

# The Kingdom at Work Project



## *Bulletin 11*

July 2017

### **‘Ministers in secular employment’**

In this issue of the Kingdom at Work Project *Bulletin*, we have linked up with ‘CHRistians in Secular Ministry’ - also known as **CHRISM** - to explore the contribution of ordained ministers in secular employment to bringing the message and practice of Christian faith to bear within the world of work.

CHRISM may not be well known to every reader of this *Bulletin*. However, ministers (as deacons or presbyters) with a commitment to exercising their ministry in secular employment have been actively encouraged by their denominations to undertake this vocation for now over fifty years. To the fore in this development have been the Church of England and the Methodist Church (where those ordained are normally known as ‘sector ministers’).

Ministers in secular employment (often called MSEs) are self-supporting ministers. However, they differ from many of the latter in that their calling is not primarily to parish or congregational ministry, though they usually contribute to this, but to those situations within which they are employed, normally full-time.

CHRISM describes its fundamental aim as being:

*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.*

In the articles which follow, members of CHRISM explore what it means for them to be ‘a minister in secular employment’ and the challenges and opportunities which this calling presents

The Kingdom at Work Project is grateful to the Revd Rob Fox, a member of CHRISM since it was established, and who has served as its Secretary, Treasurer and Journal Editor, for commissioning these articles.

**David Clark** (Project Co-ordinator)

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# CHRISM

## The origin and development of CHRistians In Secular Ministry (CHRISM)



From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, visionaries such as Roland Allen called on the churches to ordain working men who could help forge links between the worlds of church and work and thereby contribute to the churches' mission. In

1959, the Church of England changed its Canons to allow this to happen. Mervyn Stockwood, Bishop of Southwark, set up the Southwark Ordination Course, with the first deacons working and supporting themselves by remaining in 'ordinary' jobs being ordained in 1963. Training was undertaken in the evenings and at weekends so that course members could continue in their occupations and not have to leave to attend a theological college for three years. Other courses were set up in the following years. Other denominations also bought in to the self-supporting clergy model (for example, Methodist Sector Ministers).

As the numbers of Self-Supporting Ministers grew, forming an increasingly large proportion of ordained ministers, a debate developed around whether or not they should be church focussed. This meant their essentially supporting the local church minister model. On the other, hand they could be work focussed, for example along the lines of the Worker Priest movements in continental Europe. Michael Ranken, a food hygiene engineer and advocate of the latter model, started a newsletter among those who supported a missionary workplace focus. That newsletter continues today as 'Ministers-at-Work', the journal of CHRISM.

In 1984 a conference was held in Nottingham to discuss the future focus of Self-Supporting Ministry. Over 140 attendees (many more than had been expected) were evenly split between the local church and the workplace as their main concern. The financial surplus from the conference was placed in a trust (Christians in Secular Employment Trust, CHRISSET), which funded the newsletter founded by Michael Ranken and organised annual week-end retreats. The success of these week-ends led the trustees to propose setting up an organisation specifically to advocate and support Ministry in Secular Employment (MSE). This led to a Conference at Salford University in the summer of 1993 which established CHRistians In Secular Ministry (CHRISM).

CHRISM has continued to hold week-end retreats and summer (or occasionally autumn) conferences, publishes the newsletter now called 'Ministers-at-Work' and papers on MSE. It advocates and campaigns for ministry in and through daily work, and supports MSEs in that shared ministry. In addition it maintains active links with groups sharing a similar vision, both in the UK and worldwide. These include the European Worker Priest movements (sending representatives to the annual Pentecost gatherings and hosting some), US networks (NASSAM – Episcopalian – and the Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers) and MSEs in Australasia. CHRISM also maintains a library on MSE and workplace ministry located at the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine, Limehouse in east London.

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For further information, including access to papers and many published articles, visit the

**CHRISM** website at [www.chrism.org.uk](http://www.chrism.org.uk)

For all other matters please contact the **Rev'd Rob Fox** at [rob.fox36@gmail.com](mailto:rob.fox36@gmail.com)

## What is a Minister in Secular Employment (MSE)?

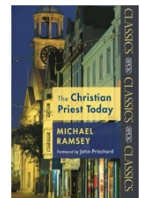
John Lees

At its simplest, an MSE is an authorised minister who earns their living working in a 'secular' role rather than receiving a stipend from a church. There is of course great variety among MSEs. In recent years it has become common to describe such ministers as 'Self-Supporting Ministers' (SSMs).

