

# **The Kingdom at Work Project**

## **A communal approach to mission in the workplace**



### ***Bulletin 3***

#### **December 2014**

### **‘Educating for Mission in the World of Work’**

This special edition of the *Bulletin* has been produced to let all those on our mailing list have a report on the conference organised by the St Peter’s Saltley Trust and the Kingdom at Work Project last month (November 13th) on ‘**Educating for mission in the world of work**’.

The conference was set up as a modest step towards moving mission in the world of work higher up the church’s agenda. To continue to further that purpose, what follows is an open letter to all training institutions, agencies and networks preparing men and women for licensed or accredited leadership positions within the church, in particular as priests or ministers, deacons, lay readers or local preachers. The letter urges training staff to set aside time to explore how the principles and practice of mission in the world of work might be more fully integrated into their courses.

#### **An open letter to church training institutions, agencies and networks**

##### **Integrating the principles and practice of mission in the world of work into the curriculum**

Dear Colleagues,

The need for church leaders to have the commitment and skills to prepare and support lay people for mission in the world of work has never been more pressing. The world of work has always shaped the values, culture, social forms and well-being of society. In our day and age, however, it is ‘corporations which rule the world’ (David Korten) and no longer church or even state. The ultimate consequences of this development are unknown. However, the global domination of a highly competitive and often inhuman market culture, the obscene gap between the rich and the poor within and across nations and the environmental threat to the future of our planet is already a reality.

#### **Opting out**

In response to this situation the church in the UK has faced two choices. We could simply remain on the side-lines because the transformation of the world of work, and the forces which shape it, seem way beyond us. Or we could begin to address the question of how our lay people, the only mission resource of any significance which the church possesses, could be equipped with the resources and skills to enable the world of work to manifest more fully

the gifts of the kingdom. The first option has been our choice, even if by default, for far too long.

The evidence from Hannah Matthews' research, carried out on behalf of the St Peter's Saltley Trust (see later in this *Bulletin*), simply confirms that, like the church as a whole, its training institutions and agencies have neglected to address the issue of mission in the world of work. There are courses which, in passing, touch on Christian ministry and mission in the workplace but even these remain few and far between. There are numerous reasons for this educational deficit, justified or not, which Hannah's report identifies. However, the result is that church leaders of the future are not being prepared to equip the laity to engage with this vital arena of daily life.

### **Addressing the educational deficit**

So that this situation can be redeemed, this letter is a plea that you, as educationalist who have such an important responsibility for the future of the church in this land, begin to explore ways of moving the issue of mission in the world of work a good deal further up the training agenda. And to ask that, in that process, you share any new ideas or initiatives with other training bodies and across denominations.

### **Beginnings**

There are one or two small-scale but encouraging ventures beginning to take place in this context - as for example at Cliff College, one of Methodism's two main training institutions. Because the college's innovative post-graduate course on Mission and the World of Work was not recruiting enough students (further evidence of this mission deficit), the college has this academic year integrated one session on mission in the workplace into three of its MA courses - Evangelism, Pioneering Ministries and Mentoring. This move has been well received by students.

Another initiative is that represented by the Kingdom at Work Project. Currently, resource material relating to mission in the world of work is only available in piece-meal form, much of it scattered around on the Internet. This makes it hard for those involved in training to access sources which offer a coherent model of the principles and practice of mission in the workplace. One reason for my having written *The Kingdom at Work Project - a communal approach to mission in the workplace* (see later in this *Bulletin*) is to try and address this weakness. The book also includes a wealth of resources for church leaders as they seek to equip lay people for mission in the working world.

I fully acknowledge the huge demands on the training curriculum of training institutions and agencies at present, not made any easier within the Church of England by the effort now required to introduce the Common Awards programme. However, this editorial is a plea to those involved in training to address with some urgency how they can help church leaders of the future to acquire the skills to facilitate the mission and ministry of lay people at work. Please let the St Peter's Saltley Trust or the Kingdom at Work Project know if we can be of any help to you in this task.

All good wishes

**David Clark**

(Co-ordinator of the Kingdom at Work Project)

# **‘Educating for Mission in the World of Work’**

**Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham**  
**13th November 2014**

**The event was organised by St Peter’s Saltley Trust, Birmingham and the Kingdom at Work Project**



**The Kingdom at  
Work Project**



## **Why did we gather?**

What prevents the churches equipping people for mission in the world of work?

What should mission in the world of work look like?

How can ordained ministers and other Christian educators be equipped with the skills to prepare lay people for mission within the workplace?

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These questions formed the focus of *Educating for Mission in the World of Work*, a one-day conference which took place at Woodbrooke Study Centre last November.

## **Who came?**

The conference was fully booked with over 40 people present. Participants included those responsible for ministerial training and development, faith-centred workplace coaches, workplace chaplains and ministers-in-secular-employment amongst others. There was a good ecumenical cross-section of people present.



