economic model stands humbled by events" (p.3). There is however an acute shortage of analysis, illustrations and concrete examples.

There are also contradictions. For example, Chapter 3, The case for values, opens with the statement, "It is clear we need regulation that is more shrewd" (p.6), yet a few sentences later we read: "The danger is that we return to our old habits of asking the Government to solve our problems or not truly learning from any of the other lessons mentioned above, including that regulation is ineffective and costly and restricts rather than encourages helpful innovation." We don't have to ask Government to solve our problems. Whichever is in power thinks it has both the knowledge and authority to do so, and each one fails as much as succeeds. As for regulation, the dismantling of the Roosevelt-era financial controls on US financial institutions by the Bush administration, and 'follow suit' relaxation of UK regulation, created the playing field on which the likes of the Lehman Brothers, Northern Rock and the Allied Irish Bank mortgaged their and our futures. If only the de-regulators had studied the demise of Leeds United Football Club ....

I think the author sometimes over-states his case. This is a classic rhetorical device, but sits uneasily here. For example, in the chapter entitled "Wrong-headed notions", the first is, "the myth that the market provides a substitute for morality" (p.8). I've yet to meet anyone who thought it did. But then I don't work in the City. On a specific point, the author states at this point that the near disappearance of the securitisation market is down to over-complexity in the financial markets leading to a breakdown of trust. In fact securitisations are well down because few investors have access to the credit necessary to invest in them; it is a consequence of the credit squeeze.

There is a chapter (tentatively) setting out how values might be promoted, and the final part, on why equity is to be preferred to debt, is good. I particularly liked the paragraph beginning "Unlike equity, debt will insist on its pound of flesh. Equity by its nature shares risk and reward" (p.19) There is also proper prominence given to the constructive role mutuality can play in re-building the economy, though the author shows no awareness of the contribution of the Co-operative movement or mutual societies, nor considers the impact of the assault on mutuality encouraged by successive governments over the past thirty years. Many of the banks bailed out were mutual in 1980.

Some of the action enjoined is not thought through. For instance, "we can support policies and practices... that reinforce our values, and we can challenge those which do not" (p.18). Is this not what people do? The public gets the policies of the party sufficient of them vote for, and the way people vote reflects their values, their actual values, not espoused. If we would like many more to support policies that reinforce our values, these need to become theirs. There is little in here on how this can be brought about.

It is a fine thing to say, "We can no longer allow the system to drive our values. Our values must now drive the system" (p.6). This tract is far from clear what those values should or might be – which is surprising – and offers no suggestions as to how others can be persuaded to sign up. At least it may spark others to do so.

CHRISM Annual Conference 2010, 'Being human at work', The Living Centre, University of the West of England, 16th – 18th July 2010.

A reflection from John Smith

It was rather fun to find that I had been to UWE before in 1964, whilst the campus was still under the banner of Bristol College of Science and Technology. On that occasion it was for an interview to study architecture (which I ended up not doing). Much water has flowed under the bridge since then and we were much refreshed by this conference which was both gentle on the spirit and uplifting on the mind. Our gathering on Friday evening set the scene. Peter Johnson, head of the Living Centre, outlined for us the aims and ambitions of those who minister in the Octagon and its environs. Naturally, any student is welcomed and no-one is force-fed religion, which is refreshing in itself, but any who come requesting specific spiritual guidance receive it. I got a bit confused by the term Christian Humanist, thinking that this was a bit of a contradiction but it turned out that both Erasmus and Thomas More had been of this ilk and friends of each other. (Rob Fox explained this to me sotto voce.) It turned out that there was a book on the table by Don Cupitt who is indeed a humanist, but who regards himself as in good standing with the Anglican Church. So sometimes these things can get a bit blurred.

Bishop Michael (left) and Peter Johnson

Anyway, Peter's leadership of the conference in his peaceful and kindly manner set the tone of all that was to follow.

Sadly for one's waistline, the food was exceptionally good and plentiful and the staff dining room said good things for those who must perforce partake of its pleasures during term time. Likewise, the student accommodation was both comfortable and up to the standard of anything one could wish. How delightful not to have to wait for the hot water to arrive in the shower! So both our bodily and spiritual needs were taken care of – Hugh Lee having chosen some lovely services from the Iona Community for morning and evening prayer. Even our singing, which was unaccompanied, was fun.