What marks out MSEs from other SSMs is that MSEs see their work and workplace as the main focus of their ministry, being work-facing as well as church-facing. Although MSEs often have some local church responsibilities, their primary focus of ministry and Christian witness is the *workplace*. Sometimes this is explicitly authorised, for example on an industrial chaplaincy basis. Far more often it is organised and recognised informally.

The primary concern of MSEs is their paid employment in particular, and the world of work more generally. They may be employed on a full-time basis, but sometimes in part-time, self-employed, freelance or consultancy roles.

The idea of clergy maintaining secular occupations is not a modern phenomenon. It can be argued that in the early church those who ministered maintained themselves through their trade. Paul insisted on doing so, hence another term often used by MSEs of themselves is 'tent-makers'. Michael Ramsey, in the first edition of *The Christian Priest Today* (1972) wrote:



I regard the contemporary development of a priesthood which combines a ministry of word and sacrament with employment in a secular profession not as a modern fad but as a recovery of something indubitably apostolic and primitive ... What we call our 'auxiliaries' today belong most truly to the apostolic foundation, and we may learn from them of that inner meaning of priesthood which we share with them.

All Christians are called to live out their discipleship in daily life, which for many includes the workplace. The workplace is an important arena for ministry. It can be a powerful source of stimulation, a community, a place for friendship and support, a place of learning, and a prompt to meaning and self-esteem. It can equally be a place of stress, uncertainty, drudgery, or somewhere from which individuals want to escape.

### The vocation of the Minister in Secular Employment

Within the churches a vocation to ordained ministry is usually understood as a call to local church work. However, it has increasingly, but not universally, been recognised that some called to ordained ministry have a vocation to be where people work. MSEs are therefore found in a huge range of occupations: teachers and lecturers, scientists, police officers, local government officers, the arts, HR managers, GPs, vets, nurses, engineers, surveyors, fire-fighters, bus drivers, independent consultants and so on. MSEs are also found in private, public and third sector organisations.

Ministers in Secular Employment have a particular ministry in that they are visibly outside the traditional 'vicar' role, yet are still rooted in the ministry of Word and Sacrament. In their work they choose to live out the Gospel among those who often appear to seek it the least. They seek to stand up for principles in contexts not normally engaged in conversation

with the life of faith. MSEs speak of workplace encounters which bring Christ alive as effectively as any other form of outreach. They provide one of the strongest links between the church and the world of work, affirming that work itself can be a form of discipleship. They keep the church better informed about the world of work. They are well placed to minister to those in congregations who are in work. Their work is distinctive and visible by being authorised, even if MSEs have little or no conventional authority.

MSEs talk of ‘meeting God at work’ - the privilege of seeking Christ in the workplace. Their work overcomes the barriers that may arise between ‘church’ and ‘life’. When preaching or leading worship their experience of faith at work becomes an invaluable resource. By choosing to share the daily experience of work colleagues and helping them integrate faith and life, they celebrate the presence of God in all human activity. They point to the values which underlie work, and tell the Christian story in a very particular language and context. By doing so, MSEs undertake an important if often invisible aspect of mission by affirming God's concern for every part of creation.

A website created by the Diocese of Coventry states:

MSEs can provide the safe space in which people seek guidance and explore the issues that are concerning them in their lives. They often enable less conspicuous Christians to declare themselves. The pastoral interactions within the school, hospital or workplace community can be every bit as intense as those in the parish.

### **Some features of the work of Ministers in Secular Employment**

A traditional four-fold picture of ministry provides some insights into the work of MSEs:

- 1 Their work usually has a *pastoral* element - but one which is defined by ‘working alongside’ rather than a more formally defined chaplaincy role. MSEs’ familiarity with the pressures and joys of work will often give them important pastoral perspectives.
- 2 Their work sometimes has a *prophetic* or ‘wisdom’ dimension to it - supporting, questioning and sometimes challenging the values of individuals and organisations, and the decisions they make.
- 3 They will very often be *evangelists* - in the sense of using everyday work contexts as opportunities to be or point to the Gospel. MSEs are often gifted at bringing the language of faith into the workplace and the language of the workplace into worship.
- 4 They sometimes find themselves *teachers* - in the way they unpack church thinking, doctrine, the bible in everyday conversations.

