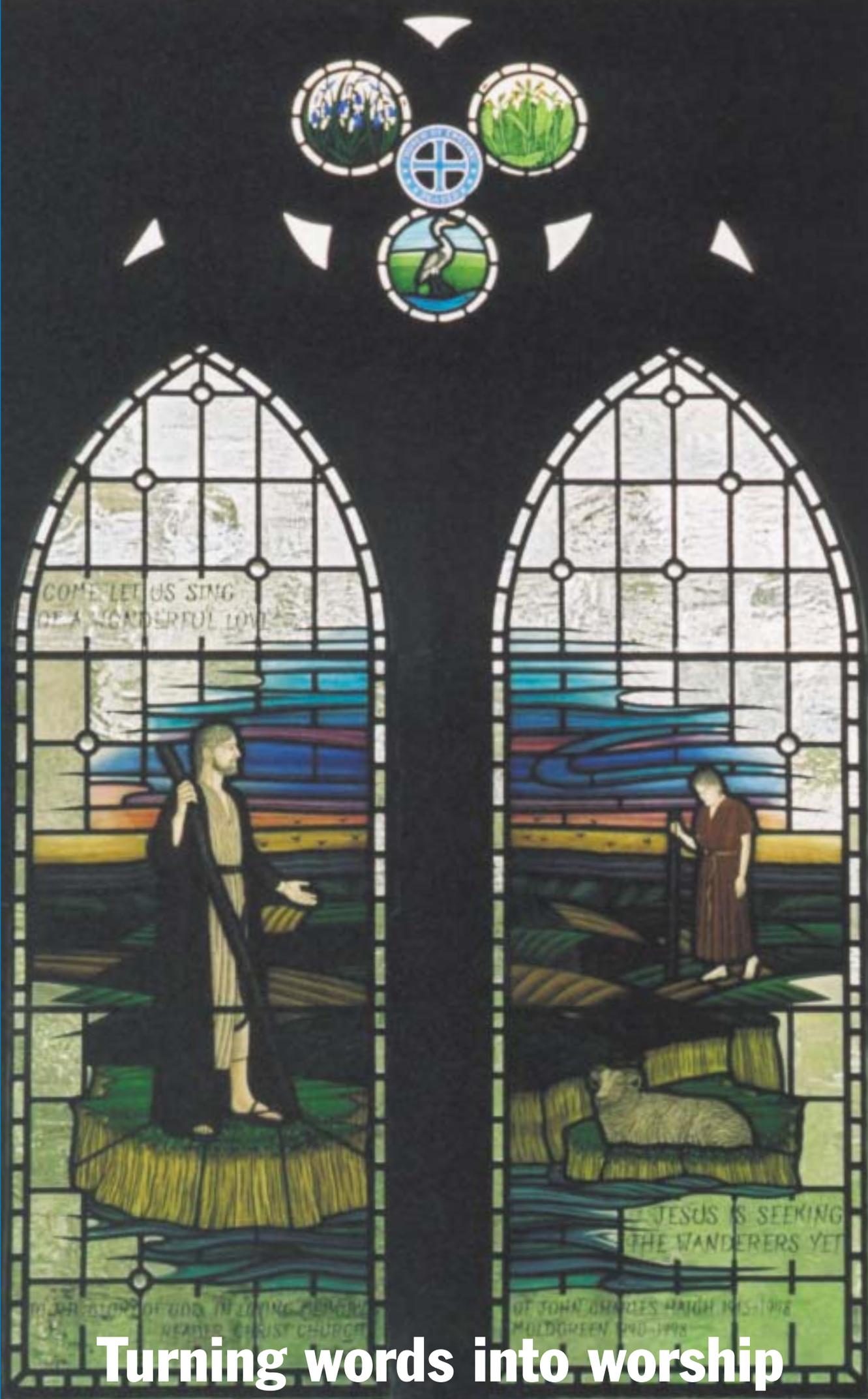




THE READER

Spring 2004
Volume 101 No.1
£1.75



COME LET US SING
OF A WONDERFUL LOVE

JESUS IS SEEKING
THE WANDERERS YET

Turning words into worship



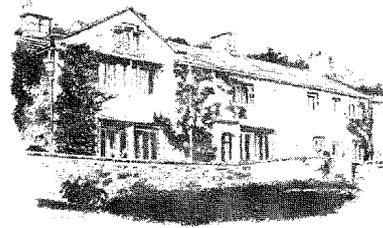
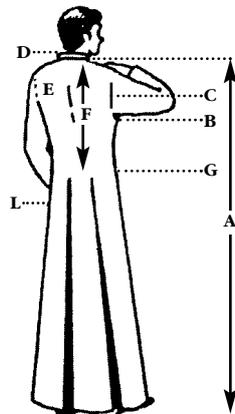
St Martin Vestment Ltd

Lutton, Near Spalding, Lincs PE12 9LR
Tel/Fax 01406 362386

For over 30 years our workshop has been producing individually made church regalia for churches and cathedrals at home and abroad.

The firm remains in the hands of a clergy family but is managed by Mrs Dorothea Butcher who will be pleased to discuss your requirements. Send for details and fabric samples.

Cassocks for Readers are supplied at prices ranging from £86 to considerably more.



Parcevall Hall

Diocese of Bradford Retreat
& Conference Centre

Parcevall Hall has excellent facilities for conferences, retreats and holidays. It offers the comfort of an old house, the peace of a rural situation and the scenic beauty of Wharfedale. It is available to church and secular groups and can be booked for weekends, midweek or longer periods; also for day, part-day or evening functions. Bookings from individuals and groups are invited.

Please contact the warden to find out about the programme of events for individuals and groups in 2004.

Appletreewick, Skipton
North Yorkshire, BD23 6DG
Tel: (01756) 720213
Fax: (01756) 720656
E-mail: parcevall@bradford.anglian.org
(Charity No 247858)

The Reader aims to assist the ten thousand Readers in the British Isles in the exercise of their ministry by stimulating them theologically and encouraging them to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ effectively in their dioceses. *The Reader* reflects the work of the Central Readers' Council and the Church of England generally, while being aware of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The Central Readers' Council of the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England.

Chair: The Bishop of Carlisle, The Rt Revd Graham Dow
Vice-chair: Gloria Helson
Honorary Secretary: Canon Pat Nappin

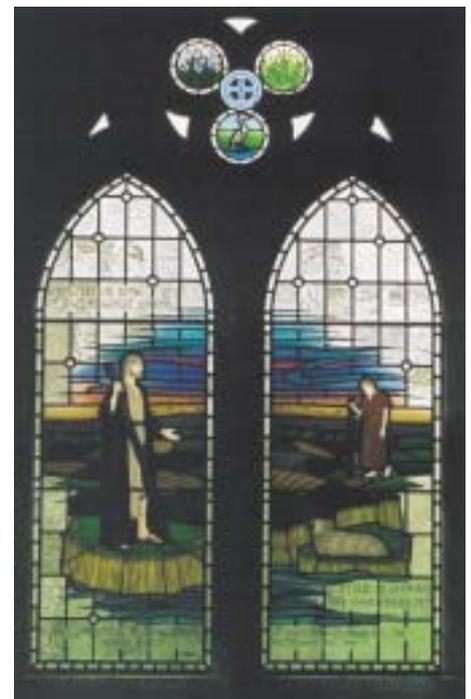
The Reader production team:

Editor: Clare Amos
Reviews Editor: Peter Watkins
Advertising Manager: Edwin Parr
Designer: Wild Associates Ltd
Editorial Committee Chair: Nigel Holmes
Editorial Committee Vice-chair: Christine McMullen

The Reader is available from the Central Readers' Council,
Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ
Tel: 020 7898 1415
Fax: 020 7898 1421
email: thereader@c-of-e.org.uk

Website: www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

The Reader is available in the UK for £5.00 for four issues a year. Cheques should be made payable to *The Central Board of Finance*.
ISSN 0300-3469



Cover: The cover picture shows a stained glass window in Christ Church Moldgreen, Huddersfield in honour of John Haigh, a Reader in that church. It depicts his interests and his Reader badge. The window was designed and executed by Adam Goodyear.
(see further p.33)



Winter 2003 Volume 100 No.3

THE READER



This issue contains:-

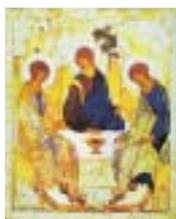
THE POWER AND POTENTIAL OF HYMNS
– Brian Castle2

FIRST CATCH YOUR RABBIT
– Stephen Wright4



FLOUR FESTIVAL 2003
– Anne Parr6

LEADING FROM BEHIND
– Susanne Mitchell.....9



**HOLDING THE CENTRE:
LEADING WORSHIP WITH CHILDREN**
– Diane Craven.....11

NOT AFRAID OF A CHALLENGE
– Derek Walker.....13

LESSONS FROM THE MARGINS
– Tim Harle14

UPHOLDING THE BEREAVED
– Jenny Francis16

LINKED UP
– Sheila Stevenson18

THE FIRST YEAR
– William Fittall20



EN FRANCE
– Joyce Bache22

THE READER 100 YEARS AGO
– Nigel Holmes.....23

FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF25

GAZETTE30

IN MEMORIAM31

GLEANINGS32

THE LAST WORD33

This issue of *The Reader* is certainly a bumper one. We have extended this time to 36 pages. There was just such a wealth and variety of good articles which I had either commissioned – or was offered – linked to the topic of ‘Readers as leaders of worship’, which we had designated as the theme for this particular issue.

But I wish we had also had the space to explore the presentation of the Easter story in Luke’s Gospel – since Luke is the lectionary Gospel this year. Luke’s presentation of Jesus’ passion and resurrection is slightly different to that found in Matthew and Mark. (John is different again). It is interesting to note the particular features of Luke – he is a very human figure; for example his agony in Gethsemane is accentuated by Luke in 22.43-44 (at least according to some manuscripts) to the extent that the sweat dripping off him became ‘like great drops of blood’. Yet in the midst of his own suffering Jesus is able to show compassion for the pain of others: it is Luke who mentions how he comforts the weeping women of Jerusalem, and it is Luke too that tells us of a Jesus who offers solace to a thief dying alongside him. Tears, in fact are not alien to the Jesus of Luke. He wept over Jerusalem (*Luke 19.41-44*). Giving us permission to weep – and to laugh – is part of the ‘good news’ that Jesus offers us, according to Luke. The presentation of the events of Easter through the eyes of a clown (*see p.9*) is not far from this vision. Jesus is, as one modern writer puts it, ‘The Clown of Glory who leads us on his way’.

Some years ago I wrote about a visit to a Palestinian refugee camp which had moved me to tears. What had affected me most was meeting a 5 year old child whose older brothers were all either in prison or in exile. The young lad commented with feeling, ‘And when I grow up I’m going to go to prison too.’ In these more recent days of suicide bombers perhaps that now seems a ‘tame’ thing to say, but at the time it moved me very much. It led me to reflect on weeping and tears. The sixth century Syrian bishop Jacob of Sarug wrote, challenging his people, ‘You have no tears? – then buy tears from the poor!’ That is a thought worth meditating on in the season of Lent. It is also remarkable how frequently in the Bible tears become the means of transformation, reconciliation and even resurrection. ‘Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy’ (*Psalms 126*) But the final challenge is that offered by the Book of Revelation. God promises that the day will come when he will ‘wipe away all tears’. (*Revelation 21.4*) Yet have you ever realised that is a promise which even God himself cannot keep, unless we have first learned how to weep?

With my best wishes for a holy Lent and a happy Easter.

Clare Amos

Clare Amos,
Honorary Editor

The Power and Potential of Hymns



Rt Revd Brian Castle is Suffragan Bishop of Tonbridge in the Diocese of Rochester. Previously he was Vice-Principal of Ripon College, Cuddesden. He has also worked in Zambia as a USPG missionary. His new book, ***Unofficial God: Voices from Beyond the Walls***, will be published by SPCK this month.

‘Let me write the hymns of a Church and I care not who writes the theology,’ wrote Congregationalist minister RW Dale in the nineteenth century. Dale, as minister of Carrs Lane Congregational Church in Birmingham, was a member of a Church aware of the power of hymns. In many services, more time is taken up in the singing of hymns than in any other liturgical activity. Many Christians will know their faith because of what they sing rather than because of what they recite. Another Congregationalist, Dr Bernard Manning, wrote:

We recite no Creed, because our hymns are full of the form of sound words... ‘The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost incomprehensible’: it is the word of the Athanasian Creed. Every word in the Nicene and in the Athanasian Creed has its parallel in our hymn books; and if we use no crucifix, no stations of the cross, no banners, no incense, you must attribute it not to the fancy that we have neither need nor understanding of what these things represent. We do not use these things because our hymns revive the sacred scenes and stir the holy emotions with a power and purity denied to all but the greatest craftsmen... The hymn-book offers masterpieces to all who have an ear to hear, every day and in every place to every worshipper.

The belief of Christians from traditions which usually recite creeds are likely to be shaped and formed by what they sing rather than by what they say. Mrs Alexander (the wife of the Anglican Bishop of Derry) wrote

hymns to explain to children articles of the creed. Thus, ‘All things bright and beautiful’ explains, ‘I believe in God....maker of heaven and earth’; ‘Once in Royal David’s city’ explains ‘Born of the Virgin Mary’; and ‘There is a green hill far away’ explains ‘was crucified under Pontius Pilate.’ At Christmas the doctrine of the incarnation will be brought alive in hymns such as ‘Hark! The herald-angels sing’ with its ‘heretical’ phrase ‘veiled in flesh the God-head see’ and ‘Once in Royal David’s city’ with its unbiblical lines ‘Not in that poor lowly stable with the oxen standing by.’ In spite of the removal of television and radio time dedicated to religious programming, one programme that remains on TV is *Songs of Praise* on BBC 1 and one which remains on radio is *Sunday Half Hour* on BBC Radio 2.

All of this points to the influence of, and the high regard with which, hymns are held in the hearts of worshippers

Hymns have always been regarded with ambivalence by church authorities

and, indeed, of those who do not attend church. Hymns are Christian folk songs: hymns often express what people do believe as opposed to what the Church feels people should believe. Folk music at its best has elements of rebellion, criticism and embellishment about it as it reflects and comments upon the past and present. Hymns are no different. Indeed, as suggested above, hymns can be theological fifth-columnists, accepted by the Church, yet embodying beliefs which enlarge upon and sometimes contradict, official church teaching. Hymns can give a theological voice to those who do not usually feel that they are being heard. How can the Church take more notice of what is being sung and incorporate this more fully into its life and theology? First, let us be clear as to what a hymn actually is.

St. Augustine describes a hymn in these words:

Do you know what a hymn is? It is

singing with the praise of God. If you praise God and do not sing, you utter no hymn. If you sing and praise not God, you utter no hymn. If you praise anything which does not pertain to the praise of God, though in singing you praise, you utter no hymn.

Are contemporary worship songs to be regarded as hymns? They may well fit into St. Augustine’s description, but they would not usually be termed as hymns as they are traditionally understood. For this reason, hymn writer and commentator Brian Wren’s helpful phrase ‘congregational song’ will occasionally be used when referring to hymns, choruses and psalms. Wren understands congregational song as ‘anything that a worshipping congregation sings, not as presentation or performance to someone else, but as a vehicle for its encounter with God.’

