



## ***Bulletin 16*** **February 2020**

### **Update**

**This issue of the Kingdom at Work Project *Bulletin* gives an update on the development of the project during 2019.**

It is twelve months since we contacted our full mailing list. This is because the development of the Kingdom at Work Project is still being shaped and tested out. Our main focus has been on how we move from a project which is simply producing *Bulletins*, however important (see the list of topics below and how to access these), to one that is concerned with the communal transformation of the workplace in practice.

To address the latter task, the Saltley Trust and the K@W Project have been engaged in the development of the project as outlined below.

### **Steering group**

Early in 2019 we set up a small Steering Group to help the development of the project. This decided that the immediate focus should be on:

- developing *the discernment process* set out in the project text<sup>1</sup> so that it might be available for work organizations to use. [*The intervention process* is also needed to communally transform the workplace but it was felt important to seek to operationalize one stage at a time.]
- re-drafting the relevant material in David Clark's book into a user-friendly format and, together with the discernment questionnaire, circulating this to a sample of our membership for their comments.

### **National consultation 2019**

In October 2019, as in October 2018, we drew together representatives of many of the Christian agencies in the UK explicitly working to facilitate the engagement of Christian faith with the world of work. Some 15 people attended what was a very useful the event. Before they met we had circulated to participants the material, including the questionnaire, produced by the Steering Group. Main points made by those attending included:

- that the questionnaire had proved very valuable in getting them individually and, in a few cases as a group, to focus on the task of recognizing signs of the kingdom at work

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<sup>1</sup> David Clark (2014) *The Kingdom at Work Project - a communal approach to mission in the workplace*. Peterborough: Upfront Publishing

and on the implications of this for practical action (intervention) to bring about change.

- that the length and language of the questionnaire needed further attention to make the discernment process more user-friendly.
- that the discernment process needed to be set out on a way that could be easily followed in and applied to the workplace.
- that the Christian foundations on which the process was based needed to be available to users, but as a choice and not imposed on them.
- that the discernment and intervention process needed to have produced some clear and useful outcomes with a small number of organizations (see below) before the process could be convincingly promoted more widely.

Members of the consultation were very positive about the long-term potential of the discernment and intervention process. They expressed a readiness to meet again in the autumn of 2020 to review how that project was going.

### **Progress since the last consultation**

The Steering Group instigated the following steps forward in 2020:

- offering a ‘longer read’ (actually much shorter than the book!) about the project (Appendix 1)
- producing ‘briefing sheets’ to assist those wanting to use the discernment (and intervention) process, with the theological and sociological foundations of the project available on separate briefing sheets available if requested.
- designing a more popular flyer which would raise people’s interest in the project.
- exploring how the discernment and intervention process could be made available on the web.

The group has become increasingly aware that for the discernment process, not least the questionnaire, to be of value to the wider world of work, it would need to have proved itself of worth in the more receptive field of Christian voluntary organizations (such as Christian residential homes and church schools). The quest for the involvement of such organizations is currently underway. (A paper for introducing the process to organizations with a Christian foundation has been produced and is given in Appendix 2.)

### **Taking stock of where we are**

The overall interest in and response to the means of Christian engagement with the world of work which the project is seeking develop is very positive. There is continuing encouragement to press on. However, the project has reached a point which some other such ventures have reached in the past and which can be summed up in the primary question: How can Christian faith help transform the world of work *in practice* to enable it to manifest the nature of the kingdom? (Note that this is *not* the same as the approach to mission dominant in much of today’s church which could be summed up in the question: How can those in the world of work be made disciples of Christ?)

### **Your response appreciated**

The Steering Group would be very grateful for your response to the progress of the project. *We would be especially helped if readers could offer us contacts for getting the discernment process tried out in any work organization, especially where these have a Christian origin or ethos.* For contact details please see page 8.