I would say that, for me, the principal highlight of the conference was Nadine Tchelebi's presentation of the Social Photo Matrix. If you haven't heard of this before, neither had I. It is based upon psychoanalytical theory, especially on the principle of first impressions and free association. If you take a photo of your work environment (as we had been invited to do) and then ask others for their first impressions, then some interesting results may follow. As the conference's theme was 'Being Human at Work', this was a most revealing session. We were asked to look at each photo for five minutes and make brief comments using free association. There were some very amusing things that came up. For instance, in the first photo the clock showed 8.45 – but was it am or pm? This theme continued through the next series of photos. The first photo was taken using stark contrast of light and shade and was rather dark in its impressions. The person who took this photo later told us that indeed the room was in a new building and not a particularly welcoming environment. So there is much to be learned about where you work by looking at a photo. I found this on the web: "The Social Photo-Matrix is an experiential method for promoting the understanding of the unconscious in organizations through photographs taken by organizational role holders. By association, amplification, systemic thinking and reflection, the hidden meaning and deeper experience of what is often unnoticed in organizations can be perceived and put into thoughts." (http://www.ispso2010.dk/PDW3-Mersky-and-Sievers) So there you are.

With this in mind, some of us went wandering round the campus on Saturday afternoon looking for signs that we could interpret psychoanalytically, ho ho! In fact, although we had been for a pleasant stroll, our subsequent conversation and discussion revealed how much different people had been affected by this new method of investigation. The conference dinner in the evening gave us a further chance to enlarge on our impressions, only to be further fulfilled by Richard Reakes in his hilarious after-dinner speech. Oh to be the head of a family firm of undertakers.

As with most conferences, it's the people that matter. For me, this was my second CHRISM conference following a visit to St Catherine's in London's dockland in 2007. So there were new faces as well as familiar ones and it was clear that the Spirit was present and moving amongst us. The calm, friendly atmosphere gave me personally an enormous feeling of wellbeing, which was what this place was all about, so it just had to have been a success – my wife commented on the fact when I got home. May CHRISM long flourish and its conferences long inspire those who attend.

The Revd John F. Smith is Deacon in St Nicholas Church, Arundel in West Sussex and was for thirty years an emigrant in Western Australia. He is only partially an MSE as he "works" three days a week as a computer consultant and for three days he donates his time to the Anglican Church.

Conference participants in the Octagon

A reflection from Amanda Duncan

Being Human at work? When I saw that title I knew I must go to this conference. For me the challenge a work has always been to bring Christ's love into the workplace at the same time as being 'real'. I have struggled with the tension of appearing one way and behaving another. I suppose the workplace has shown me just how human I am. My work colleagues have always known I am a Christian and but now I am training for ordained ministry the pressure to be a 'godly' person has been increased by their expectations of me. Non-Christians often have strong views on how a Christian should behave, especially someone in 'Holy Orders'!

Since I started training with the Eastern Region Ministry Course (ERMC), a 'non-residential course' with residential weekends and a summer school, I have been made aware of workplace ministries and CHRISM. Phil Aspinall is coming to talk to us at an ERMC January weekend. I have felt drawn towards its ethos as, although I am an ordinand, I am still working as a teacher and continue to feel keenly the difficulties for many, including myself, that the workplace brings. I am in a situation at the moment where bullying and other dehumanising tactics occur regularly and efforts by unions and other personnel have been unsuccessful in a bid to stop these practises. I feel the pressures like everyone else and am often just as stressed, so how do I make a difference as a Christian in that situation? I am presently involved in a workplace placement with the police chaplaincy and I can see how the presence of the chaplaincy offers support and a listening ear to those who work in a very stressful occupation. However what if you are one of the workforce yourself? I hoped to find some understanding on a personal level.