The popularity of hymn singing

Hymns have always been regarded with ambivalence by church authorities. Psalms were the songs of the early church and if anything other than psalms were sung, then it had to be based in scripture. It is from the Church in the East that the non-biblical hymn appeared. In the second century, the Church was forced to use this form of hymn to respond to its popular appeal and fight against heretical influences. People enjoyed singing hymns. Accordingly, the Church, recognising the popularity of the hymn, tolerated its use and so hymns asserting the orthodox faith in opposition to that of the heretics were sanctioned by the Church.

The Church of England looked upon the hymn with suspicion. *The 1662 Book of Common Prayer* has no provision for the hymn except ‘Come Holy Ghost’ at the ordination service. In fact, until 1819, an incumbent introducing a hymn book into his church risked being taken to an ecclesiastical court. When a clergyman was charged with introducing a hymn book at this time, the Chancellor of the Diocese ruled that hymn-singing was an irregularity without due authority, but none could attack a practice that had become so widespread and was clearly so edifying. It was only after this that hymn singing became widely accepted within the Church of England.

The theological, social and cultural bias of hymns

Hymns are not written in a vacuum. They are theological cameos providing

valuable insights into the era in which they are written and also the occasions on which they are sung. While praising God, the hymn may inform the diligent student about the social and political issues of the day as well as the theological approach taken by the writer in the praise of God. The theology, sociology and politics are inextricably enmeshed. Some examples, taken from across Christian history, serve as illustrations. These are also reminders that many hymns were written in the middle of passion and turmoil.

Ambrose became bishop of Milan in 374^{AD}, when the Church was struggling with the teachings of Arius, a priest who taught that Christ was less than God. Arius' teachings almost split the Church and even ruling families took sides in the dispute. Justina, mother of the boy emperor Valentinian, supported Arius' views and persecuted Ambrose, forcing him to take refuge in a church where he was surrounded and protected by his followers. In order to keep up their spirits, they sang hymns. It is against this background that one can understand the hymn 'O Come, Redeemer of the Earth', attributed to Ambrose which unequivocally states that Jesus Christ came from God. Referring to Jesus, two verses run:

*No earthly father dost Thou own;
By God's o'ershadowing alone
The Word made flesh to man is come,
The fair fruit of a mother's womb...*

*From God the Father he proceeds,
To God the Father back He speeds;
Runs out His course to death and hell,
Returns on God's high throne to dwell.*

The last verse, the doxology, reiterates the relationship of God the Son to God the Father:

*All praise to God the Father be,
All praise, Eternal Son, to Thee,
Whom with the Spirit we adore,
For ever and for evermore.*

The second example is taken from a period of history remembered every November. The discovery of Guy Fawkes in the attempt to blow up Parliament provided the background to this hymn of Isaac Watts. This attempt was keenly felt as a Catholic plot:

*Their secret fires in caverns lay,
And we the sacrifice;
But gloomy caverns strove in vain
To 'scape all searching eyes.*

*Their dark designs were all revealed,
Their treason all betray'd...*

*In vain the busy sons of hell
Still new rebellions try.*

*How have we chas'd them through
the field,
And trod them to the ground,
While Thy salvation was our shield,
But they no shelter found...*

*In vain to idol saints they cry,
And perish in their blood...*

This is a reminder that hymns are important, and at times unashamed, vehicles of contextual theology and, like all theology, deeply partisan. The final examples are more recent and so need little explanation.

Sydney Carter (author of 'Lord of the Dance') questions the traditional understanding of God as he reflects on the events of Good Friday in the hymn 'It was on a Friday morning', with the words,

*'It's God they ought to crucify instead
of you and me'
I said to the carpenter a-hanging on
the tree.*

Methodist hymn writer Fred Pratt Green produced hymns critical of the institution as in the following which he wrote in the 1960s:

*When the Church of Jesus
Shuts its outer door,
Lest the roar of traffic
Drown the voice of prayer:
May our prayers, Lord, make us
Ten times more aware
That the world we banish
Is our Christian care.*

Finally, in their fight against apartheid, black South Africans living in townships found support in the hymn/congregational song, 'We are marching in the light of God'. Each verse repeats its first line, and so in verse 2 the words are 'We are living in the light of God', and in verse 3 'We are moving in the power of God'. Like Taizé chants, the words are few and simple, but repeated to a traditional South African tune they become moving and inspiring, addressing God's activity in the particular political context for which they were written. Again, the song is partisan, recognising the presence of God with the oppressed South Africans as he was with the oppressed Israelites marching out of Egypt towards freedom.

Inside and Outside Worship

The partisan nature of congregational song means that while for some a hymn is uplifting, for others it will be

un-singable. This may be seen in congregations where one group of people favour one kind of music, while others favour another. One group may want to sing traditional hymns whereas another may want to sing choruses. Music can be a battleground when worshippers cannot agree on what hymns should be sung; alternatively music can be a symbol of love and unity when one group of people is willing to listen to another articulate its faith in song. Dr Manning has some wisdom on this subject when he writes:

Reverence is due to hymns as to any sacred object. The hymn that revolts me, if it has been a means of grace to Christian men and women, I must respect as I should respect a communion cup, however scratched its surface, however vulgar its decoration.

To be willing to listen to a song praising God which speaks to the heart and soul of another person but which the listener finds hard, shows a willingness to live with difference. Hymns represent different theological, social and political positions and if a variety of forms of hymns and congregational song is sung in worship, then this is an invitation and encouragement to the people who feel at home in these different positions. To be able to pray and worship with those with whom we disagree is a sign of spiritual maturity.

Hymns can also be used outside of worship. They can be used in Bible studies where the singing of a hymn/congregational song selected by members of the group can be their way of setting the theological agenda. They can be used in confirmation groups where the confirmands can be encouraged to bring songs which speak to the spiritual journey which they have undertaken. They can be selected when particular theological themes such as resurrection, death, hope, fear are being explored. All this is a reminder that the hymn/congregational song is a rich and deep deposit of popular theology and culture which we have hardly begun to mine.





FIRST CATCH YOUR RABBIT

Deciding what to preach

I am grateful to the **Revd Dr Stephen Wright** of the College of Preachers for this lucid introduction to an activity which is a central focus of Reader ministry.



First, you catch a rabbit'. That advice, supposedly found at the bottom of an old recipe for rabbit soup, is quoted in an article by Eugene Lowry entitled *Surviving the Sermon Preparation Process*. Lowry points out that although there are many sources of sermon ideas, and much advice available on 'how to preach', the preacher is still left with the problem of what the focus of the sermon should be. He goes on to suggest that the heart of our dilemma is that it's not our ideas or choices which should be the controlling factor at all: it's the living word of God, coming to us from beyond ourselves. In other words, says Lowry, our challenge is how to let the rabbit catch us.

One of the keys, Lowry suggests, is to remain open throughout the preparation process – especially at the beginning, when to fasten on a 'theme' or 'idea' too quickly may lead to shallow and uninteresting preaching. We must allow ourselves the opportunity to be 'caught' by some profound connection between the text and contemporary life, and by an engaging way of involving our listeners in it. For people like me who like to get decisions made and things sewn up quickly, staying 'open' like this can be scary!

In this article I want to explore the factors which condition our choice of what to preach in the ordinary setting of Sunday worship – if you like, to draw a map of the field where we may 'catch our rabbit'. Being conscious of all these factors will mean that we have more chance not merely of choosing an appropriate thrust for a sermon, but letting such a 'rabbit' 'catch us'.

The drama of worship

First, our preaching must be conditioned by its setting in the context of a service of worship. It does not stand alone, but is one stage of sacred drama. For most Anglicans this will mean the weekly celebration of the Eucharist, in which we proclaim and enact God's saving deeds.

So the first requirement for our

Sunday sermon is that it should fit within the drama. Suppose you go to a five-act play in the theatre. The first two and the last two acts are superb: convincing acting, dramatic tension, intriguing scenery. But the middle act is a complete flop. It's mainly taken up by a single actor doing a soliloquy. That would have been all right if the playwright had fitted the speech into the sequence of the play, but it seems to be quite irrelevant: great long musings about nothing in particular. It neither takes the plot forward nor provides a refreshing interlude. It's no wonder the actor can't carry it off with much conviction. And it's no wonder the audience are shuffling and muttering, and feel at the end that it has spoiled their evening.

Much more is at stake in church than in the theatre! Whatever our choice of sermon focus, it should serve

It should serve to draw people nearer to God

to draw people nearer to God, within the worship context of a particular service. This is an awesome thought. God enables people to worship despite many inadequacies in the conduct of a service, including the preaching. But it is not good if the sermon at the centre of worship detracts from the drama instead of taking it forward; if the congregation, instead of going away nourished, go away disappointed by the incongruity between the weighty words of liturgy and hymnody and the triviality of the preaching. It is embarrassing for visitors who have been welcomed to share in the drama, not to mention sensitive 'regulars'.

What does this imply? That pointing to the central mysteries of Christ must always override the peddling of personal agendas. That we should not preach as if the sermon carries the weight of the whole drama – that we should remember that other parts of the service will provide a larger context for our words. And that we should be sensitive to the interplay between what we say and the other elements of worship (such as hymns).

The texts of Scripture

The second conditioning factor is the Bible passages read in the service. I'm grateful for the lectionary, because it limits the area in which I have to look for the rabbit (or vice versa). But it doesn't by any means make our choice of sermon focus for us.

Should we try to deal with more than one of the set passages? Sometimes this can work well, though we should remember that the lectionary provides for some periods of 'continuous' reading of biblical books – which means that the readings on these Sundays are not chosen to connect with each other, but with the equivalent reading the Sunday before and the Sunday after. And sermons can get too involved or confused if we try to deal with more than one passage in detail.

If we focus on just one passage, which will it be? Anglican preachers

regularly gravitate to the Gospel, but there is no rubric which says that we must! Again, the liturgy is liberating. The Gospel will always be read, so some aspect of Jesus' story will always be there. But it doesn't always have to be the focus of the sermon. Sometimes, perhaps if there is a very familiar Gospel passage (like the 'lost' parables of Luke 15 on the Fourth Sunday of Lent this year) it may be more challenging and interesting for a particular congregation to preach on the Epistle, letting the Gospel story resonate as a kind of ground-bass. The preacher needs to bear the other readings in mind, because they are a part of what the congregation will experience, and may form as much of a channel for God's word as the sermon. But it's not necessary to refer to the others explicitly, beyond maybe the occasional allusion.

Even having fixed on a passage, or combination of passages the decisions are not over, because it may be right to focus on the whole passage, or just a part of it. We should take the whole

into account in our preparation, but it doesn't follow that the whole needs to be addressed in the sermon. Stories, of course, hang together and should rarely be split apart. But in many other cases there is no reason why a preacher needs to deal with the whole of a set reading. (Equally, there is no reason why we should not deal with the whole of a passage which the lectionary has truncated or emasculated!)

The Christian calendar

The Christian seasons are another boundary-marker for the preacher. They help us especially to choose what *mood* of sermon to preach: or rather, they are a given part of our framework through which a mood can strike us. Advent preaching is naturally marked by expectancy and awe, Easter preaching by triumph and confidence, and so on.

Yet great variety is possible, and desirable! We need to discover, for instance, how the mood fits with one or more of the set texts. The Advent mood might be conveyed through preaching on the Prophets, or the narratives of John the Baptist or Mary and Elizabeth, or Paul's focus on the Lord's coming in 1 Thessalonians. The Easter mood is conveyed in distinct ways through the various resurrection stories, the stories of the early Christians in Acts, Jesus' 'farewell' discourses in John, or passages in Revelation – all possibilities offered by the Lectionary in this season.

The contemporary world

Current events provide a further framework for our choice. If preaching is to be a vehicle for God's word to his people *today*, our message will not be exactly the same as we preached a year ago. We will seek to discern what the living God, who has revealed himself once for all in Christ, wants to say to our world *now*.

So the field really is wide open! Vague sermons which talk in general terms about ideas like justice and peace can be preached at any time and in any place, but are unlikely to have much impact. But sermons which name particular crises, troublespots, traumas and – above all – signs of God's Kingdom in their midst, can be true eye-openers and heart-warmers. To tell the story of an Israeli doctor treating a wounded Palestinian child, or of a canon whose hug saved a desperate asylum-seeker from setting fire to himself, does far more than any abstract exposition of concepts like 'reconciliation' or 'self-giving'. What has hit us and moved us from the news or from our own recent experience of the world? What events, images, stories seem to encapsulate something of the world's present dilemmas, or God's activity within them?

The congregational pattern

The choice of what to preach cannot be made in isolation from considering who our listeners will be. In many Anglican settings, this is not a straightforward matter!

Not only do Readers, like clergy, frequently find themselves travelling around different churches – sometimes on the same Sunday. They also often can't know just what mixture of people will be there. Patterns of churchgoing are changing, and there may be more monthly churchgoers and fewer weekly ones than there were (say) twenty years ago.

Nevertheless there are some basic constraining factors. Is there likely to be a predominance of elderly, middle-aged or younger people? Are there a lot of professional people or is the blend more diverse? And, especially, are we preaching at a 'family' or 'all-age' occasion, or will the congregation be mainly or entirely adult? Will the service be large and formal, or small and informal? All these factors both close doors and open them.

The ministry team

Finally, what is our place in the team which preaches in this church or locality? This, too, helps to 'mark out the field'. Co-operation in the planning of a preaching programme among all who will share in it is to be strongly encouraged. Series of sermons can sometimes be planned, for instance following either Old Testament, New Testament or Gospel readings in a period where 'continuous' reading is

allowed by the lectionary. But even where this does not happen, it is still possible to be sensitive to our place in the overall ministry of the word in a congregation or group of congregations.

It is good to be aware of what is being preached in a particular place on the Sunday or two preceding one's own 'slot'. This is easy if one is in the congregation; if preaching elsewhere, then it may at least be possible to consult the service register (or the other preacher(s) themselves) before beginning one's preparation. (This is a good reason for recording sermon texts/themes in the register.)

More deeply, however, it is good to be aware of what, as individual preachers, we bring to this ministry. What strengths, gifts, experiences do we have to offer? *What can we say, which no one else here can say?* Like all the other conditioning factors, this question suggests limits but opens possibilities. It implies that in our sermon choices we won't just follow the crowd (which may be a temptation for those lacking in confidence), but seek to discern the unique contribution that God has enabled us to make. At the same time, our motive will not be self-assertion, or harping on about our hobby-horses, but building up Christ's body.

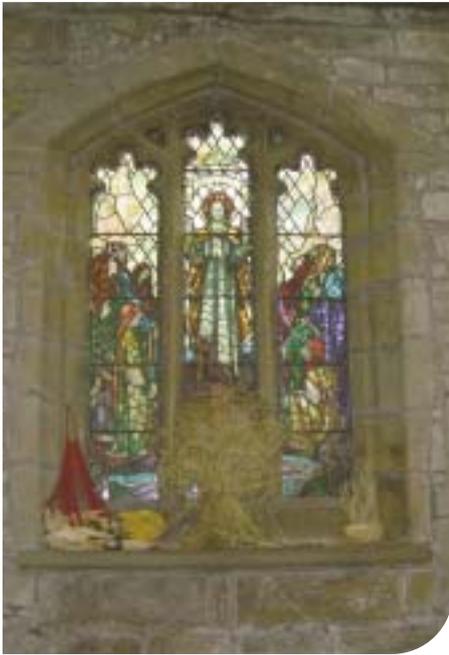
So...what?