## Appendix 1

### The 'Longer Read' The workplace as a kingdom community

#### *The context of the project*

##### **The communal imperative**

We live in a divided and fragmented world. Unless we get our act together we stand little chance of overcoming such challenges as climate change, the use of weapons of mass destruction and the economic and social upheaval caused by huge numbers of people on the move. However, we stand no chance of getting our act together unless we engage in a new and urgent quest for community - within the family, the neighbourhood, associations, institutions, cities, nations and internationally. As Parker Palmer, a Quaker once put it - 'Community means more than the comfort of souls. It means, and has always meant, the survival of the species.'

##### **The importance of the world of work**

Crucial in this quest for community is '*the workplace*' in all its forms, from the small group to the extended network. Every human being has to work in order to live. So unless relationships within the billions of workplaces lead to the creation of a multiplicity of communities of work, the quest for a viable global community will miss out on a vital aspect of people's lives.

#### *Community and the communal dilemma*

##### **The meaning of community - a sociological perspective**

But what is '*community*'? Because the word 'community' has been so overused and trivialised, it has come to mean all things to all people, and thus nothing to anyone. However, there are well informed sociologists who have argued that community is an experience built on three foundations - a sense of security (or a place to stand), a sense of significance (or a role to fulfil) and a sense of solidarity (or a world to which to belong). The project calls these feelings '*the 3Ss*'.

Furthermore, we learn to experience, and how to express these feelings through the process of socialization, a '*4th S*'. So the project defines community as the presence of the 3Ss (a sense of security, significance, solidarity), internalized by the 4thS, the process of socialization. When all three feelings are weak, community is weak; when they are strong, community is strong, and can sometimes be extremely powerful. Although cultures - the outward expression of community - are very diverse, the meaning of community and how we learn to experience it is common to all.

##### **The communal dilemma**

The difficulty is that to get our act together so that we can face the global challenges ahead, communities need to build partnerships not pursue their own ends, to work together not just do their own thing, to be open not closed. This brings us up against what the project calls '*the communal dilemma*'. The communal dilemma is the problem communities face when 'the survival of the species' requires them to become open to one another, but not in a way which undermines their own sense of community, or that of others.

This is a very difficult task because the default condition is for communities to protect their own, to build fences and walls and to reject the stranger. So it is commonplace for

communities, be they families, workplaces, institutions or nations, to settle for who they are and what they have, even if that is at the expense of others. However, communities which are self-seeking, closed and exclusive can never surmount the communal dilemma and help humankind to meet the global challenges ahead.

### *From sociology to theology*

#### **Values and beliefs**

Nor can a sociological approach to community, which focuses only on the experiences - the 3Ss - of the group concerned, resolve the communal dilemma. This is because in themselves the 3Ss offer no incentive for communities to want or attempt to be open to one another. Thus if communities, for whatever reason, do desire to resolve the communal dilemma, they need to embrace *values*, and the *beliefs* which offer the motivation and power to put those values into practice, which offer a vision of what the world could achieve as a global community of open and inclusive communities.

#### **Christian faith and the kingdom community**

There are many creeds, sacred and secular, which attempt to fill the bill here. However, the Kingdom at Work Project is founded on the conviction that it is *the Christian faith* which offers a vision of community at its zenith. It is a vision of what the project calls '*the kingdom community*', a community under the sovereignty God and made up of those who acknowledge his lordship. It is a community which is open to all. It is this vision of community which the project believes offers hope not only for the survival but flourishing of our planet.

### *The kingdom community and its gifts*

#### **The Trinity as model and inspiration**

The kingdom community takes what Christians call '*the Trinity*', a divine community of three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which exemplifies community at its zenith, as its model and inspiration.

#### **Gifts of the Trinity become the gifts of the kingdom community**

The kingdom community is empowered by gifts of the Trinity. What are the gifts of special importance for the kingdom community?

The project sees *God as Creator* bestowing on the kingdom community *the gift of life*. It is a gift which transforms a sense of security, a sociological foundation of community, into the gift of life lived to the full.

The project sees *Christ as Liberator* bestowing on the kingdom community *the gift of liberation*. This is a gift which transforms a sense of significance, the second sociological foundation of community, into the gift of the liberation. This enables us to become fully human, in body, mind and spirit, and frees us to pursue the same goal for others, not least the poor and marginalised.