Being offered a lift via e-mail from the station to the conference premises alleviated my apprehension about attending an event where I knew no-one and wasn't sure I qualified to be there, as I am training for full time parish ministry not MSE. In fact I wasn't totally sure what an MSE was or did? Although I was made very welcome, initial conversations and comments made by other attendees led me to feel I had misunderstood the purpose of the

conference and who it was for, and I began to feel a little uncomfortable especially when asked about my own 'status'. I was actually asked 'what are you doing here then?' by one person. A good enough but startling question which I continued to chew on as the weekend progressed. (More about the conclusions I came to on that later.)

The weekend was hosted by Revd Dr Peter Johnson - Head of the Living Centre in the Octagon on the campus of UWE in Bristol. He leads a team of chaplains of different faiths and therapists who together offer pastoral care at UWE. This Centre provided a welcoming atmosphere for the conference and was an excellent example of interfaith working in the community. This conference offered an opportunity to explore the essence of being human and how that related to our experiences of work and the workplace through different sessions. It would take too long to revisit everything said and done so I will highlight a few things that I have continued to recall, apart from the delicious food and fellowship!

The introduction by the Bishop of Bristol set the conference in motion. His reference to Trinitarian theology and how the Holy Spirit's work is centrifugal throwing us out, rather than, like a vortex, forcing us inwards, emphasised the importance of recognising that the 'church' is already in the world because that's where 'WE ', it's living stones, are. He commended the work of MSEs and of CHRISM before leaving.

Peter Johnson set the scene for the weekend with the verses from Rev 21, 1-5, 22-27 noting that in the references here to the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God there was no temple; rather an emphasis on God living with his people - Immanuel. This made a similar point to the Bishop that the 'church' should not be focused on a physical building but on making its presence known in the world we live in, among the people we work with. It also looked with hope to a future place where everything is made new, nothing evil is allowed to enter and is inclusive: 'all the kings and nations will bring in their glory'. It was an aspiration that the Living Centre ascribed to but we were also encouraged to reflect in what ways we could enable such an aspiration through our work, religion and

faith. In another session Peter referred to Christian Humanism, a notion I found really interesting and attracted to because of its inclusivity and inclination to social justice.

Of the four activities offered on Saturday I chose to visit the Buddhist Retreat Centre. A group of us made our way to the centre where we took part in a meditation session. The aim of the session was to teach people how to do mediation as an aid to dealing with stress. The woman leading the session talked about stress, its causes and symptoms and consequences. She then taught us how to do meditation with a focus on breathing. It was difficult not to fall asleep in such a relaxing atmosphere! We sat in the garden afterwards with refreshments and asked questions. Interestingly our hostess had attended an Alpha course during her university years and then a Buddhist course but felt more at home with Buddhist practice. She is part of the Buddhist community and presently training to be a teacher of it. Having dialogue with someone of another faith reminded me of the common ground we share in our humanity.

A fascinating session led skilfully by Nadine Tchelebi was the experimental one focusing on photos taken of our workplaces. These photos were presented on a screen for us to look at, reflect upon and speak out our thoughts, feelings and reactions to. The idea was to see the unseen, think the unthinkable. The presence of walls and barriers in the photos leapt out to me personally and my strong feelings about wanting to smash one particular wall down enabled me to get in touch with frustrated feelings about a situation at work. It felt like that wall - a seemingly insurmountable obstacle - something that needed smashing down.

So, did I find at this conference any answers to my questions about being human at work? Yes, my mixed up notions have been challenged. The quote, 'The glory of God is a human being fully alive - a human being directed toward God' remains with me. Jesus is the example of that I can draw hope from. He submitted himself to the pleasures and pain of being human. He is recorded as showing emotions of anger and sorrow and joy. He was vulnerable at the same time as being strong. He lived his life with

an attitude of servanthood at the same time as commanding authority. He was fully alive and fully directed towards God. I am encouraged that my own human weakness and vulnerability if submitted to God can become a blessing to others.

Did I resolve the question about whether I should be there? Yes. CHRISM is for those who are MSEs, but it is also for those who would support and encourage them and anyone whose main arena for ministry is the workplace. The fundamental aim of CHRISM is one I can fully agree with. As a future Parish Priest I feel committed to support and encourage MSEs, chaplains and all who enter their workplace each day as Christians human beings wanting to glorify God. I am presently doing a workplace placement with the police chaplaincy and have been made aware how lonely that role can be. The MSEs I met were truly passionate about what they do and are an inspiration to us all. Let us not forget their ministry.