A list of factors like this may daunt us. It seems to make the field both too narrow and too wide. So many things to constrain our preaching – yet so much room for manoeuvre! But that's the nature of the preacher's freedom. How, in the end, do we let the 'rabbit' of the sermon focus catch us? Yes, of course: the Holy Spirit prompts it! But it's a good idea to be in the right field.

*Revd Dr Stephen Wright is Director of the College of Preachers, an ecumenical training and resource agency devoted to encouraging preachers and promoting effective preaching. He is the author of various articles and books including **Preaching with the Grain of Scripture** (Grove, 2001). The College arranges courses, conferences and an Open Learning programme validated by the University of Wales. A Journal is produced twice a year. For details of College membership and activities visit the website, www.collegeofpreachers.org.uk or contact the Administrator, 14A North Street, Bourne, Lincolnshire PE10 9AB, tel/fax 01778 422929, email administrator@collegeofpreachers.org.uk*



Flour Festival



Anne Parr, a Reader in Wakefield Diocese gives a vivid description of this Festival which she inspired and coordinated last autumn, based at the Church of St John the Baptist, Penistone.

‘Sowing the seed’

The Bible is rich in literature about seedtime, nurture of crops, harvesting, baking, and mealtimes – God providing for His people. So rich that we had to be selective. We concentrated on Joseph, Moses, Ruth and Elijah in the Old Testament; the Parable of the Sower, Feeding the Five Thousand, The Lord’s Prayer, other teaching of Jesus, and the Last Supper in the New Testament.

The Festival was planned for harvest-time, and warranted more than a weekend. We decided on five Sundays and a four week period, mid-September to mid-October, avoiding our local agricultural show and October half-term. The slot was just right.

We introduced the idea of the Festival to the congregation at Candlemas, and asked for volunteers. Our Lent book would be Eddie Askew’s *Cross Purposes*, sub-titled *Meals with Jesus*. We planned our giving for the Festival. Book sales would help the Leprosy Mission. We arranged to have ‘Grace’ jars (for mealtime donations)

Flour is spelt correctly. Our language is rich in homophones. This is one of them. The idea for a *Flour Festival* originated in 1974 when there was a traditional flower festival in the church which we then attended. Its inspiration, a punning use of words coupled with well-established Christian symbols and imagery, was impossible to ignore. The biblical theme was at once written down, then filed and forgotten. That is, until recently.

At a PCC meeting at St John’s, Penistone, we discussed fund-raising

‘Kneading the dough’

The pastoral aim of the festival was two-fold – building up relationships within the congregation and strengthening the quality of links with the community (already a WMS aim). The project had financial implications and would be demanding in time and effort. Like others, we suffer from lack of funds. We acknowledged that the Festival must be self-financing. Therefore a series of neighbourhood ‘coffee breaks’ was organised, to raise funds to cover overheads. We felt that, like the woman from Zarapheth, we were doing what God wanted us to do, and we believed that our resources would not run out.

The WMS group took on much of the responsibility for the festival. The first and last Sundays were planned as All Age Worship, led by members of the said group. The group is fifteen in number, separated into groups of five. Each group had a ‘buzz’ session in which they noted ideas for events. These were programmed, and those whose suggestions they were took on responsibility for presentation. Thus we acquired a variety of social events, opportunities to meet together and have fun. This arrangement was essential for the implementation of the first part of our aim.

Community links were furthered by reaching out to Churches Together, the Scouts and Guides, St John’s schools, Thurlstone Band and Millhouse Green Male Voice Choir. We invited chefs from restaurants, a baker, the hospital chaplain, a nutritionist, and the Women’s Institute – as visitors, entertainers and demonstrators. We arranged visits to flour mills, a bakery and a maize maze – all tangible community links.

Not having a church hall, we hired venues for the events. The Community

The Bible is rich in literature about seedtime, nurture of crops, harvesting, baking, and mealtimes - God providing for His people.

and ideas for reaching out into the community. I suggested the Flour Festival concept. After some explanation and discussion the PCC decided to adopt the idea. In a post-PCC discussion with our incumbent I had the opportunity to discuss details of planning and presentation, and how the skills of the Wakefield Ministry Scheme group (WMS) and the congregation might be utilised.

during Lent. This UNICEF idea helps buy anti-tetanus injections for African mothers-to-be.

While planning preachers for Sundays, and speakers for mid-week events, it seemed appropriate to focus harvest giving on Christian Aid, Feed the Minds and USPG. This was in thanksgiving for our plenty and our concern for the needy, underpinned by a prayerful approach to everything.

2003

Centre, the school hall, and a dual-purpose daughter-church, were our places of social contact.

Town and parish councillors were vital contacts when compiling the brochure and negotiating the 'hire' of the park. Their knowledge brought its free use, and a PA system.

Preparing the display

The WMS groups made the banners and displays with which we decorated St John's. The background colour was green. On it we used yellow or gold (the colour of ripe corn), poppy red,

with artefacts made at the craft event during the festival. These included the use of dough craft, seed layers, seed pictures, drawings of biblical stories, corn-dollies and mock stained glass of the Sower and Ruth. Notice boards were used for displaying materials from chosen charities, and for Festival information. One depicted the state of the church – things we used to do, do now, and hope to do.

Planning the Festival timetable

The first and last Sundays have been mentioned. Each of the five Sundays

cookery demonstration by a member of our congregation, and a demonstration of bread-making by the owner of the bakery, would prove to be popular events. Our One World Week celebration was also popular, when local chefs entertained us with their skills in using grain in the Lebanese, Indian, Italian and Chinese traditions. The Guides made dough-craft table decorations in which they had stuck flags of the nations represented. They also sang grace (camp fashion) and served tea and coffee.

So that the programme would be fully comprehensive, and encompass more talents, we arranged within it a discussion evening and a concert. At the concert the school choir sang a selection of songs which included *Any Dream Will Do* from *Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. The band and the male voice choir used the repertoire which they were rehearsing for an imminent concert in the Royal Albert Hall. A world premier of the play, *The Snob's Wedding*, was presented by *Churches Together in Penistone and District*. The play had been written especially for the festival by a member of the Roman Catholic congregation, and the content was witty and very appropriate.

When the time-table was secured, and we had checked that all participants were still available and willing, and venues double-checked, the process of planning the brochure and publicising the festival began. The computer skills of a few people were invaluable. They helped to keep down the cost of the Festival. The brochure

We felt that, like the woman from Zarapheth, we were doing what God wanted us to do

and cornflower blue. Amazing things can be done with this palette. We made eight banners, two 'stained-glass' windows (the Sower, and Ruth), and a mill-wheel.

During the festival we 'grew' a field of barley in the chancel! We 'set' seeds on the first Sunday. Each Sunday the congregation witnessed that the 'seeds' had 'grown'. On the fifth Sunday the field was thick with corn (provided by two of our local farmers.) During the service on the fifth Sunday we reaped our harvest, binding the bundles into stooks and putting them with our harvest offering. The congregation was then given 'seeds' to take away and 'sow' in the field of the world. On one side of each seed was the festival symbol, and on the reverse was the post-communion prayer.

During Holy Week we had made an altar frontal depicting the festival logo. This was used during Eastertide and the festival. In front of the altar, as the Festival progressed, we built up a display which included a basket of seed, bundle of corn, mill-wheel, pantheon of flour and loaf of bread. (One disadvantage – four-footed friends, emerging through their holes in the floor, enjoyed the pickings!)

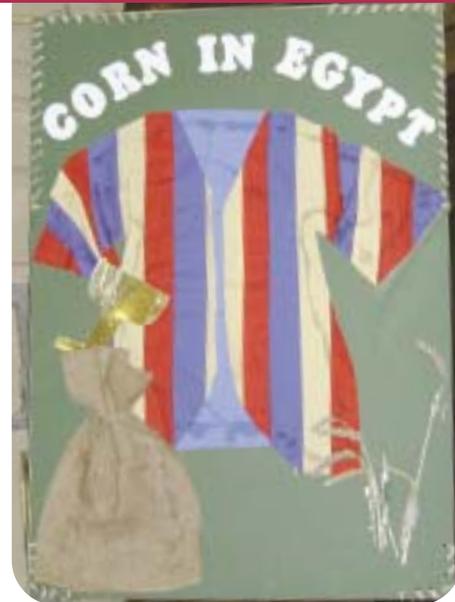
The children's corner was decorated

would have an invited preacher, with Parish Eucharist on the middle three Sundays. On the second Sunday, in addition, we arranged a Praise Picnic in the Park.

Sundays set, we inserted three events each week. The church would be open for visitors at Sunday service times and on Thursday mornings – market day in town. The only additional time was on the third Saturday, when people were in town for the Farmers' Market, and it was the day of our craft event.

The visits to the Hovis mill, a local water mill, a family-owned bakery and a maize maze, added interest to the programme. Corn-dolly making, a





represented the largest item of expenditure. Yet we realised that the public face of the festival had to be attractive. The content was gathered together from the relevant representatives of the community and edited according to available space. Some advertising space was sold to give the document street credibility. The format was neatly planned to include the necessary information.

People offered to produce posters, make tickets, and compile a small cookery book (*Flour Power*) and a booklet of rhymes (*A Little Flour for Children*) Our parish clerical assistant put out notices on the news sheet and in the parish magazine.

Extensive and varied correspondence in the form of numerous letters and emails were sent out with the help of the designer of our brochure. The printing of the brochure was the only part of the production process which was not done 'in-house'.

small WMS groups met each month to make their displays, firm up arrangements for events, and discuss which activities would need additional help. These meetings proved vital to the success of the Festival.

The main group met during the week before the Festival to decorate the church and to ensure that everything was ready. Brochures were distributed and press releases sent out. There was initial press and radio interest, but less than anticipated. It seemed to us that Good News does not make commercially-viable copy. During the Festival the sub-group met each week to monitor progress and note difficulties.

The Festival

The Festival began on 21st September. We heard about the types of soil; the seed of the Word sown in the Holy Land; the Saviour of the World born in Bethlehem – the House of Bread;

Endpiece

Before the Festival, comments such as 'exciting', 'interesting', 'ambitious', 'Why can't every church do this?', 'I wish I lived there – I want to go to everything,' and 'this is mission and evangelism' were said.

During the Festival came, 'When we heard about it, we didn't really understand it. Now we do, and it's wonderful!', 'I am really enjoying this festival', 'This is triumphant,' 'Can we have another?'

Since it finished, 'We're tired but it was worth it,' 'You have all done really well,' 'It was well organised,' 'What next?'

Thank you letters have been written, a report presented to the PCC, and WMS have conducted a review. The Festival proved to have been self-financing and, with planned giving and overheads paid, we were left with a significant profit.

What was most important, however, was the profit to the Church and community in human terms and the potential for pastoral development. As co-ordinator of the Festival, I am thrilled to be able to say that we achieved our aims. I give thanks to everyone who participated – and to God who blessed our efforts. He continues to provide for his people.

Be gentle

When you touch Bread
Let it not lie
Uncared for... unwanted.
So often
Bread is taken for granted.
There is so much beauty
In Bread
Beauty of sun and soil
Beauty of patient toil
Winds and rain have caressed it
Christ so often blessed it
Be gentle when you touch Bread
(*Scottish traditional*)

'I am really enjoying this festival', 'This is triumphant,'

British Food Fortnight and One World Week co-incided with our four-week festival. We made mention of these, as well as being inspired by them to make our festival more interesting. This connected the Church, the community and the world.

Pattern of preparation meetings

The main WMS group met monthly, with the Festival on the agenda. A sub-group met weekly to develop ideas. During Lent and early Eastertide there were no meetings, but in May they recommenced in earnest.

During May, June and July the three

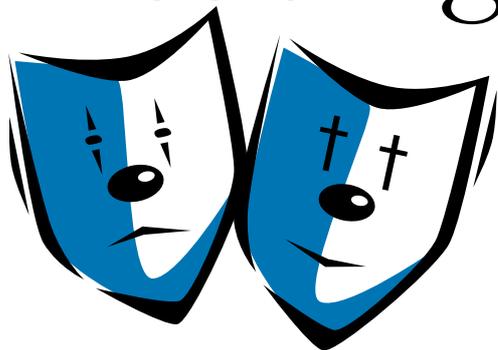
the Seed scattered through Europe, coming to England through Paulinus and Aidan etc.

We visited mill and bakery, made corn dollies, ate bread and cake after demonstrations, discussed nurture of body, mind and soul. We listened to choir, band and preacher, sowed 'seeds' and reaped the 'harvest'. God provided, feeding us physically, mentally and spiritually. We continue to feed on him with thanksgiving.

We have scattered seed far and wide, perhaps providing an example which others have expressed an interest in using.



Leading From Behind



As a schoolgirl I played the violin. Once, whilst finding myself in the back desks of the orchestra again, my teacher encouraged me with ‘We always put a few people who know what they are doing at the back so that they can lead from behind’.

As a Reader I have often felt, whilst sitting in the congregation, that it was part of my role to lead responses confidently. As someone trained in liturgy and worship I should in theory know what I am doing and why I am doing it. If many of us have experienced leading worship ‘standing up at the front’ as rather like stirring stiff porridge when the congregation responds, if at all, in a lackluster way, we owe it to our colleagues to ‘lead from behind’ when the occasion arises. But is leading worship only about making sure the words and actions come out in the right order? We all promise to use only the forms of service and words that have been approved by the relevant authorities, but this undertaking has to be balanced with the knowledge that liturgy is organic. If Reader ministry has an element of teaching then the way we lead worship and the kind of worship we lead should also teach and help others to grow in their understanding of their faith and develop their own spirituality.

A few years ago I discovered that I had been assigned to lead the children’s worship slot on Palm Sunday and Good Friday as well to preach on Easter morning. This meant I could approach the worship as a big picture in several frames, rather than several separate services or (as can happen in an end of term assembly) as something the size of a feature film squeezed into a cartoon’s time slot! At the same time I had been learning more about clown ministry and the two strands came together. The following suggestions are based on what I did then.

Susanne Mitchell, a Reader in Southwark Diocese, who has worked professionally both in editing and teaching shares her experience of leading Easter worship – with a difference.

Palm Sunday

Don a clown’s costume to use the clown (or fool) to tell the story from the point of view that Jesus behaved in a way that was surprising, foolish even. The clown uses his body rather than his voice, to mime, so that the congregation watches him rather than listens – just as on this occasion the crowd watched events unfold rather than heard Jesus preach. These are the words of the accompanying narration:

Once there was a clown.
He traveled about the country
drawing crowds to watch him.
He came from a pretty nondescript
town and there was nothing
particularly extraordinary about
him as clowns go. But, wherever he
went, people came to watch.

Most of the people who came
were not wealthy or powerful and
the clown did not magic up money
or give anyone special honour. He
gave them simple gifts;
Hope;
Belief in themselves;
A smile.

Once or twice he even made
someone who was dead miserable
come alive.

People began to wonder if there
wasn’t something rather special
about this clown after all, but even
his close friends couldn’t quite put
their finger on what it was.

Then one day they arrived at the
most important city in the district.
‘This is it’ his friends thought, at last
we’re going to hit the big time. But
the clown didn’t seem all that excited.

He asked his friends to borrow
a donkey. He got on ... and rode
in to town.