MSEs are not ‘part-time’ ministers. All of their activity is ministry, not just the work they undertake within church contexts. They are not working simply to subsidise the time they give to the church. They are not undertaking a background ministerial training in preparation for early retirement when they can take up full-time church ministry.

An MSE is a minister who is ‘one of us’, working alongside ‘us’, doing the same work, experiencing the same joys and trials of the job. It is a missionary role, reaching colleagues many of whom would otherwise have no regular contact with the Christian faith. MSEs recognise this calling, a calling to everyday work, and place it at the centre of their discipleship and ministry.

### Further reading

- Francis, J. M. and Francis, L. & L J Francis (ed.) (1998) *Tentmaking: Perspectives on Self-Supporting Ministry* Leominster: Gracewing
- Fuller, J. and Vaughan, P. (1986) *Working for the Kingdom: The Story of Ministers in Secular Employment*. London: SPCK
- Mason, K. (2002) *Priesthood and Society* Norwich: The Canterbury Press
- Larive, A.E. (2004) *After Sunday: A Theology of Work*. London: Continuum

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<http://johnleescareers.com/info/john-lees/>

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## The neglect of Ministers in Secular Employment

Hugh Valentine

Rob Fox of CHRISM asked me to write this article. He gently suggested I develop the theme of how workplace ministers might *be better supported* by the church. This was after I had said in response to his initial request that the most pressing observation to be made was that the church largely fails to show any understanding of such ministries.

I take his point, but sometimes being negative isn't, well, so negative. The ministry of ordained or otherwise commissioned people *in the secular workplace* is an ill-nurtured vocation. Indeed, I suspect it is regarded as phony in some quarters. My experience has been within the Church of England. When I sensed a stirring that I should offer myself for ordination it was not long after I had embarked on a vocation as a social worker. I could not see that it would be right to detach that stirring from the context in which it had arisen. These were pre-internet days – the mid-1980s – but, by luck, I came across the work of the Roman Catholic French worker-priests. A penny dropped!

Over the 28 years since I was ordained I have been an ordinary wage-earner - first in local authority social work and now in the third-sector. I do not regret for a second choosing this path over that of the stipendiary priest. However, I do regret, indeed I sorrow for, the institutional indifference shown towards the world of paid work. I also have some regrets about my own failure, as a worker-priest, to live up to my calling.

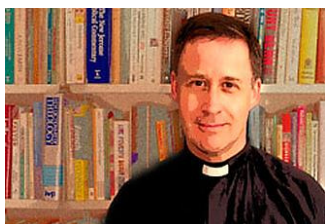
The principal sorrow is the indifference the church-as-institution shows towards the lived experience of those who sell their labour, who go off to work. It may be that non-conformist churches are better at this than my own CofE. The problem is partly connected to clericalism – a mind-set which places the ordained at the centre of things, and certainly at the centre of 'things spiritual'. It is one which sees them attached, umbilically, to buildings called churches. Through no fault of their own, the lives of many clergy run on different tracks. Whilst many remain alert to realities beyond the parish and its ways, some fall victim to an insulated life. It is insulated from having to sell their labour, to respond to inhuman demands



or having to engage with the ‘powers and principalities’ that find expression in, and are indeed nurtured by so much of modern organisational and workplace life.

It seems to me blindingly obvious that the church, as part of its ministerial structure, should seek out women and men to operate in the world of paid work - and ordain them as worker-priests or ‘ministers in secular employment’. Places of paid work are where most people congregate. To a large extent they are where the drama of our redemption is played out, individually and collectively, and where the impact of the gospel might be found to have most traction. However, lest there be any misunderstanding here, I do not see, and never have seen, the role of ministers at work to be collared or to be convenors of prayer meetings. The calling is far more nuanced than that.

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**Hugh Valentine** is an Anglican priest. He is director of an endowed foundation concerned with education as a means of helping children and adults from low-income households escape cyclic disadvantage. He has worked for over 25 years in social work as a practitioner, a manager and later as a director/head of service. Until 2005, he was engaged in work with local government. He runs the website ‘With-Intent’, advocating and

supporting Ministers in Secular Employment.