Amanda Duncan is married with three grown up children and two grandchildren and living in Barnet, North London. She is an ordinand training with ERMC and a teacher of children 'not in school' for medical reasons.

A sermon given at the conference: 'Observations and remarks about the dignity of work and workers' by

Franz Segbers

I am much honoured to deliver some remarks about this conference. I have been asked to comment on the discussion.

Firstly, you should know the context that I am coming from. For more than 20 years I have been engaged in industrial chaplaincy or industrial mission. All over these years the following question has been my central commitment: How can we be human beings at work? I am not able to give final answers to this question. But here are some further thoughts:

1. Why are we asking this question? What exactly is the challenge that makes us ask this? There is no doubt about it: work is for the majority not good work and not wholesome. Many people are suffering because of their work. In Germany we have a great debate about so called 'good work'. A German study about 'good work' states:

> Firstly, good work is characterised by opportunities for influence, for personal development and learning and by good relationships. Secondly, the income needs to be sufficient and fair. According to these criteria only 3 percent of the employees are satisfied. Only 13 percent have good working conditions with opportunities for personal development; 84 percent are characterised either by less possibilities or by wages that are not able to guarantee the right of living wages.

What does it means to have a good job? A good job is a job well paid; a job without precarious conditions, a job that allows us to express our capabilities. A job is a good job if the boss or the manager is respectful of their employees.

What are we speaking about when we discuss about good work and about being human at work? I have been missing, during this conference, some analytical thoughts about the societal and economic trends that are visible in the world of work and the work place.

2. What are the forces responsible for the increasing bad work? Work is made flexible while the profit is inflexible. That means that the shareholders demand a fixed return on their equity and so their demands prevail against the demands of the workers. It is in the workers' interests to have good working conditions, fair salaries, working hours and so on. But the shareholders have an interest only in increasing the return on their equity. They like to get a bigger and bigger share of the results produced by the common operation of all the work force. This is typical of financial capitalism.

Bad work is neither a tsunami nor done by nature. Bad work is increasing, but it is a result of structures and of decisions taken by

other human beings. We have to ask these questions if we would like to recognise the forces that are complicating our efforts to be human beings at work. What does it mean to be human within inhuman contexts? How can I become more of a human being at my workplace? What do I need to do?

3. Who is co-operating in God's project for his "household" – the world in which all have access to their livelihoods? The Bible speaks about God in many terms. God is shepherd, is king, and is father and mother. God is a liberator and an economist. It may seem to some of us that to speak of God as "the Economist" is not terribly flattering to the One in whom we live and move and have our being. The US American theologian Douglas Meeks centres his argument of God the Economist on a social conception of the Trinity, each of whose persons are understood to be giving and sustaining, not self-sufficient and domineering. The argument is explored in relation to conceptions of property, work, and need. Work, depicted ambiguously in our culture as both curse and source of meaning, is seen in Trinitarian perspective as redeemed from control by others.

The Bible speaks about God like an Economist He cares for humankind as creator of the creation. This creation is full of gifts for us but we have "to work it and to take care of it" (Gen 2:15). Work within God's household is a work in a household that is created in fullness but not in scarcity. God's will is that human beings cooperate with him. The Bible's primary interest is not what we are but what we are doing and caring for. The whole Bible is an invitation to join in God's project and in his mission. We are invited to join this project within his household. The starting point of the Bible is the liberation from slavery in Egypt. Since these days God makes a covenant with us. We are invited to help God in his project. The European and American history is influenced by an "exodus thinking" and "exodus politics" (so the Jewish Philosopher Michael Walzer). The first version is the exodus and every act of liberation is a variation of God's first act of Exodus.

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'Responsible leadership' a talk by Philip Green at Liverpool Cathedral, 12thOctober 2010

Rob Fox

North West Christians in Business (CABE, LICC, North West Christian Forum, Initiatives of Change and the Diocese of Liverpool) organised this event in the imposing surroundings of Liverpool Cathedral on the evening of Tuesday 12th October. It comprised a 25 minute talk from the speaker followed by a half hour QA session, plenty of time to talk to others, and the odd glass of wine. About 60 people attended, from up to 40 miles away.