People were very excited. They
had heard of this strange clown
and they came out to see what he
was like. Some of them waved.
Some of them cheered. Some of

them threw things on the road in
front of the donkey. You’d have
thought he was a king or something.

But when he arrived at the big
top things changed.

The establishment clowns were
not at all pleased. ‘He’s not a
proper clown,’ they said.

‘If he goes on drawing crowds in
the wrong place or out of hours
we’ll have the authorities on to us.
We might even all lose our licence
to perform.’ They went to the crowds
and said ‘Pay no attention to him.
You think he’s so special, you think
he’s going to be the greatest clown
that ever tumbled. Why, he can’t
even juggle,’ they sneered.

At that the crowd turned nasty.
Even his friends wanted nothing to
do with him. The clown was sad
and quite alone.

Some time later people said, ‘He
was a fool, riding in to town on an
ass. He was an ass, he practically
signed his own death warrant.’

The establishment clowns beat
him up and had him killed.

But that was not the end. God
made the wisdom of the world
look foolish. The world fails to
find God by its wisdom. He chose
to save those who have faith by the
folly of the gospel.

Good Friday

This time the clown found a voice:

There’s something odd about
today. Can’t quite work out what it
is! (*clown is wearing his jacket back
to front.*) You might be wondering
why it’s called ‘Good’. Well of
course it is a good day for fools,
like me. Did you know that some
people say the first Good Friday
was April 1st – All Fools Day?!



Let me introduce you to some fools; First up there's Peter. One of Jesus' best mates. 'I'll do anything for you Lord' he said. But Jesus knew. When they got to the garden Jesus asked them to stay awake with him while he prayed. What did Peter do? He fell asleep. Then when the guards arrested Jesus that fool Peter tried to put up a fight. I ask you. They were outnumbered and everything. Typical Peter though. Then of course they all ran away. Least Peter kept his clothes on, not like what's his name when they tried to get hold of him. Anyway let's sing about Peter... (*'I do not know the man' 229 in Hymns Old and New to the tune 'Carlisle'*)

There were a lot of fools around in them days. Of course they didn't think they were fools. Oh no, they

say sorry for. Now will those of you with letters on the seat beside you bring them out here please. (*Clown arranges them to spell out the word 'sorry'. They then form a circle, hug and leave the letters on the floor before returning to their seats.*)

Isn't that better? Now then, Jesus. He was always turning things upside down and inside out and back to front (*clown at last realizes his jacket is back to front but mutters 'oh never mind'*)... He was a fool, wasn't he? I mean there he was on trial and he hardly said anything to defend himself. All that spitting and mocking and beating and he never tried to run away. He never once said 'This isn't fair, I haven't done anything wrong.' He let them crucify him and he asked God to forgive them! But with all the

gap he lifts the cross high and brings the singing to an end)

May the God of love and laughter, who by the cross save us from our own foolishness, bless us today and throughout life's journey. Amen.

Come back on Sunday morning to see who has the last laugh.

Let's end by singing one of my favourite topsy turvey sort of hymns.

(*'The Servant King' 148 in Hymns Old and New.*)



Easter Day

The clown tells the story of the resurrection with the punch line;

'They thought he was dead but Jesus leapt from the grave saying, "Fooled You".'

For those involved in clown ministry the ideas above may lack real clowning skill and polish. For those who are dubious about this kind of thing it may all seem too theatrical. I remember at the beginning of my ministry saying to a very experienced priest, 'You probably think it's rather irreverent but to me waiting in the vestry before the start of a service is like waiting in the wings to go on stage', he replied 'The day I begin a service without "stage fright" is the day I know it's time to stop!'

So do we lead worship from the front or from behind? I would have to say that I put a lot of myself into the examples I have given so that they were led from within. Perhaps that's where all worship should be led from.

Text and comments © Susanne Mitchell

Note: The hymn suggestions were those selected by Susanne. If you do not have these particular hymns easily available, other hymns would also be suitable.

I have often felt, whilst sitting in the congregation, that it was part of my role to lead responses confidently

thought they were the cat's whiskers. (*Uses throne like chair as prop*) Mr High and Mighty Pharisee, Mr Clever Cloggs Scribe, Mr Holier than Thou Priest. They just couldn't see what Jesus was about. How can anyone in their right mind be upset by someone who makes others well and whole? You know, I think the truth frightened them. Jesus led them a merry dance alright. Let's sing about that shall we? (*'Lord of the Dance verses 2, 3 and 4, 228 in Hymns Old and New'*)

Of course all these fools were sorry afterwards. Sorry they'd let Jesus down, sorry that things had gone too far, got out of hand. Do you know what is the most foolish thing of all? Being afraid to say sorry or too proud to say sorry. They thought it was too late, but it's never too late. God loves us so much that he's just dying for us to come back to him. He forgives us almost before we can get the word 'sorry' out of our mouths. Let's try it now. Just for a moment or two think of anything that you'd like to

wonderful things he'd done up till then, couldn't he have saved himself, come down from the cross?

Power you see, – he knew when to let go. Good Friday, Fools day.

Time I showed you my new trick. Bit of tight rope walking. (*There is a string stretched loosely between two chairs*) I need a sort of drum roll and you're going to sing it. (*Either teach now or have learnt before the service started 'Behold the Lamb of God from 'Come All You People', Wild Goose Publications.*)

Give me an 'E' (*The accompanist replies 'Eh by gum'*) No, not that sort of an E!

(*The singing begins but at the first attempt the string is too slack – stop the singing and move the chairs further apart*) It's still no good, I need some help. (*Clown fetches a small cross made of sticks – the singing begins again and clown uses the cross as a crutch to help him up on to one of the chairs which are now sufficiently far apart to make the string taut but close enough together for the clown to be able to straddle the gap. Once clown is balanced across the*



Holding the centre: leading worship with children



Diane Craven works as Youth and Children's Adviser for Kingston Episcopal Area and Diocesan Children's Adviser in the Diocese of Southwark. She is also a licensed Reader in the Diocese.

I wonder why it is that the idea of leading worship with children so often strikes fear into the hearts of Readers. What is it about the presence of children that makes us anxious; gives us the feeling that we are about to enter alien (dare we say enemy?) territory and makes us concerned that we need to 'do something special or different' in order to – as we think – keep them interested? Is leading worship with children really so different from leading worship with anyone else that we need to behave in unusual ways in order to do the job properly?

Perhaps because children are physical beings and their responses to what is happening are often physical ones, we suddenly become aware that what we lack in our worship are those things which work on a kinaesthetic level and which are mediated to us through the senses... because children are capable

The hospitable space

All of this seems a long way away from the open hospitable, holding space represented in Andrei Rublev's 15th century icon (*see over*). It seems a long way too from the beauty, holiness, mystery and presence this icon captures so well. If we look into this icon, we find both fully individualised persons and mutuality and interdependence – a kind of deference one to the other shown in the circular gaze and the inclination of the heads. We find too a space which opens out towards us to draw us into the Trinitarian dance of love and which extends an invitation into the possibility of a transformatory encounter. If we are called as church to 'image forth' the God we know as God-in-relationship, I wonder what we see in the mirror of our worship and whether we as adults are changed by our encounters with children within the

means to be church. Worship with children cannot stand alone and needs to be supported by genuine child-friendly behaviour and practices in every area of our life – including our structures, budgeting and decision making, for in this way we bring the margins into the centre.

And what of some of the practicalities of liturgy? Since *A Service of the Word* is the primary place where Readers are most involved in leading – and sometimes in planning – worship with children, we should look at some specific issues related to this area of church life. It is a frequently heard comment that 'we can't sing in Latin because the children are in' or 'maybe we won't have a Gospel procession because the children won't understand it'. Rather because the children are there we should use as many different ways as possible, employing all our repertory to help communicate; we should play up the symbolism, colour, movement and gesture available to us; recognise and use the space we are in; work to make this space safe and sacred; engage our imaginations; work at all the places where story and storytelling are key to the communication and enjoyment of the word of God; and finally remember our bodies.

The threshold of the Kingdom

We need to free ourselves from the notion that children have to be entertained, kept occupied, talked down to or spoken to in dumbed down language and instead should remember that they deserve pathways into the divine which fire their imaginations; feed their souls with poetry and enable them to pray and play on the threshold of the Kingdom. Adults need to rediscover what it means to play, to explore and to discover, and secondly we adults need the spaces and places for these things to take root in our own lives. I wonder what might happen if the multi-level, multi sensory dimension of our worship and learning

Feed their souls with poetry and enable them to pray

of entering readily into prayer (which is not necessarily expressed in words) we are brought up short against our inadequacies in prayer and our inability to share prayer with children... because children can be fidgety, mischievous, and challenging we are brought up against our own frustrations with all that fails to engage us as whole people – frustrations which we may feel keenly but which we very rarely dare to express... because children learn through play we are reminded that we learn through participation and involvement not only through instruction and are reminded that faith is really too full of life to be left entirely in the hands of the adults. In short, it is a challenge to our whole understanding of what worship is and to our established ways of doing and being church and cannot be confined to 'what shall we do with the children in an all-age service or crib service'. No wonder it's scary!

gathered people of God...? I wonder too whether children find a hospitable space within our church community and our worship, a place to both be and become within the love of God.

When facing issues of planning and leading worship, there is an authenticity question which needs to be addressed. Leading worship with children (and indeed with anyone) has something to do with extending a welcome into what we hold most dear and precious. It is about welcoming people home, not about putting on a show. And our worship is rooted in and speaks out of community. How we are, in a sense, matters more than what we do. We have to think carefully and prayerfully about the choices we make and the things we choose to do. But we must also be mindful that how we approach worship with children speaks volumes about our relationships and about our understanding of what it

became more and more the norm instead of something we have to think about in particular ways because children are present? Why are these vital dimensions of our being and doing so neglected and why should we think they belong only to children? We *all* need these ways in to worship and learning because we are physical beings and because the presence of God is mediated to us through matter and understood by the senses.

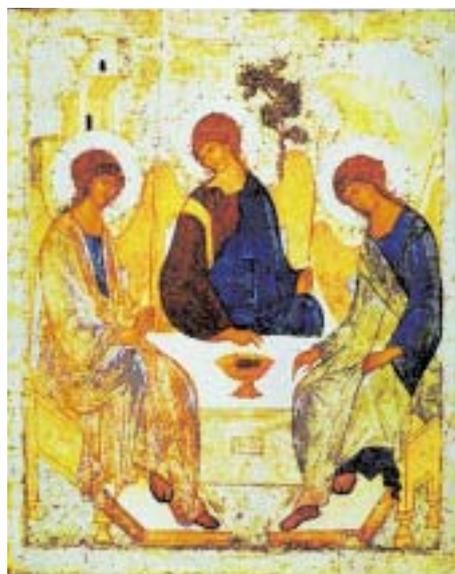
In a society dominated by the moving image and in which we are bombarded by noise and stimulation, we have some stark choices to make.

In view of the current cultural norms, it becomes increasingly vital to work with the imagery, colour and movement which we already possess within the liturgy. It is also crucial that we should seek new and creative ways to work with visual imagery which communicates the word and which supports and enhances the verbal content of the liturgy. And we also need to learn how to enter into silence and stillness and to nurture the contemplative, both in ourselves and our children. We need this ourselves and we need to work at this with children because they need it too.

The same applies to the word. We don't offer an all-singing, all-dancing version of the word of God 'because the children are present'; we do it because it is appropriate to the context; the community and the liturgy of which it is a part. If the word is important we mark that importance through accompanying movement (gesture or procession); through signifiers (such as candles and acolytes) through attention to all the storytelling elements and cues; through not skipping over what we think are the difficult or uncomfortable parts of scripture and through providing space for reflection and response. Why? Because the word of God is central to who we are as the gathered people of God and the significance of this needs to be marked whenever we gather but all the more so because children are with us. And God is revealed in the entirety of the story – the great sweep of the biblical narrative with all its joy and pain, its passion and longing, its great themes of loss, suffering, death, resurrection, redemption and ultimate restoration. Anything less than this is not really the Gospel: it's a 'kiddy Gospel' which won't stand up to the vicissitudes of human life!

Learning... to teach

If the story we tell is important, so too is what we model. Leading worship – with adults and children – should not be thought of as a solitary activity. We need to find ways of modelling collaborative patterns of being and working and need the corrective insights of the group process to provide the balance to our own preconceptions and preferred learning and worshipping styles. In creating liturgy, we need first of all to make it our own and learn what we intend to teach. To this end it becomes important that we begin to see the work we do in preparation as part of our own on-going learning and part of the learning of the whole people of God. This is particularly important when working with children



where the tendency is to spend more time on telling the children what they have to do rather than exploring theology and creating worship with them.

If we are going to work with children on the liturgy or aspects of it, we need to take the time to reflect with them on the meaning of what we are doing rather than giving them a part to play in our worship. Only then does it become possible to enable them to enter into the mystery that is at the heart of worship rather than simply being recipients of roles we share out. We adults might even learn from those we think we are teaching. Can we see and hear God present in the children amongst us? And if we can, how will God be treated, welcomed, made room for?

Holding the centre

Holding the centre in worship with children means that worship is

connected to what we do week by week and does not become a series of more and more exciting one-offs. This is an important dimension of worship that is often forgotten in work with children where we sometimes feel that every element of the liturgy has to be 'new' and 'different'. It is time we let ourselves off this hook and allowed ourselves to work within our capabilities, rediscovering and drawing on the recognisable and familiar ways in which we express our faith week by week and the sensual as well as visual forms of communication already available to us within our liturgical experience. We will also need to recognise the flow and shape of the liturgy to provide some sense of rhythm rather than a series of more or less loosely connected items.

Holding the centre also means that the presidential role is key. *A Service of the Word* involves considerable freedoms and within a liturgy which may involve movement and which may include unfamiliar aspects, the holding or presidential function of the leader becomes more significant. The need for a still point, a focal point which establishes a centre becomes all the more important. It is perhaps particularly pertinent if the liturgy has been a collaborative enterprise and involves a range of participants. The congregation need to know who is exercising the presidential role and it needs to be marked spatially and physically as well as by function. If Readers are leading, say, *A Service of the Word* they need to exercise this role with confidence and if they are involved in shaping the liturgy it is also important to know what the limits and boundaries are and to work within these: 'children are present' is not adequate reason for neglecting liturgical order!

But if we revisit the story of the hospitality of Abraham in Genesis 18, which is the foundation story of Rublev's icon, I wonder if we can learn something important about the blessing which comes from showing hospitality, from making room for others... Entertaining angels unawares? Maybe children are not 'angels' as such, but if we learn to work with them, worship with them, pray with them and share faith in all its richness, darkness and wonder with them, then perhaps we shall all find God revealed in new and surprising ways in the midst of us.

NOT AFRAID OF A CHALLENGE

Derek Walker interviewed **Jude Levermore**, a Reader in Oxfordshire who has until recently been Chair of the Greenbelt Festival.



Villages having been changing for some years. They hold a remnant of the old families, whose younger generations can not afford to remain. Instead, newcomers move in, often urban business people who want a quiet place to de-stress. So often, the cultures of the two barely meet.

The Church can still be a bridge between neighbours who live in different worlds, and someone who embodies those links is Jude Levermore, who has just finished a three-year stint as Chair of the Greenbelt Festival (a time, incidentally, which has seen its popularity rise rapidly).

I did not know quite what to expect of her. Would she be someone arty, as well as efficient? Having to work part-time in London, maybe she would be quite aloof?