His web site is: <http://www.with-intent.confiteor.org.uk/hugh-valentine.html>

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## **Reflections from an MSE working in the mental health services**

**Margaret Trivasse**

I was ordained in 2004 and was clear from the outset that my ministry was within the workplace rather than in a parish. While I have always been attached to a church and have valued my liturgical and pastoral role as a foundation, my passion has remained for what I do during the week. I have been employed by the NHS for over fifteen years as a counsellor, although my actual job title and mental health team has changed a few times. A vocation within a vocation emerged, namely to work with asylum seekers and refugees, and this has remained my specialist area, although for many years I have had a mixed caseload.

### **An incarnational, compassionate activity**

I was trained in Carl Rogers’s person-centred model of counselling, which stresses the relationship with the client. The theory is that the client is their own expert, and the counsellor accompanies them on their journey of self-exploration and, ideally, healing. Although there is a built-in power imbalance to the roles, this form of therapy is non-directive. The counsellor offers ‘unconditional positive regard’ to the client. Carl Rogers often used the word ‘prizing’. As I sit with a client, I am very conscious that this person, whatever has happened to them, whatever their beliefs, is a child of God. I hope and pray that I may communicate warmth and acceptance and thus enable the client to feel safe enough to work through their troubles.

### **A matter of justice**

I believe God has called me to work with a group of people who are marginalized as well as traumatized. Even before my caseload was exclusively asylum seekers and refugees, I was committed to working for a service which was free at the point of delivery and embedded in a deprived inner city area. As austerity has bitten, I have become ever more aware of the struggle which many people endure with negotiating the benefits system and finding work.

For example, it is very hard for people with mental health conditions to convince the assessing panels that they really are not able to work. Asylum seekers are not permitted to work, receive less than mainstream state benefits, and are usually housed in the worst accommodation. There are restrictions on accessing education and legal support, and the asylum system itself is humiliating, protracted and often makes mistakes. Many have endured racist abuse – and all these factors are on top of whatever trauma they have left behind in their country of origin. Simply being with these clients is for me a matter of incarnation and justice.

### **Spiritual connections**

While it is not appropriate to be overt about my faith – I would not be allowed to evangelize or even to offer to pray with a client – the very nature of my questions and responses to clients clearly indicates to them that I am at least sympathetic to religious belief. The vast majority of the refugee and asylum-seeking clients are practising Muslims or Christians.

Several of the Christians are converts who are escaping persecution for their faith. As a matter of course I will ask clients about their religious practices since faith can be a major resource in helping clients cope with their difficulties. Clients do ask me to pray for them (though not in the session). I have a good working knowledge of Islam and will suggest activities from that religion just as much as I would ask Christian clients about their practices. Simply being able to speak about spiritual matters opens up possibilities. Many Muslim clients do not expect a white counsellor to be interested in these things and to be encouraged to talk about matters of faith. Having ‘religious language’ is a great asset in this work, and helps us to connect across cultures.

### **Clients as gifts**

I thank God for my clients as well as praying for them. They are amazing human beings who have endured horrific treatment which would defeat most people brought up in the west. I feel immensely enriched by them. They have helped me to be more thankful for what I have. They are a privilege. I yearn for them to be free.

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**Margaret Trivasse** is an Anglican priest. She is currently Lead Psychologist Therapist with Bradford City Primary Care Mental Health Team, having previously worked in rural Kenya. She is licensed to St. Gabriel's Church, Prestwich, near Bury, in the Diocese of Manchester.

## When is an MSE not an MSE?

Wendy White

The title ‘Minister in Secular Employment’ implies *employment*. But what happens when that is *not* the case?

I’ve had a variety of jobs as over the past few years we have moved house across the country for the sake of my partner’s work. The first time I moved out of a fairly well-paid professional job. For the past few years I have enjoyed being part of a (more lowly paid) social enterprise. Now we have finally arrived at our last, and probably final, working destination.

### Looking for work

Though late, I explored trying to get work either in the third sector or, following the example of many of our European brothers and sisters, taking work beside those at the bottom of the employment heap. Not so easy, as multiple job applications have shown. For starters there’s the old chestnut of my being ‘over-qualified’. So if I am looking for work at the lower end of the qualifications/experience scale, do I ask my referees to fudge what I have been doing previously?

Secondly there comes the ‘too-old’ response, though not in so many words. From basic administration jobs, fetching and carrying work, even many sales jobs, through to even some professional appointments, it is made clear to me that they are ‘an apprenticeship’ type of work. Thus employers are not interested in someone entering their last five(ish) years of employment. I might lie about my age but the lines on my face won’t!