## **Session one**



The conference opened with **Ian Jones, the Director of the St Peter’s Saltley Trust**, summarising the findings of research undertaken by Hannah Matthews (formerly of the same Trust) entitled *Faith and Work in Theological Education and Training: An Enquiry* (see below). The enquiry focused on the treatment of faith and work concerns in the churches’ arrangements for selecting, training and developing ordained ministers, readers and local preachers.

In relation to *selection* for licensed ministry, interviewees identified strengths and weaknesses. Current selection criteria were widely seen as permitting though not often requiring exploration of a candidate’s attitude to faith and work. However frustration was expressed that unless such questions were followed up in initial training, the ability to connect faith and work could unintentionally remain simply ‘an entry requirement’.

Within *initial training*, interviewees regarded those course units or modules which permitted discussion of faith and work matters and the broadening of work-related placements as beneficial. However, opportunities to explore the theology and practice of

faith at work at any depth (for example, in dedicated modules or as a specific theme within course units) were minimal. Furthermore, in *initial training and continuing ministerial development*, the opportunities which were given for clergy, readers and local preachers to reflect on faith and work issues were largely limited to their own experience. Such training and development did not provide them with the breadth of knowledge or the skills needed to equip *others*, primarily lay Christians at work, to make important faith and work connections for themselves.

Challenges militating against the effective exploration of faith and work within the life of the church as such included the disproportionate number of retired people in many mainstream congregations, a lack of confidence and expertise amongst clergy to explore faith and work issues (exacerbated by a historic assumption that only the clergy were capable of this), and a tendency to think of mission primarily in terms of growing congregations or as engaging with the spheres of home, neighbourhood and leisure time rather than the workplace.

Regarding how to improve engagement with faith and work issues within theological education and training, interviewees found it difficult to offer suggestions. Respondents were divided over whether new resources and materials were needed though many admitted they were unfamiliar with what already existed. Several noted the potential value of pooling material and resources to enable easier access.

## Session two



In the second session of the conference, **David Clark, Co-ordinator of the Kingdom at Work Project**, reflected on a particular challenge highlighted by the Saltley Trust's research: the frequent lack of connection between the 'high ground' of academic theological reflection on 'work' and the practical, lived experience of faith within the workplace. Drawing on material from his recent book, *The Kingdom at Work Project - a communal approach to mission in the workplace* (see below), he offered an outline of a holistic communal model of mission within the workplace as an alternative to the generally fragmented approach.

He set out the foundations of a theology of community and its related spirituality, economic principles and organisational structures (including those of a 'diaconal church'), which could guide and empower mission in the world of work in an innovative and dynamic way. The methodology of the Kingdom at Work Project involved Christians acquiring the art of discerning the signs of the kingdom within their workplaces and intervening in appropriate ways to achieve the latter's communal transformation.

Lack of time prevented an exploration of other aspects of the project - the importance of mission mentors in this context, the responsibilities of the gathered church and a new role for chaplains and minister-in-secular-employment - though some important points relating to these matters came out through questions and answers.

## Session three

In the afternoon, participants briefly shared examples of their own initiatives in helping to educate and train people for mission in the world of work. The conference then broke into groups focusing on three areas of concern: ministerial formation/theological training; working with congregations; and coaching, mentoring and spiritual direction.

*The ministerial formation/theological training* group felt that one essential development for mission at work would be for training agencies (initial or in-service) to use the work experience of those in training much more fully as a resource for their preparation for licensed or accredited ministry. For example, lay readers and local preachers should be trained to use their work experience as a primary resource in worship, especially in preaching. At the same time it was felt that licensed or accredited ministers should be equipped with the skills to enable lay people to value and reflect on their work experience (paid or voluntary) in the context of mission in that sphere.



The group concerned with *the local congregation* emphasised the importance of embedding a concern with faith at work (and other ‘frontline’ ministries) into the explicit ‘curriculum’ of the congregation (through sermons, small group discussions, special events, etc.) and, implicitly, into the whole fabric of congregational life (who we pray for, how we listen and how we converse within daily life and work). It was suggested that theological training institutions and selection advisers should tackle the pervasiveness of an implicit hierarchy of types of work (with vocation to ordained ministry at the top) which was a significant stumbling block to valuing the calling of every lay person.

The group considering *coaching, mentoring and spiritual direction* proposed a ‘dating agency’ for matching faith-centred coaches and mentors with lay people and organisations involved in the world of work which might benefit from these skills. They felt that there was an unrealised mentoring potential within the church as a whole which needed identifying and developing with some urgency, not least with regards to furthering mission at work.

### Where do we go from here?

Though the conference was a stand-alone event, both the Kingdom at Work Project and St Peter’s Saltley Trust are committed to partnering with organisations and individuals passionate about educating for mission within the world of work.