Travelling to the Oxfordshire village where she lived, my image was changing. As I rounded the duck pond, past the sun-warmed stone cottages, the image melted further.

As she came out to meet the car, Jude Levermore showed herself to be friendly, enthusiastic, chatty – and normal. A parent of young children, a youth worker, a nurse and an Anglican Reader, she somehow managed to find time to be an anchor person for the Christian Arts Festival described by *The Big Issue* magazine as offering ‘that little bit more.’

But how does a rural Reader manage to be the same person that chairs a major festival run by a handful of paid employees and 1,500 – 2,000 volunteers?

It all began when...

The link began with the local Church. When Jude and her husband first moved to their village in the mid-eighties, as the only young couple they were asked to look after a group of five young people about to be confirmed.

Because the Levermores normally went to Greenbelt, that was where they chose to take the group.

One year, on a feedback form, Jude mentioned that although Greenbelt allows adults to explore issues, this was not being modelled in their structured youth work, which lacked space for exploration. So Greenbelt asked her to put her ideas into practice.

Soon she had become involved in the Fringe, and ended up running it. At this time she had her ‘defining Greenbelt moment.’ It happened at the end of the last festival held at Castle Ashby, when funds were so low that she knew it would never again be held in open fields. She was onstage among representatives of all areas of the festival, with a six-month old daughter sleeping in her arms.

‘It was going to be the last Greenbelt as we knew it. I remember standing there, looking. There were thousands with their lighters out and candles and we all sang, “*I still haven’t found what I’m looking for*”. I thought at

that will make a difference to them.’

So today, she is proud to head up a festival that is not just a showcase for the arts, but also a place that ‘really encourages people to grapple with things, get their hands dirty, and be creative people, rather than consumers. In our culture we are trained from an early age to be consumers of culture as well as products. Greenbelt is very counter-cultural, and says, “*No!*” That’s why I’m very excited that now we’re linked up with Christian Aid. It’s a really natural partnership – campaigning for issues of justice. We use the arts to expose people to the Gospel, and to expose injustice. It ties up brilliantly with getting out there and making a difference.’

Building strong communities

Jude is passionate about building community, whether it is for a few days in Cheltenham, or in her local village. Although Jude began her involvement with Greenbelt through taking a small youth group, in recent years she has

Greenbelt is not a youth festival, but an arts festival to the glory of God

that point, “I’m not going to let Greenbelt die. I need this wonderful place of exploration, and discovery and spirituality for my children to experience”.

Rich and poor

And not just her own children; it is youth generally that help define her passion for the event. Her second-favourite memory of Greenbelt is hearing Tony Campolo speak. ‘He talked about praxis – taking young people away to do something, because what you do affects your belief systems. He took rich youngsters off to Haiti to build houses for poor people, and talked about how that was life-changing in their spiritual lives as well as their material lives. Until that point, I thought, “As long as I teach them everything, as long as I give them opportunities to meet God, they’re bound to get it”. But you have to expose them to poverty, expose them to the ability to make a difference – and

brought the local church along to hear Christian opera singer Willard White, and experience the musical *Strange Kind of Hero*, covering the story of Paul. (This is her way of showing that Greenbelt is not a youth festival, but an arts festival to the glory of God – and one that appeals to all ages, as well as various traditions and churchmanship.)

She believes that the community of the Church has to be strong enough to bridge the culture gaps – and especially to hold teenagers as they adjust to becoming independent.

‘It is difficult for teenagers because everything within them cries out to be separate from adults – that’s what’s going on inside them. Everything around them tells them, “All adults are prats; the only people to take any notice of are other teenagers”. You have to let them do that a bit, but somehow hold them within the family of the church. It has to be the family of the church because families can’t hold them. Our

house frequently has teenagers around. You need that in villages. When my children are older, I hope that there's a place that they can go round to that isn't their family, but is Christian.'

Although a town girl at heart, Jude loves living in an idyllic village. But as a Reader, she is aware that the beauty does not prevent some of the very difficult pastoral issues that can strike anywhere. She remembers that a couple of years ago a car fell on a father of four children and crushed him to death on the day of the school fair. 'The Church has to be there to help pick up the pieces, and to speak into that pain.'

Festival and Village

There must be some ways that involvement in such a forward-thinking arts-based organisation affects the way that she leads worship in the village. Does she have any hints that she can pass on?

'Through a Greenbelt-organised trip, I went up to the Iona Community and have been going subsequently most years. Using that Celtic spirituality within services is proving successful. That's a real all-age thing.' Using everyday items like pebbles or water is something that

everyone can relate to. She also finds the songs simple and often set to well-known tunes. 'We try to use such things in our evening services, though I'm not very involved in evening services now because of putting children to bed – it's the wrong time. We're trying to think up some midweek stuff. In Autumn and Winter terms we run *Have I Got News for You*, which isn't really like the quiz on television. We take some current news stories, and try to look at them from a Christian perspective. We take it in turns to lead it, and somebody might have a bit of video footage. Taking a difficult nitty-gritty issue, we try to pull it apart – what does God say into this; what as Christians should we be doing about this?'

'We did the Stephen Lawrence case. We talked a lot about that and racism. That was quite interesting, because at that point an Asian couple had just taken over the village shop; there had been a little bit of difficulty over that. So that was a local story and a national story all mixing in. We could talk about how difficult it is as Christians to put aside your national pride – and should you? Is your identity tied up with your culture? How do you say racism is wrong, but having a cultural identity is right?'

Jude can be pleased with the way that Greenbelt has grown in her time at the helm. The festival reached its 10,000 licence capacity for the first time since 1984 (with no crime reported) and subsequently neared 15,000; there have been world-class speakers lining up in just one venue (Mike Yaconelli, Tony Campolo and Philip Yancey); and last year's music line up alone included several current award-winners in their fields.

Greenbelt so exudes honesty about the big issues, so emphasises building God's kingdom of compassion and justice, and so loves to celebrate creativity, that of all the UK festivals this could well be the one that Jesus would most keenly book up for. That's why Jude can be content.

And a week later, she would probably be miles away, leading worship for the village faithful.

The 2004 Greenbelt Festival will take place at Cheltenham Racecourse August 27 – 30

For more details, and to buy tickets visit the Greenbelt website

www.greenbelt.org.uk or write to Greenbelt Festivals, All Hallows on the Wall, 83 London Wall, London EC2M 5ND

Lessons from the margins



Tim Harle, a Reader in the Bristol Diocese, reflects on unexpected riches for which his training had not prepared him. These experiences relate to another English diocese.

'I'm not praying for the bl**dy queen'. This was the spontaneous reaction to a fellow-worshipper's (very Anglican) suggestion that we should pray for the monarch.

Training courses encourage us to invite suggested topics for prayer, but they don't advise on how to deal with such a reaction. Undaunted, press on... 'Is there anyone else you'd like us to pray for?'

'The Belgians.'

Welcome to weekly worship in a psychiatric hospital. A wonderful mix of sadness and joy, anger and

bewilderment, for which no training can prepare you. After several months, you begin to notice that one of the regulars displays an obsessive interest in war. Was the request for prayer for our European neighbours the result of some long forgotten memory?

Bounced into it

How had I got involved in the first place? Quite simply, I was bounced into it. A friend in the parish mentioned that he helped lead services. 'Oh', I said non-committally, 'that

sounds interesting.' The following Saturday, the phone rang. 'I'm taking the hospital service tomorrow. I'll pick you up on the way.' I had no time to come up with an excuse... and, of course, there was a gap in the rota a couple of weeks hence. Fifteen years later, I realise the debt of gratitude I owe to my friend (now a URC minister) for dropping me in it.

The very name 'Reader' conjures up ideas about words, and yet words are often the last thing you need. Words don't help the gentleman with hollow sad eyes, who seems to be trying to convey something of the pain he feels. And words are an inadequate response when, a few weeks later, you meet him again and his eyes are sparkling with life.

You need more than words to hold the attention of these people. How often are we told that we need to make sure our worship is lively and relevant? But how many of our parish church congregations walk out if they are bored? The chapel in the hospital had



been condemned long ago as unfit for use, so services were held in various settings: the social club, the library. This had the great advantage that you could pick up what might be referred to as passing trade. But it equally meant that people could just as soon leave.

My own record was 100% turnover during a service – no-one who was there at the beginning lasted until the end, and no-one at the end had been there at the beginning. Not bad for a 20 minute service. Lively? Relevant? Or what about the occasion when one of the men in the front row had what is usually described as a top shelf magazine stuffed down his clothes. Every time he got bored with the service, he got the magazine out. That keeps a worship leader on their toes.

Life without labels

The Sunday morning service is open to patients and staff, but no-one wears a uniform. Without these badges, you have to treat everyone the same, even though you're crying out to label them. Then life would be so much easier. But this is a dangerous game. Because our own certainties are threatened. And the thin line which separates us from those whom we designate as different is exposed again and again. But what liberation it brings, when our presuppositions are left at the door. Worshipping in open social spaces brought another great opportunity. It was easy to hover on the edge – you could listen in without apparent commitment. It took more than ten years for one of the regular hoverers to speak, but he still stayed on the edge. Which, I imagine, is where our Lord might well have been found.

Then there is the wonderful lack of inhibition. I've already mentioned the heartfelt reaction to suggested prayer topics. One abiding image is

of one of the willing band of musicians who came to help lead the worship. One Sunday, we had an organist who would cheerfully describe herself as unreconstructed Ancient & Modern. When it came to one of the hymns, someone asked if we could sing *Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning*. At which our organist set about the piano (out of tune and missing several keys) with gusto, improvising in a way which only served to emphasise the true liberation we all felt.

A mirror for the wider church?

But there is another side to this lack of inhibition. Despite occasional visits to the hospital's secure unit (try explaining how everyone is free to worship to someone behind double-locked doors), I only once felt physically threatened. It was prayer time again. We regularly came up against the question of how to pray for doctors and nurses who were variously seen as helpers in the quest for wholeness and jailers who took away liberty. But it was the question of abortion which came the closest to causing physical violence. No amount of carefully chosen words to respect those

afresh at the world we inhabit and how we relate to those among whom we live and move and have our being.

Theological reflections

After 15 years, changed family circumstances meant that it was time to move to a new diocese and new challenges. Now, two years later, this article provides a chance to reflect with a degree of objectivity. Yes, there is the risk of rosy hindsight. You can't ignore the sheer bloody-minded congregation of two, or the overwhelming stench from the blocked toilets. But, if we claim to follow an incarnational religion, then can we complain?

If the role of a Reader includes helping people to worship, then who was helping whom? If we are seeking to bring each other into the presence of God the creator, redeemer, sustainer and friend, then I am humbled by the experience of this raw worshipping community. Here are those whom society chooses to place on its margins throwing down a living challenge to help us find the God who was rejected and yet threw down the ultimate challenge to humanity from the margins of a city.

You have to treat everyone the same, even though you're crying out to label them

with different views could suffice. Ah, the joy of worship with words like 'murderer' and 'bigot' being hurled about.

Which brings me to the first mirror on which the wider church can reflect. People hold strong opinions, but are not open to reasoned debate. Can we honestly say that such attitudes are restricted to psychiatric hospitals?

The informal setting did have its drawbacks. The most chaotic service I encountered was when some well-meaning person had arranged the chairs in a circle rather than serried rows. Worshippers are most comfortable when everyone and everything is in its appointed place. Even a small change can completely upset the balance. The second mirror – you wouldn't find that sort of reaction outside a psychiatric hospital... would you?

The third mirror? Some residents live in their own world. This may be internally consistent, but may only bear a passing relation to what the majority define as reality. Whatever the pros and cons of the *Care in the Community* initiative, it challenges us all to look

If the role of a Reader includes teaching, then who was teaching whom? Our parish church congregation regularly included a professor or two plus half-a-dozen PhDs. Yet, at the hospital, our most carefully crafted sermon becomes just so many meaningless words.

Neither carefully constructed Pauline theology nor thoroughly deconstructed Postmodernism satisfies. But see the impact of vivid stories, especially those from the Jewish tradition, the parables of Jesus, and the Psalms as they lurch from the depths of anguish to the pinnacles of joy.

If the role of a Reader includes offering pastoral support, then who was supporting whom? The sheer range of ways I was addressed (padré, father, oi...you) speaks of a diversity of relationships. Yes, it was a privilege to be asked to help in sometimes desperate personal circumstances. But how much greater the privilege of being confronted – sometimes literally – with the joy, the anger, the bewilderment, the despair, the longed-for hope of those created in the image of God.



Upholding the bereaved

Jenny Francis, currently a Reader in Gloucester Diocese, writes about the role of Readers in leading funerals and ministering to the bereaved. She has led bereavement training courses in several dioceses.

Early on Advent Sunday a fire severely damaged a flat above two shops just across the road from us. We woke to find nine fire engines, two paramedic ambulances and lots of support vehicles parked outside our front door and saw flames bursting between the tiles beside the open dormer window which firemen on the roof were clearly trying to reach. The town of Stow was very shocked to discover two young women died in that fire and two others just managed to escape. The first fire crew on the scene was the Stow retained crew whose members often drank in the pub in which all four girls worked. Like many in this town, which depends on tourism for its prosperity, these girls had come from abroad and were temporary workers in the hotel and catering industry. One who died, aged 24, was from South Africa; the other, only 18, from Poland. The two survivors, both in their twenties, were from South Africa and Zimbabwe. All were well known. This tragedy highlights the multiple elements in grief and bereavement which anyone working in that field needs to be aware of – Readers too, if involved in pastoral visiting or conducting funerals.

Readers and funerals

Dioceses have different rules about Readers conducting funerals, *eg* in the Rochester diocese Readers are generally required to have been licensed at least two years, to have ‘shadowed’ their incumbent at a minimum of ten funeral services, and are then required to undertake special training before their licenses are endorsed by the diocesan bishop. Other dioceses have no specific requirements other than a vague understanding the Reader concerned is mature, sensitive and able to cope with distressed people.

As others’ sadness stirs up feelings and past memories in us too, it is important we know ourselves well enough to recognise such feelings can get in our way at the wrong moment. Of course, it would be very false if no intimation of shared sorrow were expressed but equally, a Reader in tears may force the bereaved person to try to

reassure him/her, hardly the intention! Similarly, other senses can be stimulated. Anger and depression, for example, are catching, We are there to help, encourage, guide and support someone who may feel their life has just fallen apart. They will look to the undertaker and the person taking the funeral to help them through one of the most challenging ‘goodbyes’ any of us can ever say. We must, therefore, be professional in the way we do the job, inspire confidence and keep any personal agenda out of the way.

The importance of training

This is why training is important, even if the diocese in which you serve does not provide any for this purpose. Training should equip us for this delicate, sensitive task and if not available locally, is perhaps an area of work for which licensed Readers might request training, possibly with Readers in adjoining dioceses or as

cultures have different requirements and expectations, some of which are quite technical.

Sharing the depths

People cope with loss or major personal crises, of which death is perhaps the most obvious and severe, in accordance with the values and responses learnt in their families of origin and in accordance with their own personalities. These must be respected as the Reader provides the Christian ministry they look for, whilst explaining what must be done and helping everyone concerned to plan the sort of service they feel is appropriate. It is a time of raw emotion when scenes of utter fear and desolation, or of great poignancy, are not uncommon but, I have noticed, afterwards people often feel a bond has been established with the minister, born of having gone through something significant together.