Thirdly, there are my own doubts to deal with. Though we are told things are getting better, should I even be thinking of taking work that for some would be the only work they can do and for which they may be uniquely suited? Then what about the third sector? Here, however, many of the jobs are now about fund-raising, and being perfectly honest, I don’t know if I would have the patience or skill for such a task.

Finally, I’ve cracked it! I’m about to start a job in the charity sector in a post where my experience counts but where funding will not allow for paying the current market-rate salary. But is that ethical? Whatever the answer to that question, as now an employed person, it is important that I don’t forget the black days when I had to struggle. I must put behind me the apparent judgement which came from application rejections and long silences.

### More questions

Is the current economic climate across so much of the Europe limiting the work available for those within the worker-priest movement? Are they too becoming unemployed ‘MSEs’?

How do we discover what we as MSEs are uniquely called to do in the present circumstances? For example, if we are working at the lower end of the pay scale should we possibly jeopardise our own employment by challenging a minimum wage in favour of a living wage?



Should we, as individuals and as the body of the church, involve ourselves more in using our gifts and experience to create work which not only promotes the living wage but creates living wage *opportunities*?

How can we as Christians engage with those who are unemployed and currently caught up in a system which lacks care and dignity? I can't remember ever hearing prayers in worship for the unemployed - apart from occasional intercessions for food-banks and their users.

And how can we care for the invisible unemployed, often those with a working partner, where there is loss of income and little ability to stand one's ground over a long period, or for ever?

### **The stigma of unemployment and economic reality**

A few years ago I was approached by a member of a congregation who asked for prayer for her family as her son-in-law had been made redundant. There was a young family involved. Her parting words – 'Please don't tell anyone in church' - still haunt me. Do we, even in church, judge people, however subconsciously, by their economic worth? Do we ensure that people know they are profoundly loved and valued, whatever their economic status?

We also face a major challenge concerning the re-envisioning of our economic reality with honesty. Back in 2008, Rowan Williams called for us all to be less materialistic, to be less acquisitive. Around the same time shops started to close – remember the loss of Woolworths? Rosebys? Ethel Austin? People who I knew in retail lamented their situation to me. However, if we followed an 'acquire less' dictum, then shops would still close for lack of trade.

As now a working MSE, I feel even more strongly that we who are deeply engaged in economic and workplace life need to call attention to what are the economic realities of our time. Then the church might cease to be simply part of 'the band-aid brigade' and be able to offer an alternative vision which restores hope and dignity, through deeds as well as words. We should take seriously the challenge of MSU - ministry in secular *unemployment*!

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**Wendy White** is a URC minister. She trained at the Northern College, Manchester. She and currently lives and works in Southampton. She has had a variety of jobs, including managing a retail mall in Oxford and a shop in Bolton

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## **Worker Priests and MSEs**

**Rob Fox**

The development of Ministry in Secular Employment in the UK has by no means been in isolation. It has in many respects been influenced by the Worker Priest movements in Europe. This piece attempts to describe how - and to highlight why the British expression of workplace ministry differs.

### **Practice and spirituality**

At around the same time Roland Allen was advocating ordaining working men in the Church of England, there was increasing interest in mission among working people in France. An important influence on this movement was Charles de Foucauld (1885-1916) who coined the term 'Nazareth Life'. This referred to the longest period of Jesus' life which was spent in Nazareth in the workshop of his father Joseph and where he shared the life of small artisans and laborers. In 1933, the French priest Rene Voillaume (1905-2003) began from the spirituality of Foucauld, and from that of the Little Brothers of Jesus, to connect the world of work and the active and contemplative Christian life. The women religious of the Little Sisters of Jesus, who live from the wages of their work and do not live in a monastery, also contributed to this development by expressing a preference for the working class and the poor, and those living permanently on the edge.

### **World War Two and its aftermath**

During WW2, large numbers of French workers were conscripted to work in Germany. Being concerned for their spiritual welfare, the Bishop of Paris appointed a handful of priests with industrial skills, such as Henri Perrin, to accompany the conscripts 'under cover' as workers. The Mission de France was established in Lisieux in 1942 to equip and support these priests.