Philip Green has been CEO of United Utilities (UU) for five years, having previously worked for P&O Nedlloyd, Reuters and DHL. He is relatively unusual therefore among CEOs in having worked in a range of industries. Also unusually, he does not have a team he brings with him to each new business; he noted later that he has only ever hired one person twice. He has a number of outside interests, including being a trustee of 'More than Gold', a Christian initiative for the 2012 Olympics, and a charity he and his wife set up sponsoring community projects for children in sub-Saharan Africa. His starting point was the question "Who are you?" This is usually answered by reference to our role or our title. Philip answers it as "Christian, leader, husband and father, with a heart for Africa."

Philip identified the single most important factor in determining the success of a business, indeed of any organisation, as leadership. He uses a definition for it borrowed from Tim Cross: 'winning the hearts and minds of people to achieve a common objective'. Leadership is fundamentally different to management, which is concerned with execution, delivery, deadlines and so on. They require and use different skill sets. This I fully agree with, together with his observation that learning the difference takes a long time.

There followed an excursion into David Goldman's concept of 'emotional intelligence' (EI), and the challenge it makes to the notion that it is IQ that determines success. Philip noted that the factors Goldman associated with EI - the ability to communicate, self-awareness, authenticity, empathy – are all characteristics important to leadership. He illustrated this with a story about a visit to a university at Oradea, northern Rumania, which has just two faculties: applied theology and business. A young lady asked the question, "How do you prioritise your life?" Initially stumped, Philip realised that there are five key factors, in order: faith, family, health, enjoy what you are doing, and firm (that is, career). This order is, as he put it, an aspiration.

Responsible leadership, he told us, is both corporate and personal. The first is important because of our moral responsibility towards one another and God's world, as stewards, because it makes good business sense, and because it is an increasingly important factor in attracting and retaining staff. Many employees now have a social and/or environmental agenda, and it is good business to address this.

Delegating and embedding responsibility is an important feature of responsible leadership. He illustrated this with a story about UU's response to the Lake District floods earlier this year. Local managers felt they needed the freedom to take necessary decisions quickly. The culture of the organisation enabled UU to respond to the needs of those flooded out, without a water supply, or disrupted by essential engineering in a way that met real needs, and this was reflected in praise by local businesses and residents for the prompt actions taken.

Further stories followed, for example of taking senior management away on activities such as building a community centre in Africa and climbing Kilimanjaro to raise money for charities. This came up again in the questions, but left one unaddressed: does this laudable encouragement of social action go beyond the personal to embedding it in the corporate? Philip has set up a charity with his own funds; has UU done likewise with corporate funds?

To finish Philip identified three areas that challenge Christians in the workplace. It is he thinks, "depressingly difficult" to talk publicly about faith. It is also difficult to fund-raise for explicitly Christian charities or activities; there is a widespread multi-faith sentiment inhibiting it. Finally, there is widespread doubt, both within and without the churches, that business and Christian faith can co-exist. He cited Stephen Green (HSBC) and John Varley (Barclays) as examples of how they can and do.

The questions were mostly about Philip's personal experiences of twinning faith and work; interesting but not adding much of substance. One observation he made was interesting though. He is "desperately disappointed with the lack of leadership from the church", especially the Church of England. I have some sympathy with this, though think it is not so much a matter of the right kind of leadership not being shown, but that it is not coming from those most in the public eye and media spotlight.

To illustrate this point, one question concerned executive remuneration, citing David Cameron's recently expressed view that a CEO should not earn more than 20 times what the office cleaner earns. (This says more about the PM never having worked outside the party machine than it does about tackling pay differentials). Philip cited the global market forces at play on the remuneration of senior executives and star footballers, which, while a factor is not the whole story. For example, could a business like UU – or a major bank – not follow the pay escalator and see whether senior staff left? From observation, my view is that fear of losing out drives business choices on pay: pay more just in case.