Clearly some people will have

In short, it was a turning point and a moment of personal growth as so many funerals are

shared CME training with local clergy. There are overlaps, of course, with the work done by chaplains and social workers, in hospital or hospice or in community organisations like Cruse, (the National Society for the Widowed and their Children) or specialist charities like those working with HIV/Aids. Furthermore, local undertakers may have been doing the job for years, and are acknowledged experts in the field with a fund of useful knowledge, and sometimes funny stories! It is vital any minister conducting funerals ‘makes friends’ with local undertakers and some are only too pleased to accept an invitation to talk to clergy or Readers about ways of doing things. I am personally indebted to a helpful undertaker in West London who in agreeing to show people learning about bereavement round his premises, gave them an opportunity to see how a body is laid out, embalmed, prepared for family and friends to view and how different

previous experience of death and know what to do. Others are at a loss and those who are themselves frail or vulnerable may have forgotten some things so turn to the minister for guidance. The undertaker will usually have discovered whether it is to be a cremation or burial, or whether the will contains other specific instructions for the body’s disposal. These matters and the practicalities of registration are usually things he can advise on, especially if the family concerned has little or no church involvement and would not naturally turn to the local incumbent for help. The undertaker is therefore a key adviser and the first to meet the family. He contacts the minister with suggested times and dates for slots at the crematorium and/or for church services.

Different ways and words

Of course there are different ways of doing things, for example, there may be a service at the crematorium

followed by a church service of thanksgiving or in memory of the deceased. It may be the opposite way round; the family disappearing from the church for the crematorium, possibly returning for a reception afterwards. Others prefer a church service followed by burial and this is easier if the church has an open churchyard: one which is not full up and where burials still take place. In my husband's present parish, the churchyard is closed but the town has a large, newly consecrated extension to its cemetery and burials take place within sight of the parish church. The burial of ashes after cremation is another option and that is usually done in an area of the churchyard set aside for the purpose though occasionally ashes are tucked into existing family burial plots or graves. These are all matters for the undertaker and he is the person to guide the Reader round the crematorium, especially if it is your first visit there. It is advisable, if possible, to have been at least once with another minister for a funeral at which you can be a spectator so that one is prepared for most eventualities when the time comes. This is true of cemeteries and unfamiliar churchyards too.

When it comes to deciding upon the actual form of service, with choices between *Common Worship* and the BCP, usually only active churchgoers are well aware of different wording but they may have strong preferences. The *Common Worship Pastoral Services* book contains much useful material from prayers to readings and helpfully sets out in the second half of the book sections on ministry at the time of death and before the funeral, followed by a section containing outline orders for funerals, with or without Holy Communion, including those for a child. The next section provides an order for the burial of ashes, and an outline order for a memorial service. The Resources section which follows is excellent, full of useful material, specially selected Bible readings, psalms and canticles as well as a really helpful range of prayers.

Readers who regularly exercise a funeral ministry have learnt to know where other resources are, both for the more straightforward or traditional service and for those dealing with a less common situation, such as the death of a child or young person, or for the victim of sudden or violent death or suicide. Poetry books, for example, may

supplement customary prayer books familiar to most Readers. (see the suggested resources illustrated on this page) Music and hymns are important for many at a time of great personal loss and attention should be paid to choosing what is most appropriate. The undertaker may well see this as his responsibility but do be aware that, these days, most non-churchgoers seem not to know how to sing while those by whom a much loved hymn is chosen may end up utterly tongue-tied! My husband has had to learn to sing, solo, *The Old Rugged Cross* and it is not unusual for an officiating minister with a good voice to discover he is essentially singing for all.

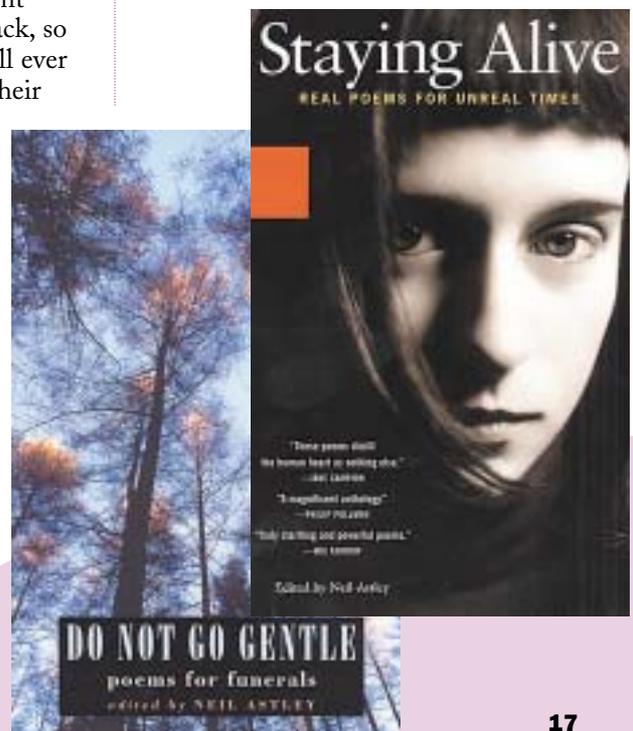
Together in grief

When the time came in Stow for the memorial service for the young women lost in the fire, great care was taken to invite ministers from all denominations in the town including the RC priest. The Polish girl was known to have been Catholic while it was thought the South African family were probably Dutch Reformed. All the young staff of the pub where they worked came. One read a poem she had written while another accompanied a song on his guitar. The young hotel owner spoke most movingly and for those in the town who had been so distressed, this service seemed to help them to move forward. In short, it was a turning point and a moment of personal growth as so many funerals are. Sensitivity to cultural differences enhanced that. Few who saw the Polish family weeping outside the burnt building, dressed entirely in black, so strange in this country now, will ever forget the sense of desolation their stance conveyed.

There are many aspects of funeral ministry to consider. As you gain in experience you go on learning. Some Readers have found their forte in the conduct of funerals and the associated pastoral visiting. Others are used to relieve the clergy work-load or to enable clergy to have a welcome day off. There are different circumstances in different places and it is important to be sensitive to them. Here in Stow, a small town with a population of just over 2000, most people expect the

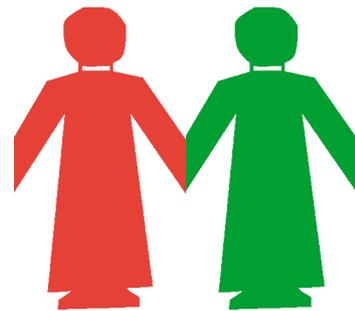
Rector will do the funeral. For those who have been involved with the church for decades, that would be the case anywhere (unless there was a specific request for an ordained member of the family or an ordained friend to take the service or to assist). Where the previous incumbent left relatively recently, (and that can be for a good few years in some minds!), there may be a request for him or her to return to take part. Unless there is a clear reason why not, it always seems a time to be generous though there are clergy, and Readers too, no doubt, who are less than happy about such arrangements. In Stow it is consequently rare for any Reader to do a funeral, regardless of their experience hitherto. But with the increase in groups of parishes working under a single incumbent, with or without assistant clergy, pressures grow and time off is a real problem. It may therefore be necessary, gradually and sensitively, to introduce the possibility of Reader involvement.

One final matter: the question of fees. Readers can receive only reimbursement of directly incurred expenses, not those fees meant to support the incumbents' diocesan stipend fund as described in the Table of Parochial Fees, prepared annually by the Archbishops' Council under the Ecclesiastical Fees Measure 1986. When this is correctly understood, the situation is clear and unequivocal. If this ministry is for you, do not let such complexities put you off!



Linked up

Revd Sheila Stevenson, Assistant Warden of Readers, Leicester Diocese and priest-in-charge of St Crispin's, Braunstone shares the experience in the Diocese of Leicester of 'Link Readers'.



Pat and Michael Cleaver and the priests they work with.

During my training as a Reader I had a placement in the parish of Barwell, where my husband, Michael and I live, though for historic family reasons we have worshipped in the parish of Aylestone, 12 miles away. Michael was licensed as a Reader in Aylestone and it was natural for me also to be licensed there. However soon after I became a Reader, the vicar in Barwell called round to see if I could help him out. This was in the autumn of 1999.' This is Pat Cleaver's story and from the informal arrangements she and Michael made with the two incumbents of these parishes has grown the system of Link Readers in Leicester Diocese.

The idea was first raised at Reader Council and then taken to the Diocesan Advisory Board of Ministry. ABM wanted all Readers and Rural Deans to discuss the proposal so that in Spring 2001 a paper was sent to every Reader in the Diocese and to the Rural Deans. At the Reader AGM people expressed their opinions and overall there was a very positive response. The Bishop then formally agreed that the *Regulations for Reader Ministry* should be amended to

incorporate this proposal. This now includes: 'All licensed Readers are invited, alongside their ministry in their home benefice or chaplaincy, to link with another named benefice, where they will be available to lead worship and/or preach once a quarter.'

In January 2002 the Warden of Readers, Revd Malcolm Lambert, wrote two parallel letters, one to all Readers and one to all incumbents and priests-in-charge in the Diocese. Here

For them the experience of serving in two different churches has broadened their experience of worship and church life and enriched their own ministry as Readers.

he described the proposed scheme for Reader Deployment of forming a link with another, named Benefice and listed all the benefices with no Readers and then all the ones with only one Reader. He emphasised that Readers are encouraged to form a link but that it is not compulsory. It was also recognised that it is not possible for all to do so. The letter stated the need for clergy to release Readers from duties in their licensed parish in order to form a

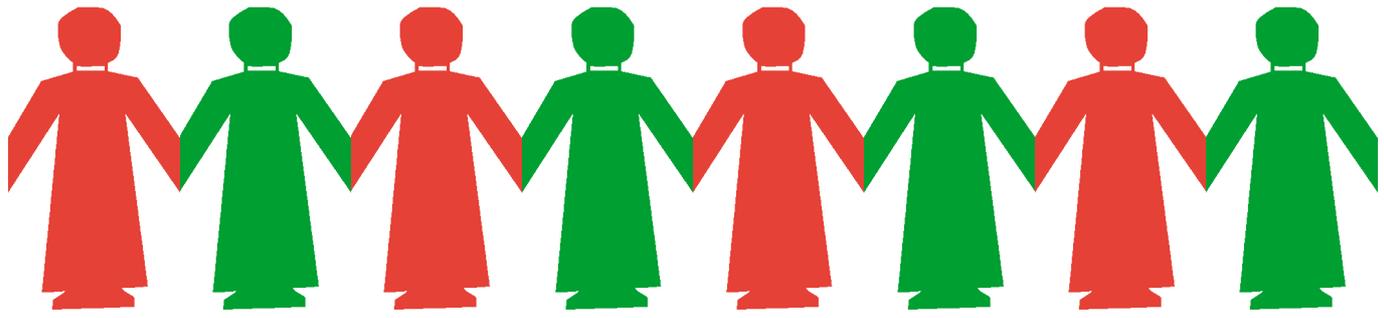
link and that receiving parishes should cover travel expenses for the link Reader. There are now nearly 40 links and more are under discussion.

Changing places

For Pat and Michael Cleaver the link has over the years led to interesting developments. The incumbents have exchanged pulpits but have not all been together for a service. Each parish has a Mothers' Union and they now join forces regularly and parishioners are prepared to attend each other's events. In addition Pat and Michael conduct funerals in both benefices. For them the experience of serving in two different churches has broadened their experience of worship and church life and enriched their own ministry as Readers.

For Marjorie Joyce the link scheme has led her to helping a NSM priest in a small benefice, population 1200 with 3 historic church buildings and an average Sunday attendance in the benefice of 11. This is a great contrast to the parish, Holy Apostles, Leicester, where she has been a Reader for 10 years. Here the average Sunday attendance is 85; the church was founded in 1904 and the present building was completed in the 1920s. Other differences include the style of worship with ASB and

then *Common Worship* at Holy Apostles and robes only for communion services while in the villages it was Book of Common Prayer and robes for all services; a music group and organist or pianist are available at Holy Apostles while in the villages a CD of hymn tunes is used. For the NSM priest the availability of a link Reader has given him not only help with Sunday services and a way to introduce Common Worship to the congregations but also



a link with the wider church. He also has another Reader who for many years has regularly taken a family service in one of the villages as an informal link. For Marjorie the link has given her a very different experience of worship and ministry and of working alongside another incumbent. She values the lay participation and presence of young people at Holy Apostles but also enjoys the drive into the countryside, appreciating the beauty of creation, when she goes to one of the villages. This year she took a harvest service at Peatling Magna when this was part of an Arts Festival. Marjorie said 'I was impressed by the wide variety of skills shown by members of the village in the display in the church and the number of people who came to the service.'

New perspectives

Another example comes from the large suburban parish of Birstall and Wanlip, with 2 church buildings, a vicar, curate and three Readers where two Readers formed a joint link with St. Luke's, Stocking Farm. In the first year of the link they each preached on four occasions at the main Parish Eucharist on Sunday morning. The vicar of Stocking Farm is on his own and so appreciates the occasional break from preaching as well as the opportunity to be more flexible in the liturgy. He values taking part in the ministry of healing, with the laying on of hands for people in the Lady Chapel, during the distribution of communion. This ministry is still fairly new to the congregation who expect the priest to be involved so the availability of a Reader about every six weeks enables this to happen. The congregation at St. Luke's which serves a large council estate and an equally large owner occupied area has a greater social mix than the Birstall and Wanlip congregations. One of the Readers, Bert Tegg reflected on his experience as a link Reader.

'I have been a Reader at Birstall for

ten years and have taken services on the odd occasion in other parishes but there has clearly been little opportunity to establish friendships with members of the congregations. However I really feel I am making friends at St Luke's and have had some really interesting discussions over coffee in the Church Hall after the services. It is also refreshing for me to preach on a regular basis to another congregation. Just as most congregations value hearing the occasional different voice

the link Reader has brought not only a different perspective into the sermons and intercessions, appreciated by many, but has also enabled the Reader's grandchildren to see that their granddad really does wear those funny robes sometimes!

I feel it is equally valuable for the preacher to preach to a different congregation. After ten years of preaching and leading worship at services in Birstall and Wanlip church the change in the routine is quite stimulating and one hopes that this will enable me to be more effective in preaching the Gospel during the remaining years of my ministry.'

Extending ministry

Wyggeston Hospital, founded in 1513 and now a charitable trust has flats for elderly residents and a community home with its own St Ursula's chapel and an ordained Master. With the regular services in the chapel there has been scope for various Readers to exercise a ministry there and two have formed formal links. Rosemary Smith is one of these. She was licensed as a Reader in 1990 and soon after that started to take services at Wyggeston. Her parish church has good links with the residents and some attend a monthly Wednesday Club. Rosemary said 'I became Emeritus in the year 2000 but this fact has in no way lessened the work I have done at St Anne's or at Wyggeston Hospital.

During their recent vacancy I took a service about once a month. I have thoroughly enjoyed my contact with the residents and have been pleased to take part in the Founder's Day Services and more recently in the Induction and Licensing of the new Master.'

Other examples could be given showing the variety of ministry and experience that Readers are bringing to more people through the Link Reader scheme in Leicester Diocese. People who have never seen a Reader at work

or do not really know what a Reader is or does, now discover what Reader Ministry is all about. As a result some have come forward to offer themselves for training. The whole plan is intended to make greater and wider use of Reader Ministry where it is needed – especially in Benefices where there are no Readers or, in rural areas where clergy are thinly spread. The links already established are doing well but there is scope for further developments.