The project sees the *Holy Spirit as Unifier* bestowing on the kingdom community *the gift of love*. This transforms a sense of solidarity, the third sociological foundation of community, into the gift of love, or agape, binding us together as one human race and one world.

One other gift, *the gift of learning*, needs to be added. The project believes that because the Trinity is made up of three Persons, in a profoundly deep relationship, it must be a learning community. This enables and empowers it to transform the experience of socialization, the process of nurture, instruction and training, into the gift of learning as a spiritual journey of discovery.

The kingdom community claims these gifts as its own. It offers them to all human communities in order that they might be transformed into kingdom communities.

### *Signs of the gifts of the kingdom community*

#### **The nature of signs**

But isn't all this remote from daily life and the workplace? Not so, because in every place and at all times we are offered signs which reveal the presence and power of the gifts of the kingdom community. They may be clear for most to see. More often they are hidden and not easy to recognise.

#### **Signs in the life and teaching of Christ**

However, if we want to know where the signs of the gifts of the kingdom community are most clearly and fully revealed, it is to the life and teaching of Christ that we must turn. The gospels are fully of stories and actions, some to do with the world of work, about how the gifts of life, liberation, love and learning give us the power to build communities which manifest the gifts of the kingdom community.

### *The diaconal church*

#### **The diaconal church and its mission**

What the project calls 'the diaconal church' is the servant of the kingdom community. Its mission is to transform human communities, including workplaces, into kingdom communities. In this task, the people of God in the world are the diaconal church's primary mission resource. Their calling is likewise to strive to transform human communities, including workplaces, into kingdom communities.

Every word and deed is important in this undertaking. The human scale matters. Occasional conversations and modest actions should not be devalued. 'Small is beautiful.'

Nevertheless, building kingdom communities is neither easy nor without cost. Many people, for reasons of pride, selfishness, fear or hatred, seek to live in communities which are closed and exclusive. They are happy with the sense of security, significance and solidarity they experience within the closed circle they inhabit. However, they turn their back on the gifts of life, liberation, love and learning because these would mean them being open to other communities which they regard as rivals, alien or enemies. The task of living out his vision of the kingdom community cost Christ his life. But by being faithful to the end, he ensured that the kingdom community and its gifts would never be destroyed.

### *Discernment, intervention and outcome*

**Discernment:** The mission of the people of God in the world is shaped by discerning how fully the gifts of the kingdom community are present within those human collectives, including workplaces, in which they are involved. Discernment is an art and discipline which has to be learnt as a journey of spiritual discovery. The project points to Celtic spirituality as helping us to understand the meaning of the gift of life; Ignatian spirituality as enriching our

understanding of the gift of liberation; Methodist hymnology as exemplifying the gift of love; and Quaker spirituality as deepening our experience of the gift of learning.

Discernment can be an individual and personal task. However, it is best undertaken in the company of fellow Christians, and, where possible, with those of other convictions who in their own way appreciate the importance of the gifts of the kingdom community.

**Intervention:** Where the gifts of the kingdom community are clearly in evidence, within the workplace or elsewhere, any mission task decided upon will require intervention to affirm and increase their influence. Where the gifts of the kingdom community are ignored or neglected, in the workplace or elsewhere, the mission task chosen will require making those gifts which are hidden manifest and influential. There are many forms of intervention. The project draws attention to just a few of those which are especially noteworthy. But intervention is contextual and must suit the challenges posed by the particular workplace concerned.

**Outcome:** The outcome looked for by the project is the creation of a multiplicity of workplaces which manifest, and are thus transformed by the kingdom community's gifts of life, liberation, love and learning. Its audit is offered as a resource as to what this might mean in practice. The main text underpinning the project also suggests, with special reference to Catholic Social Teaching, what such a transformation might mean in terms of the bigger economic picture. However, it is recognised that what particular as well as wider outcomes might look like is an ongoing journey of discovery.

The deeper conviction of the project is that making manifest the gifts of the kingdom community in any workplace will give inspiration and impetus to the communal transformation of the world of work, and wider society as a whole.