Yet there is an example of Christian leadership in this area. I recommend reading "The ethics of executive remuneration: a guide for Christian investors", a report for the Church Investors Group by Richard Higginson, Director of the Ridley Hall Foundation, and David Clough, Professor of Theology and Ethics at Chester University. It is available at www.churchinvestorsgroup.org.uk/issues/executive-remuneration. The authors recommend a more realistic top to bottom pay guide ratio of 75 to 1, not on any particular basis, but they later discovered that this is the guide used by the John Lewis Partnership, which is a model for employee stakeholders' interest that could be used much more widely in business (including UU?).

An hour is not long, but the ground covered was useful, and Philip is clearly successful at both integrating his own faith and work, and creating a business environment in which others can do likewise. An encouraging start to this new venture.

And finally

A Christmas story

We were the only family with children in the restaurant. I sat Erik in a high chair and noticed everyone was quietly sitting and talking. Suddenly, Erik squealed with glee and said, 'Hi!' He pounded his fat baby hands on the high chair tray. His eyes were crinkled in laughter and his mouth was bared in a toothless grin, as he wriggled and giggled with merriment.

I looked around and saw the source of his merriment. It was a man whose pants were baggy with a zipper at half-mast and his toes poked out of would-be shoes. His shirt was dirty and his hair was uncombed and unwashed. His whiskers were too short to be called a beard and his nose was so varicose it looked like a road map. We were too far from him to smell, but I was sure he smelled. His hands waved and flapped on loose wrists. 'Hi there, baby; hi there, big boy. I see ya, buster,' the man said to Erik.

My husband and I exchanged looks, 'What do we do?' Erik continued to laugh and answer, 'Hi.' Everyone in the restaurant noticed and looked at us and then at the man. The old geezer was creating a nuisance with my beautiful baby. Our meal came and the man began shouting from across the room, 'Do ya patty cake? Do you know peek-a-boo? Hey, look, he knows peek- a-boo.'

Nobody thought the old man was cute. He was obviously drunk. My husband and I were embarrassed. We ate in silence; all except for Erik, who was running through his repertoire for the admiring skid-row bum, who in turn, reciprocated with his cute comments.

We finally got through the meal and headed for the door. My husband went to pay the check and told me to meet him in the parking lot. The old man sat poised between me and the door. 'Lord, just let me out of here before he speaks to me or Erik,' I prayed. As I drew closer to the man, I turned my back trying to sidestep him and avoid any air he might be breathing. As I did, Erik leaned over my arm, reaching with both arms in a baby's 'pick-me-up' position. Before I could stop him, Erik had propelled himself from my arms to the man. Suddenly a very old smelly man and a very young baby consummated their love and kinship. Erik in an act of total trust, love, and submission laid his tiny head upon the man's ragged shoulder. The man's eyes closed, and I saw tears hover beneath his lashes. His aged hands full of grime, pain, and hard labor, cradled my baby's bottom and stroked his back. No two beings have ever loved so deeply for so short a time.

I stood awestruck. The old man rocked and cradled Erik in his arms and his eyes opened and set squarely on mine. He said in a firm commanding voice, 'You take care of this baby.' Somehow I managed, 'I will,' from a throat that contained a stone.

He pried Erik from his chest, lovingly and longingly, as though he were in pain. I received my baby, and the man said, 'God bless you, ma'am, you've given me my Christmas gift.' I said nothing more than a muttered thanks. With Erik in my arms, I ran for the car.

My husband was wondering why I was crying and holding Erik so tightly, and why I was saying, 'God, my God, forgive me.' I had just witnessed Christ's love shown through the innocence of a tiny child who saw no sin, who made no judgment; a child who saw a soul, and a mother who saw a suit of clothes. I was a Christian who was blind, holding a child who was not. I felt it was God asking, 'Are you willing to share your son for a moment?' when He shared His for all eternity. How did God feel when he put his baby in our arms 2000 years ago?

The ragged old man, unwittingly, had reminded me that to enter the Kingdom of God, we must become as little children. Sometimes, it takes a child to remind us of what is really important. We must always remember who we are, where we came from and, most importantly, how we feel about others. The clothes on your back or the car that you drive or the house that you live in does not define you at all; it is how you treat your fellow man that identifies who you are.

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