Perhaps the final comment can come from my own congregation where the visit of the link Reader has brought not only a different perspective into the sermons and intercessions, appreciated by many, but has also enabled the Reader's grandchildren to see that their granddad really does wear those funny robes sometimes!

Leicester contacts

Warden of Readers Revd Malcolm Lambert Tel 0116 267 4517 email malcolm_lambert@ntlworld.com
General Secretary Michael Cleaver Tel 01455 845564 email michael@rosewooddriving.demon.co.uk



The First Year



In autumn 2002 **William Fittall**, became Secretary-General of the Archbishops' Council. He is a Reader in the diocese of Southwark. Here he reflects on his first year in office.

If a week is a long time in politics – indeed with the arrival of twenty-four hour media, it can seem like an eternity – a year is not very long at all in the more measured rhythms of the Church of England.

I arrived at Church House to succeed Philip Mawer as Secretary General on 1 October 2002. The final couple of years of my twenty-seven in the Civil Service had been spent shuttling backwards and forwards to Belfast in a wearing and erratic routine dictated by the twists and turns of the peace process. At times it was hard to predict from one day to the next which side of the Irish Sea I was going to be.

The past twelve months have been very different. Much more of my life revolves now around set-piece meetings – of the General Synod,

From the local to the national

Until a year ago my experience of the Church was almost exclusively local. A church organist since my teens and a Reader since my twenties I had set my face against investing time in anything outside parish level. Spending my days working with Ministers and Parliament left me disinclined to devote evenings and weekends to synods and councils when there were sermons to write, home groups to lead and organs to be played. Finding my way around the national and diocesan structures has, as a result, been a steep learning curve.

What do I actually do? As the senior member of staff supporting the General Synod, the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops, my primary responsibility is to ensure that each of those bodies is able to take the

Turnbull report recommended. 'Joined up government' has become a bit of a tired slogan in Whitehall over recent years but we still have some way to go in achieving that seamless and collegial approach to the Church's business which today's challenges require, not just nationally but with the dioceses too. This is not about centralisation but rather about recognising our mutual interdependence.

I was very struck early on by the observation of a shrewd observer who said that somehow the Church of England 'managed to be less than the sum of its parts'. What he meant was that in so many parishes and cathedrals people were doing quite outstanding things for the Gospel in a whole variety of ways. Yet when you tried to add it all together, something was lost. There was not the awareness that the Church's involvement in serving the community, supporting the needy, providing spiritual resources, helping to educate nearly a quarter of primary school children, looking after much of the nation's building heritage, remained so integral to our society.

The big challenge facing us all is, of course, to reverse the long period of decline which has affected the Church of England and most other denominations in Western Europe

Archbishops' Council, House of Bishops, ecumenical bodies. Part of my diary is fixed for at least a couple of years ahead. The decision-making processes of the Church were not designed for speed of response.

Yet on the basis of the first lap there seems little chance that I am going to find myself under-worked or under-stimulated in this hugely varied and challenging assignment. The sheer complexity of the processes and intricacy of the networks require constant energy not simply to keep the business moving but to secure the changes which are required if the Church of England is to become fit for progress in the twenty-first century.

decisions which properly fall to them and then to secure their effective implementation. Allied to that are various functions of a representational kind, be it negotiating with Government Departments to try and ensure that new legislation and initiatives take account of the needs of the Church or seeking to give life to the ecumenical instruments.

Much of the work consists of leading a diverse and committed team here at Church House and of seeking to ensure that we, the Church Commissioners, Lambeth, the Pensions Board and the other small national church institutions really are 'working together as one Body', as the

Challenges and opportunities

The media's fascination with Archbishop Rowan has provided a fresh opportunity, nationally, for us to communicate something of this richness and breadth of activity. Sadly there is some risk of squandering this if we cannot manage our internal debates on contentious issues in a more charitable and restrained manner.

The big challenge facing us all is, of course, to reverse the long period of decline which has affected the Church of England and most other denominations in Western Europe for much of the past century. There is nothing inevitable about decline, as the

vibrant growth of the Church in many other parts of the world testifies. Nor is this the first period of Christian history in these islands when the going has been tough. But this is not a time for caution and consolidation.

What are the big strategic opportunities? First, we have to reconnect with children and young people following the collapse of the traditional Sunday School model. The target of creating 100 new Church of England secondary schools seemed hugely ambitious but already over the past three years more than a dozen have come into being and many more are planned. In addition over 20% of children in England are still educated in Church of England primary schools. John Hall and the Education Division at Church House, working closely with colleagues in dioceses have a key role to play in securing resources for our church schools, helping to raise standards and, crucially, enabling our schools to develop and sustain a distinctive Christian ethos.

Second, we have to find ways of promoting imagination and initiative in mission. In some areas there has been significant growth. The report by the Bishop of Maidstone's group, *Mission Shaped Church*, maps out the major developments there have been over the past decade in church planting. The scene is becoming increasingly diverse as local communities and networks create 'fresh expressions of church'. John Clark and his colleagues in the Mission and Public Affairs Division have the challenge of promoting and facilitating the ideas generated by this report.

Third, we have to find a way of using our buildings more effectively as assets rather than liabilities. At times it seems as if the burden of them is intolerable. With Anglican churches and cathedrals accounting for over a third of the Grade I listed buildings in the country we are entitled to look to the Government and other sources of public funding to share the burden. But we also have to find more imaginative ways of using our buildings – not all of them heritage masterpieces – for wider community use as part of our mission and outreach. Paula



Griffiths' division is working hard to carry forward the outline building strategy which Synod debated in July.

Fourthly, we need to develop and resource new patterns of ministry. The decline in the number of stipendiary clergy is bound to continue from the present figure of 9500, given the bulge of retirements over the next decade. The growth in NSM and OLM numbers (now around 2000 in total), in the number of active retired clergy and of course in the number of licensed Readers (around 10,000) means that ministry already looks very different from forty years ago when I was growing up. The Ministry Division under Gordon



All this is work which can only be sensibly done nationally. But it is work done on behalf of the whole Church. When I was interviewed for this job I expressed my conviction, born of over a quarter of a century as a Reader, that the primary work of the Kingdom is local. That is where the word is preached, the sacraments administered, pastoral care offered. If we are doing anything at national or diocesan level which is not about the support, nurture and promotion of that work then there is a big question mark over whether we should be continuing to do it. Negotiating with Government over new legislation, running the clergy payroll, organising selection conferences for prospective ordinands,

If we are doing anything at national or diocesan level which is not about the support, nurture and promotion of that work then there is a big question mark over whether we should be continuing to do it

Kuhr have a major task to carry forward the reforms to theological training proposed by the Hind Report and endorsed, with some modification at the July 2003 Synod. They are central to ensuring that we have the trained ministers, ordained and lay, we are going to need.

A national Church for the nation

There is much else, of course, which keeps me and my colleagues at Church House busy, not least lobbying and negotiating with Government Departments on behalf of the Church of England. Over the past year scarcely a week has gone by without active work on a number of Government consultation documents, White Papers and pieces of legislation.

Sometimes, as with the proposed reform of charity law or the forthcoming regulations outlawing age discrimination, we have plenty of time to make our views known and work through the consequences. On other occasions we have to go into overdrive. The successful lobbying exercise to defeat the unexpected and unwelcome proposal in the Licensing Bill to make plays and concerts in church licensable was a case in point. The unexpected decision to abolish the post of Lord Chancellor has required us suddenly to consider what to say to Government about the future of his ecclesiastical patronage.

sustaining the network of stewardship offices, supporting the Central Readers' Council – these are all examples of functions which it is sensible to undertake nationally from Church House. But over the past few years, as financial pressures have increased, the investment in many other areas has been scaled back or cut altogether. The need to continue squeezing costs at national and diocesan level will not go away. Equally, it is crucial to sustain morale and continue to affirm the value of the high quality work done by so many dedicated staff. The results of a recent survey which showed that 85% of staff at Church House enjoyed their jobs were encouraging.

I was fortunate during my years in Whitehall to work in a succession of stimulating and worthwhile posts in the Home Office, Cabinet Office and Northern Ireland Office. My expectation had been that I would probably remain there until retirement. But the opportunity to serve the Church of England in this unique role was too good to pass up. My previous lack of involvement in church life outside the parish has not, in the event, proved a disadvantage.

Writing this on the anniversary of my arrival there seems little chance that the next twelve months will prove less demanding than the last. But it remains an enormous privilege to be here.

en France

We are retiring to France. What happens to our Reader licences?’

This was the question we addressed to our diocesan bishop. He advised us to contact the office of the Diocese in Europe, which we did. When they had ascertained our French address they informed us that we would be living in the Chaplaincy of Poitou Charente. They also said that they would inform the chaplain of our impending arrival.

Quite early on the following Monday morning we received a telephone call in England from Revd Michael Hepper, chaplain of Poitou Charente. He seemed extremely pleased that we would be living in his very new Chaplaincy and invited us to contact him on our arrival.

Big and beautiful...

The English speaking Chaplaincy of Poitou Charente covers the French departments of the Charente, Charente Maritime, Deux Sevres, Vienne and Vendee. An area about the size of Wales! The present number of British people with permanent or holiday homes here is around twenty-five thousand. It is a large ‘parish’ by any standards, with a lot of kilometres for the Chaplain to cover.

This very beautiful region of France seems to attract Readers. With our arrival there are now seven active Readers in the Chaplaincy and one Reader Emeritus. Four of us reside in the Charente Maritime, where we do not have a church.

There are four churches, or worship centres, in regular use in the Chaplaincy, with others available for special occasions. As the Chaplaincy does not own any buildings we rely on the goodwill of the local Roman Catholics or sometimes the Eglise Reforme (Protestants) who allow us to use their churches.

There is a regular pattern of Sunday morning worship. Each ‘centre’ has Holy Communion Order One once every month, at which the Chaplain presides. On the other Sundays there are services of Morning Worship, Praise and Worship or occasional BCP, usually Reader led. Our ‘local’ church, at Cognac, is forty minutes by car from our home, but the farthest centre is two hours drive away.



How it works

The Chaplaincy is managed by an elected Chaplaincy Council, similar to a PCC and includes a Reader representative. As the Chaplaincy is very new we rely heavily on the financial support of ICS (Intercontinental Church Society).

Reader licences can be transferred to Europe with the agreement of the diocesan bishop and we are all licensed to this Chaplaincy. The Council must unanimously approve the transfer of Readers and so we had to be seen, and take part in worship at all the centres in the Chaplaincy prior to applying to transfer.

Although our transfer and new licence was requested by the Chaplain we ourselves had to obtain a Child Protection Declaration in France. This ‘Casie Vierge’ is issued from a national centre, Judiciare National, in Nantes. All the paper work and approval took about a year, and we were re-licensed by Revd Michael Hepper at a service of Holy Communion in Cognac in October 2002.

The chaplain acts as the bishop’s representative. He is responsible to the bishop and answerable for all that takes place here. In Church of England terms we are considered officially as a single parish with a single parish priest. The role of the Chaplain is similar to that of an incumbent in the UK, but with some differences. The congregations are mainly of a more mature age here, many having retired to France like ourselves. We do not have much call for baptisms or marriages, although there are some, and as younger families are searching for ‘a place in the sun’, requests are increasing.

Distinctive features

Sadly we do have quite a lot of funerals, and with the ageing membership of the Chaplaincy these seem bound to increase. Bereavement

Joyce Bache who is a Reader in the Chaplaincy of Poitou Charente (in the mid part of France’s Atlantic coast) shares what it feels like to be a Reader in the Church of England – in France.

is an area which Readers have discussed, especially in relation to the different funeral arrangements in France. We feel that our services could be in greater demand in the future.

The church background of the congregations varies enormously. We have just completed a questionnaire which highlights this. The Diocese in Europe exists ‘to serve Anglicans and to be a visible sign of church unity’. We have some members who are accustomed to ‘High Church’ services, others who are Evangelical or Charismatic and everything in between. We have Methodists, Baptists, URC, Pentecostal etc., all with different previous experiences of worship and we try to meet everyone’s needs.

The Eucharistic services follow *Common Worship* with occasional BCP, but *A Service of the Word* offers opportunities to try something different and respond to some of the requests made by members who are more used to a Free Church model. With Readers leading worship on non-Eucharistic Sundays we have an interesting and exciting challenge.

The Church of England is present here as a minority church, living and working alongside France’s historic churches. As such we must try to integrate with people in our local communities and this means having ecumenical, bi-lingual services with the Roman Catholics and the Eglise Reforme. Christmas is a particularly good time to work together and we have joint services attended by English and French. The chaplain, a fluent French speaker, has a good working relationship with the French clergy in the Chaplaincy and with the Archbishop of Poitiers, who attends services when invited. One Reader has set up a group to help new arrivals from the UK to integrate into their community and arranges English /French activities in her locality.

On-going training for both Readers

and Clergy is difficult here as there are no local courses to attend. With the recent appointment of a part-time Training Officer in the Diocese this may improve. In the meantime we try to meet together as time and distance allows, to share prayer and support one another and to look at subjects relevant to our work.

One of our Readers has had several experiences of leading funeral services in France and we are grateful for his information and guidance on that matter. As we all have different experiences and backgrounds we have something to offer each other. Reader fellowship is important and it is good to know that we are remembered in prayer, especially when some of us don't see each other very often.

And similarities

There are also similarities to Reader roles in the UK. Preaching and leading worship obviously, but also pastoral care. People who are sick, possibly in hospital, and the lonely, always need

our care. One Reader has made contact with her local hospital and is available to assist any English speaker who needs help. She also visits members of the Chaplaincy, in hospital, or in their homes.

As well as the diversity of Christian backgrounds in our congregations, we are increasingly being joined by new residents who have little or no church background in the UK, or have lapsed in their church attendance. These people may gravitate to our churches because they are English speaking, but whatever the reasons they are welcomed most warmly and encouraged to join in the life of the church. So we have Alpha and Beta courses arranged in the Chaplaincy, our local course being led by a Reader.

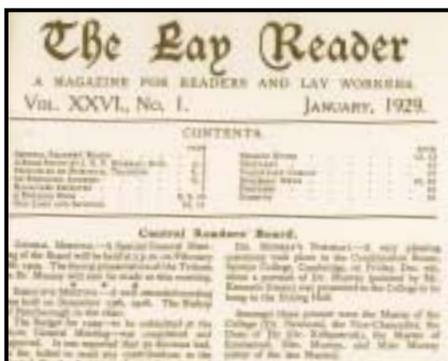
Our chaplain is keen to develop every-member ministry and believes that Home Groups play an important part in encouraging Christians to grow, particularly as members are so geographically spread. We now have six Home Groups in different areas of the Chaplaincy, some of which are Reader led. These small groups are ideal places to discern each other's gifts and ministries and we are delighted

that three people from the Chaplaincy have felt called to Reader ministry and will begin training in 2004. How they will be trained has yet to be determined, but we shall be looking to the new Training Officer for guidance.

However, the Diocese is determined that their training will be full and complete and in line with UK moderation so that their licences could be transferred to the UK in the future should the need arise. Those of us already working here are delighted that the Holy Spirit is providing more people to do his work in this large 'parish'.