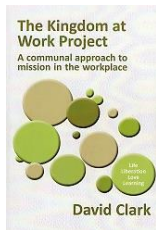
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*It is important to recognise that though the above is a 'longer read', it cannot do justice to all that underpins and is offered by the Kingdom at Work Project. For a full understanding of the model of mission offered by the project, and the abundance of resources available, facilitators and others should refer to the main text:*

David Clark (2014) *The Kingdom at Work Project - a communal approach to mission in the workplace*. FastPrint: Peterborough (available via Amazon.co.uk).

## Appendix 2

### **The distinctive contribution of Christian organizations to a secular society**



#### **The Kingdom at Work Project**

##### **An open letter and request**

The growing secularization of British society over many years has seen the steady decline in the membership and influence of all the mainstream churches. At the same time, Britain has become a more multi-faith and multi-cultural society than ever before. These changes in religious and social practice have presented the churches with critical questions about their future. However, they have also presented many organizations which originally had a clear and overt Christian identity, especially in the public and voluntary sectors, with a dilemma. How can they retain their Christian identity when an increasing number of those they employ and serve would not call themselves Christians? Should they and, if so how, honour and communicate the implications of their Christian identity to a society which no longer appears to have either a strong or explicit commitment to Christian faith?

In response to this dilemma a number of Christian organizations have changed their name or adapted their mission statement to downplay the Christian origins of their life and work. Others are still trying to honour their origins, but are finding it a struggle to maintain and express their Christian identity. The consequence is that without careful reflection and relevant action, Christian faith and practice may gradually cease to distinguish and enrich the life and work of these organizations and of wider society. We believe this would be a great loss.

The Kingdom at Work Project has been set up to address issues such as that identified above. The principles on which the project is based are rooted in the conviction that Christian faith has a unique and invaluable contribution to make to every aspect and sector of society. It is a conviction grounded on firm sociological, theological and operational principles. In outline, these are as follows:

- For any organization, religious *or* 'secular', to survive and flourish it must have a strong communal foundation.
- That foundation must be experiential - that those associated closely with the organization feel a strong sense of community. However it must also be based on values which enable that communal experience to enrich the lives of all those with whom the organization comes into contact, directly or indirectly.
- Christian faith offers a unique and empowering vision of what it means to be a strong, sustainable and inclusive community.
- It is a vision founded on the symbol of the Trinity, which represents the Christian understanding of community at its zenith, and the Trinity's universal gifts of life, liberation, love and learning.
- These gifts offer *all* organizations a unique means of becoming strong, open and influential communities of practice.



The Kingdom at Work Project has designed a process of discernment and intervention to facilitate the enhancement of organizations as communities. This involves discerning signs of the four trinitarian gifts - of life, liberation, love and learning - evident within the organization concerned. This prepares the way for action to ensure these gifts are used effectively to strengthen and enrich the communal life and work of the organization for its own benefit and for the well-being of all those it serves.

The Kingdom at Work Project is at the stage of testing out this approach to enhancing the distinctive contribution of Christian organizations to a secular society. We are currently approaching a number of organisations which might be in a position to work with the project in this endeavour. If such a partnership might be possible with....., we would be delighted to provide any more information needed and/or meet to discuss any questions you may have.

January 2020

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### **Themes of past Kingdom at Work Project *Bulletins***

These can be downloaded from

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

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|-----------------------|--|
| No. 15 (January 2019) | Future directions of the Kingdom at Work Project                 |
| No.14 (August 2018)   | Educating for mission in the world of work - where next?         |
| No. 13 (March 2018)   | Sustainability at work   |
| No.12 (Nov. 2017)     | Quakers and Business   |
| No.11 (July 2017)     | Ministers in Secular Employment                                  |
| No.10 (Feb. 2017)     | The Christian Entrepreneur                                       |
| No.9 (Nov. 2016)      | Servant leadership   |
| No.8 (July 2016)      | Spirituality in the workplace                                    |
| No.7 (Feb. 2016)      | Christian faith and the economy                                  |
| No.6 (Oct. 2015)      | Chaplains and chaplaincy   |
| No.5 (July 2015)      | The Common Good  |
| No.4 (April 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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