**The Kingdom at Work Project** will be continuing to publish its occasional *Bulletin* which now goes to over 150 people concerned to develop the faith and work agenda in the UK and beyond. The project is also exploring how it might facilitate the explicit introduction of material about mission in the world of work into the curricula of a number of theological colleges in the Midlands.

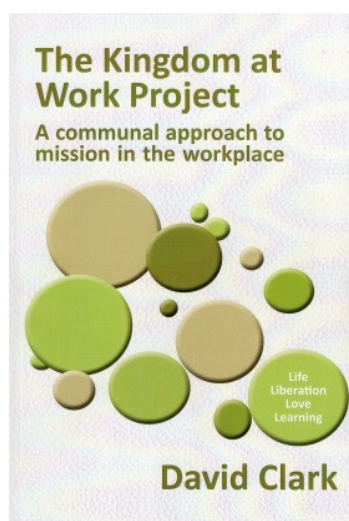
To that end it is seeking to promote David Clark’s recent book (*The Kingdom at Work Project - a communal approach to mission in the workplace*) as an important and comprehensive resource for trainers and mentors. David would be very interested to hear from anyone using any part of the book as a resource for faith and work initiatives and how the latter have gone. He can be contacted at [david@clark58.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:david@clark58.eclipse.co.uk).

**St Peter’s Saltley Trust** is currently beginning a new stream of work exploring ‘What Helps Disciples Grow?’ and would very much like to be in touch with anyone with ideas or suggestions for encouraging growth in discipleship in relation to work (contact details below).

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## The resource material on which the conference was based



Mission in the world of work has been neglected by the churches within the UK for decades. The Kingdom at Work Project addresses this crippling failure. It sets out a new and comprehensive model of mission for the transformation of the workplace. The model is founded on a radical theology of community and related spirituality. These guide and empower an innovative process of discernment and intervention. The latter covers individual and collective action, dialogue, the use of symbols and messages, prayer and worship. Mentoring, the role of chaplains and ministers in secular employment, and the responsibilities of the gathered church are some of the key issues covered in depth. This book is the most thorough and imaginative exploration of mission in the world of work to appear for many years. (2014)

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*A brilliant work-book for the servant leader who genuinely starts where others are in their work.*

**Peter Challen** - Sloan Fellow of the London Business School

*The book is a valuable mission resource which explores at depth context, theology and intervention concerning mission at work... the project is much to be commended.*

**Jennifer Tann** - former Professor of Innovation Studies at Birmingham University

*I welcome this detailed and helpful study of mission in the workplace on which people can draw in many different ways.*

**Ruth McCurry** - former Commissioning Editor with SPCK

*What sets the Kingdom at Work Project apart is its truly holistic approach.*

**Robert Fox** - Customer Relationship Manager at HM Revenue and Customs and a priest in the Church of England. He is editor of *Ministers-at-Work*.

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**David Clark** was a Methodist presbyter. He is now a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order. For twenty years he was a leading figure in the Christian Community Movement. For most of his working life he was a senior lecturer in community education at Westhill College, Birmingham. During that time he was deeply involved in mission and ministry in the world of work setting up the Christians in Public Life Programme and founding the Human City Institute (Birmingham). He is the author of numerous seminal books and articles on the mission of the church in contemporary society.

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**£14.99**

From: [www.fast-print.net/bookshop/1677/the-kingdom-at-work-project](http://www.fast-print.net/bookshop/1677/the-kingdom-at-work-project) or [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk)

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David Clark's 'companion' volume, *Breaking the Mould of Christendom - Kingdom Community, Diaconal Church and the Liberation of the Laity* (Epworth, 2005) is being reprinted by FastPrint Publishing (Peterborough) and will be available from the same sources as above for £14.99 from January 2015

***Faith & Work in Theological Education and Training: An Enquiry***  
***Hannah Matthews***

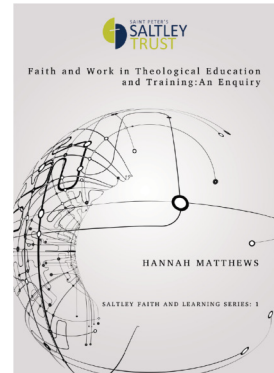
***St Peter's Saltley Trust - Faith and Learning Series: 1 (2013)***

What place does reflection on faith and work have in existing theological education and training? And how might this be done better?

Based on interviews with a variety of training officers and theological educators in the West Midlands region and beyond, this report aims to provide an insight into the understanding of faith and work in theological education and training, and interviewees' perceptions of the theological, cultural and systemic factors surrounding it.

**Hannah Matthews** was Research Intern at St Peter's Saltley Trust, 2010-2011, and now works at a foundation college for non-EU international students as Pastoral Welfare Leader.

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