When peace returned, the experience gained led some to remain in blue collar jobs, initially with official blessing. Fearing Marxist influences at work, in 1954 the French church suspended the 'experiment'. Some priests returned to parish roles. However, some defied the official line and continued to work in factories and building sites. In 1959, Pope XXIII declared that working in a factory was incompatible with the role of a priest. This appeared to spell the end of the movement. Vatican II changed the landscape completely. In 1965, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, opened the door to a renewal of the Worker Priests movement.

### **Developments in the UK**

The Worker Priest movement did not go unnoticed across the Channel. In the UK, a small number of Anglican priests sought to develop a version of the movement for British conditions relating to occupations such as miners, car factory workers and farm labourers. This appeared to cut across the already established industrial missions, such as the Sheffield Industrial Mission, the leader of which, Ted Wickham, roundly criticised the idea of worker priests. However, the latter stood firm and, by the late 1960s, a number of experiments had commenced to train blue collar workers for ordination (such as under Ted Roberts in London's east end).

While in the UK there have now been blue-collar worker priests for 60 years, what eventually shaped the British expression of this development was the growing number of Self-Supporting Ministers being ordained. Notwithstanding the initial hopes that many working class men (and later women) would be selected, trained and ordained, such as refuse workers, bus drivers and electricians, the preponderance of British MSEs have come from middle class backgrounds and work in white collar jobs. (I state this as an observation not a criticism.) Thus while French and other European worker priests work largely in manual jobs, their British counterparts are generally found in 'professional' jobs. Curiously this may have helped relations with industrial mission, which has retained a more industrial focus. MSEs tend to be where industrial chaplains are not in evidence, and vice versa.

What marks out worker priests/MSEs, whatever their occupation, is that they see it and the work community of which they are part as an important field of ministry and mission. MSEs are accessible to those they work alongside, seeing the kingdom of God to be present wherever they are employed.

### **Further reading**

Mantle, J. (2000) *Britain's First Worker-Priests (Radical Ministry in a post-war setting)*.  
London: SCM Press

**Rob Fox** is an Anglican priest. He is a Chartered Tax Adviser working for H M Revenue and Customs, based in Newcastle, having recently moved from Manchester. As well as ring-mastering HMRC's activities on a mixed portfolio of large businesses, he has been involved in training for many years. He has been a member of CHRISM since its establishment in 1993, serving variously as Secretary, Treasurer and journal Editor.



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### **Past copies of the Kingdom at Work Project Bulletin**

These can be downloaded from

<http://www.saltleytrust.org.uk/faith-and-work-in-theological-education-and-training/>

- No.10 (Feb. 2017) – The Christian Entrepreneur**
- No.9 (Nov. 2016) – Servant Leadership**
- No.8 (Jul. 2016) – Spirituality in the Workplace**
- No.7 (Feb. 2016) – Christian faith and the economy**
- No.6 (Oct. 2015) – Chaplains and Chaplaincy**
- No.5 (Jul. 2015) – The Common Good**
- No.4 (Apr. 2015) – The Kingdom at Work project – ten key questions**
- No.3 (Dec. 2014) – ‘Educating for Mission in the World of Work’ conference report**
- No.2 (Oct. 2014) – Faith and work agencies in the UK and beyond**
- No.1 (Feb. 2014) – The Kingdom at Work Project and related initiatives**

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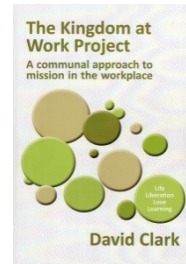
### **‘Friends of the Kingdom’ An untapped mission resource**

**David Clark**

#### **The church's disengagement from the world of work**

In recently putting together a number of articles on the ministry and mission of the church, I have had to take increasingly seriously not just the decline in the size of congregations across all mainstream denominations in the UK, but the fact that many have virtually no members in full-time active work. Here and there some congregations are bucking the trend - not least amongst middle-class suburban churches and the black churches. However, the numbers involved nowhere near compensate for the growing dominance of the retired. How does this fact impinge on our approach to mission in the world of work?

In *The Kingdom at Work Project*, I set out a mission programme for the communal transformation of the workplace based on a kingdom theology. One plea I make is for the churches to cease pretending that chaplaincy is proof that they are taking mission at work seriously. In the first place, there are simply not enough chaplains to represent genuine Christian engagement with the world of work. Secondly, the chaplaincy role is in practice dominantly pastoral and thus cannot provide the hands-on presence essential to bring about any significant communal transformation of the workplace. Thirdly, a post Christendom ecclesiology sees the church's primary resource for ministry in the workplace as its laity not its clergy. It is only lay people at work - and ministers-in-secular-employment (as this *Bulletin* underlines) - who are in a position to address the radical kind of changes demanded by the values of the kingdom.



However, even with the church's commitment to a post-Christendom ecclesiology, we here encounter the dilemma I refer to in the first paragraph of this article. As the number of Christian laity active in the world of work continues to decline, there is a pressing need to ask what resources the church is left with to implement its calling to transform the world of work?

### **The ever-present reality of the kingdom**

The Kingdom at Work Project - and this *Bulletin* - is founded on a theology, spirituality and economy of the kingdom. The project's contention is that the calling of the church is to enable every place of work to manifest the gifts of the kingdom - or of 'the kingdom community' as I prefer to call it - life, liberation, love and learning - the 4Ls. In the book underpinning the project, I spell out some of the signs and critical incidents that might help us to operationalise those 4Ls. Such signs and incidents are in evidence because the kingdom community and its gifts are operational within the workplace ahead of us. The task of the Christian is, first and foremost, to discern where the kingdom community is literally 'at work'. It is then to intervene to promote those endeavours - and challenge those situations where the kingdom community's gifts are neglected.

This means that the world of work is not bereft of the energy of the kingdom community even if those who call themselves Christian are not present in person, as is now the case in innumerable workplaces. Nor is the workplace ever bereft of those, of other faiths or convictions, who are committed to kingdom values. It is such people whom I identify as 'friends of the kingdom'. I believe that they are of huge importance in the economy of the kingdom and the mission of the church, even if many of them would run a mile from any formal designation as 'Christians'.

### **A theology to encompass 'friends of the kingdom'**

I call these people 'friends of the kingdom' for the church's benefit rather than theirs. This is because it is we as Christians who need to wake up to the fact that the work of the kingdom community is going on apace throughout the world of work, whether the church is represented there or not. This means that we urgently need to develop a theology to help us understand and embrace the contribution such friends of the kingdom are making. We also need to become more aware of the spirituality on which, consciously or not, such friends draw to further the values of the kingdom.

To grasp the fact that the kingdom community is already 'at work' and has a vast number of able people assisting it, most of whom would not call themselves Christians, is to

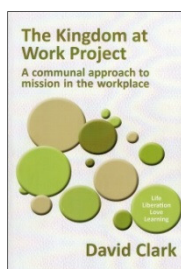
turn our current understanding of mission and ecclesiology on its head. We should not be putting all our efforts into ‘church-shaped mission’ and its pre-occupation with the survival of an institution still moulded by the model of Christendom. Instead, our far greater responsibility is to create a ‘mission-shaped church’ which welcomes the fact that, in the world of work as elsewhere, ‘those who are not against us are for us’.

The church remains an essential base community for mission in the world of world - through its worship, praying, educating and pastoral care. However, it does so as the servant of the kingdom community and thus as a diaconal, or servant church. A diaconal church will commission its lay people as its primary resource for kingdom community building in the world of work. Yet such a church also recognises that mission in today’s world means finding ways to engage in active partnership with the many millions who are ‘not far from the kingdom’ and who are also concerned to create human workplaces.

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***‘The Kingdom at Work Project  
- a communal approach to mission in the workplace’  
David Clark***

Peterborough: Upfront Publishing (£14.99 paperback; £8.99 e-book)



Unique in recent literature on faith and work in that its focus is the on the transformation of the workplace - founded on an innovative communal theology of the kingdom ‘profoundly lay-centred’ - a wealth of resources for practice - argues for a new mentoring role for chaplains and ministers in secular employment - a comprehensive mission agenda for the local church

This book ‘may represent the beginning of another stage in the historic and contemporary Christian engagement with work’  
(*John Atherton in Crucible*)

‘A brilliant work-book for the servant leader’  
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‘An extraordinarily stimulating book... Its huge strength lies in the sheer comprehensiveness of the vision, combined with a myriad of practical ideas, structured responses and imaginative, evocative prayers.’  
(*Roger Walton - President of the Methodist Conference, 2016-2017*)

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**David Clark’s has a new web site and blog on the theme of ‘the diaconal church’**  
<http://www.diaconalchurch.com>

Parts of this have considerable relevance to ministry and mission in the world of work.