We are now blessed with a curate who was ordained in September, having worked as a deacon in the Chaplaincy the previous year. Like us all she travels many kilometres to fulfil her duties both at services and in pastoral care. Her presence means that we can have more Eucharistic services and that we feel like a real Ministry Team.

All the Readers here are certain that God has called us to this place at this time to further his work. We pray that as the Chaplaincy grows so we too will grow in his service.



THE READER

100 years ago

Nigel Holmes, Chairman of the present Editorial Committee delves into Volume I

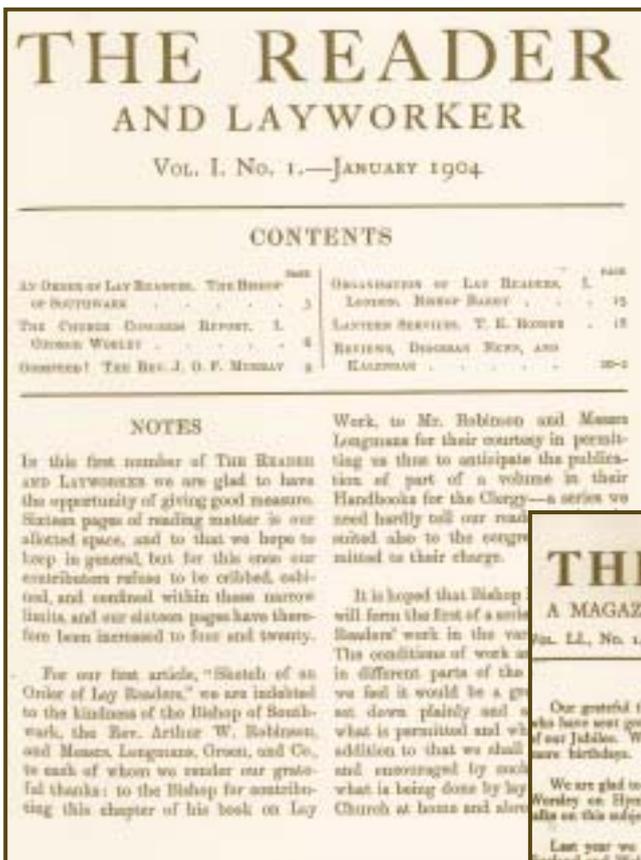
Ninety-nine years after his ancestor so distinguished himself at Trafalgar, the Right Honourable Lord Nelson penned a piece on *The Work of the Reader* for the tenth monthly magazine then called *The Reader and Lay Worker* dated October 1904, which begins with the less than memorable words, 'The Reader's first duty is to know how to read'. This, as you might have guessed, is to do with voice projection, as important in church before the days of sound reinforcement systems as on the deck of Victory in the midst of battle.

Reader ministry had been revived about twenty years earlier with bishops like Frederick Temple of London

playing a leading role. By 1902 London had 54 Diocesan Lay Readers, 'mostly men of greater age and of higher culture, education and station than the Parochial Lay Readers' of whom there were 148. There were also 34 Stipendiaries who went to the SPCK Training College in Stepney and then received 'a moderate stipend'. Such people soon used the magazine to offer their services. Following a four page article 'Sin' in March 1904, the following appeared: *Licensed Reader seeks post, Winton or Rochester; 11 years in present parish. Children's services, men's guilds, good voice, active habits.* – G. Stilling, 61 Hambalt Road, Clapham, S.W.

A speedy success

It was for people like this that the magazine became a speedy success more than twenty years before any national structure for the movement was established. A century ago there were between 2,000 and 3,000 Readers in England – all men. The founding fathers of the magazine were the Reverend John Grieg, later Bishop of Gibraltar and then, from 1927, the first Bishop of Guildford, and the Reverend Alan Simpson, later Warden of Rugby Retreat House, who provided clerical clout. But the two who did the work for over thirty years were WA Kelk, later Assistant Secretary of the Central Readers' Board and Arthur Nott, a

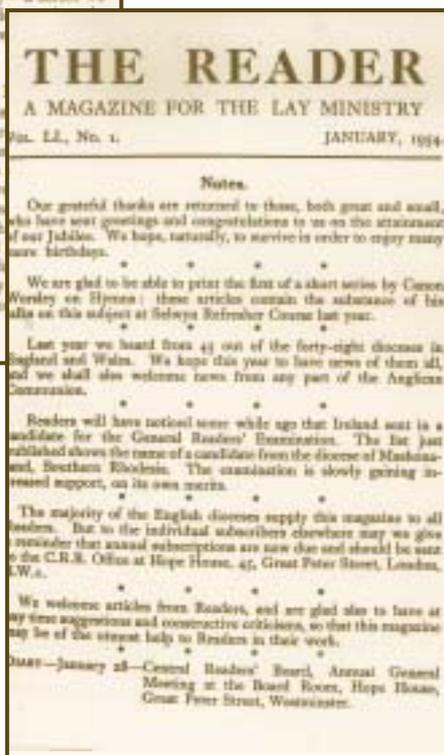


Readers and clergy

To some the Reader was a second-class clergyman. The Bishop of Southwark, Yeatman-Biggs, wrote in the very first issue, 'It would be an excellent thing if we could soon create a "profession" of Readership... which a young man, perhaps of the lower middle classes, who was earnest and devout but not educated enough

impact and it is said led both to the first representative conference of Lay Readers in 1908 and to the creation of the Central Readers' Board in 1922. At that point the magazine was adopted as the official journal.

The first issue in January 1904 carried a report of the Church Congress in which George Worley, a Rochester Reader, stated that 'There is no prospect of a Council or Synod which will have any legislative power in the Church' so he applauded the creation of a 'consultative body' but also quoted Sir Lewis Dibdin's rhetorical question, 'What is the value of consultation with those who bring neither knowledge nor thought to the task?'



The face of change

The task for many Readers was in bringing new knowledge and fresh thought to the lower classes who were being seduced by other denominations. The Reverend AH Patterson wrote from Durham that it is 'difficult to see how the Church is to hold her ground without the help of Lay Evangelists and Lay Readers'. In Durham these two roles were introduced in 1881 literally at the coal face in the plethora of pit villages. The Evangelists followed a two-year course and then largely ran the mission rooms and open air services. By 1902 they numbered 43 to the 126 Readers. There was real competition. 'Somehow or other Dissenting places of worship spring up almost at once at these places... The industrial population is increasing fast, while the supply of clergy is diminishing.'

The Bishop of Durham, Handley Moule, invited all lay workers annually

Reader who described himself as 'enthusiast, optimist, fanatic'. His editorial reflected this line. 'The nineteenth century, with its great revival of Church life, bequeaths to the twentieth century no legacy more valuable or full of promise than this great body of earnest, zealous laymen'.

Home and overseas

The Lay Reader was more to be found in the mission hut than the church and had 'direct conflict with agnostics who fight shy of the parson'. The evident evangelical zeal led many more overseas, like EO O'Reilly, who featured in one of the very early Gazette columns when he was licensed to the lovely-sounding Sierra Leone parish of St Luke, Bananas! No doubt it was a risky place to live, being in what was then known as the white man's grave. White men still ran the worldwide Anglican Church at the time of the Golden Jubilee of what was by then The Reader, with the sub-title 'a magazine for the lay ministry'. The issue of January 1954 bore tributes not only from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York but also from those of the West Indies, Cape Town and New Zealand and the Bishops of Borneo and Chota Nagpur in India. By then Readers were becoming a varied lot ethnically. Borneo had Chinese, Sea Dayak and Land Dayak as well as Europeans.

for the priesthood, could adopt as his life's vocation'! A couple of months later the editors strayed into controversial territory with implied criticism of the clergy. 'The church has suffered so

The Bishop of Southwark, Yeatman-Biggs, wrote in the very first issue, 'It would be an excellent thing if we could soon create a "profession" of Readership...'

much from parochialism and its allies, the unrestricted freehold and the independence of the incumbent.' At a time when a Reader lost his licence when the incumbent moved or died, they wanted diocesan recognition and national standards though 'the past does not encourage us in extravagant hopes. But the Reader movement will be greatly crippled until there is some genuine unity.' The voice of the monthly editorial began to make an

to a summer social in the splendid surroundings of the home of the Prince Bishops, Auckland Castle. It's good to see such episcopal appreciation from that great academic theologian for the Readers and Evangelists who ministered to the miners. And there was hope for the future as Bishop Moule said, one hundred years ago, that allowing Readers to preach in consecrated buildings was 'under consideration'!



For your bookshelf



T B P H

Some issues in human sexuality

£12.95 pbk.
0 7151 3868 5

A Companion to Some issues in human sexuality

Joanna Cox and Martin Davie
£2.50 pbk.
0 7151 3871 5
Church House

(Because of the importance and sensitivity of the issue to which this report relates, we offer two reviews on it written from slightly different theological standpoints. Editor)

This report is 'published under the authority of the house of Bishops and.. commended by the House to the Church for study'. It is thus a study document, not a statement of policy. It 'works within the parameters of [the House of Bishops 1991] statement and does not seek to change the position of the House of Bishops from the one expressed there'.

What we have, therefore, is a resource to facilitate continuing reflection and discussion. How does this study help us? It provides a summary of the background changes in society and the church and, importantly, sets the debate in the wider context of our understanding of marriage. It deals not only with homosexuality but also – more briefly - with bisexuality and transsexualism, thus

highlighting western culture's preoccupation with individual rights and personalised choice.

Arguably the most important chapters in the document are those dealing with the use of the Bible. Underlying the debate are competing views about the nature of biblical authority which has for many in the Anglican Communion raised this particular ethical problem to a defining ecclesial issue. There are two elements to this: one is whether Scripture is the controlling authority in all matters of faith and practice or whether it stands on a par with reason and (crucial in the ethical context) experience. The second is how we interpret and understand 'the text': does it have a 'once and for all' meaning as originally given, or can its meaning (contrasted to application, a distinction not fully made in the document) change as circumstances, cultures, 'scientific knowledge change? How do we overcome our 'preconceptions' about the meaning of the text to hear the text itself? Are we at the mercy of any and every meaning which may be found in the text, as the post-modernists now argue? The report considers carefully 'revisionist' interpretations such as those offered by Richard Holloway, Jeffrey John and others but concludes that the consensus of scholarship remains firmly against them.

For the Church the political and ecclesiological issues remain: how do we handle diversity on these issues? Are there limits? How much weight should be given to the opinions of those who dissent from the traditional position? How can bishops lead when they are not of one mind? Does continuing to listen and debate mean waiting until 'revisionists' have overcome 'traditionalists' opposition? The problem is that insistence on 'provisionality' and 'openness' privileges one side of the debate: it seems to say that all points of view are possible except the one which says (as per the traditionalist)

the words of Scripture are clear and unambiguous. That happens to be the position of most of the Anglican Communion, of other world Communions as well as the witness of the Church down the ages. It is a position which is rightly preceded by the prophetic utterance 'Thus saith the Lord...' We ignore it at our peril. To follow it is the way of wholesome human flourishing and holiness – a concept which hardly features in the Report.

PHILIP GIDDINGS

The current mind of the Church of England on sexual matters and in particular homosexuality is contained in a General Synod resolution of November 1987 and in the House of Bishops' report *Issues in Human Sexuality* published in December 1991. The broad conclusion is that 'homophile [the word used by the report for homosexual] orientation and activity' cannot be endorsed by the church and that, whilst the church would not reject lay people 'who sincerely believe [a gay relationship] is God's call to them', clergy cannot enter into 'sexually active gay relationships'. In 1997 the General Synod commended *Issues 1991* for discussion and in November 2003 the House of Bishops published this document to guide the discussion.

It is important to be clear about the status of the new report. 'It is written' says the Foreword, 'within the parameters of this earlier document and does not seek to change the position of the House of Bishops from the one expressed there'. It is nonetheless a substantial book, running to 350 pages. The emphasis falls on what the Bible says about male homosexual relations. The six key texts – three in the Old Testament and three in the New Testament - are examined in some detail. There are chapters in addition on the Theology of Sexuality, on Bisexuality, on Transsexualism

and on other matters. There are abundant quotations from all periods of Christian history – Tertullian, Aquinas, Aelred of Rievaulx, John Calvin and Thomas Cranmer as well as modern theologians including Karl Barth, John Stott, and Rowan Williams. This is not a book that he who runs may read; it requires careful study and is accompanied by a *Companion* of some 20 pages, offering guidance for study by individuals and groups.

Despite its scholarly thoroughness *Some issues* seems to me to be seriously flawed. It is first of all the work of four bishops. Bishops are by their nature male, straight and middle aged. We surely need also the voice of laity, women, the young (say under 40) and gay people.

Second, this is not really a discussion document at all since the conclusion is already known. Chapter eight lists five possible responses to the policy set out in *Issues 1991*. These include ceasing to have a policy, stricter pastoral discipline and a more inclusive approach. It is however the fifth option which is adopted: 'to maintain the present policy'. This, says the report, has three advantages: 'it reflects the consensus of scholarly and Christian opinion', 'it allows for sensitive and discriminating care of homosexual people' and 'it enables the Church of England to maintain its internal unity and its relationships with its Anglican and ecumenical partner churches'. All that is needed, we are told, is more education about the issues, encouragement of informed discussion, more education about the pastoral needs of gay and lesbian people and continuing work by the church to combat homophobia. It is not at all clear to me why 12 years after the publication of *Issues 1991* we need this weighty discussion document to enable us to conclude that we have all along been on the right lines.

Third, since the policy was laid down in 1991 the world



has moved on while the church has stood still. The attitude of society in this country towards gay people has changed dramatically in the last decade, the result in part of scientific and medical research into the causes and nature of homosexual orientation. In the last few years the age of consent has been lowered from 21, first to 18 and later to 16, gays may enter the armed services, there are openly gay MPs and cabinet ministers and section 28 has been repealed. Of course the church should not necessarily follow the spirit of the age but nor can an incarnational faith be wholly out of accord with secular thought.

Finally, I wonder what is the intended audience for this document. After the events of 2003 in the Church of England and the Anglican Communion there can be few people who are unfamiliar with the general drift of the conservative and liberal cases and they are unlikely to work through a report whose arguments are closely reasoned but whose conclusions are predetermined. My fear is that together with the glass ceiling on the ordination of women to the episcopate this document may be the Church of England's *Humanae Vitae* – the point at which people stop listening to what the official Church of England has to say since it is so manifestly out of touch with secular opinion and indeed with much Christian opinion too.

PETER WATKINS

B H
The Bible in English

David Daniell
Yale £29.95 hbk.
0 300 09930 4



Many will already know Professor Daniell's recent critical biography of William Tyndale, and his modern spelling edition of Tyndale's NT. In those volumes the author has emphasised the enormous debt we still owe Tyndale, not only in more recent Bible translations, but also in our everyday words and phrases. *The Bible in*

English develops these themes by presenting a comprehensive survey of English translations of the Bible from Anglo-Saxon times to the present day. But this massive book – 900 pages – is much more than a reference compendium. As well as illuminating for example the huge contribution of Miles Coverdale who translated from the Latin Vulgate those parts of the OT which Tyndale did not live to complete, Professor Daniell allows us a well illustrated insight into the social history of Britain and America as nations driven emotionally and politically by the English Bible. He further demonstrates how much Bible translation drove rather than followed the English Reformation. Because it is so detailed this is a book for browsing rather than extensive reading. The method is however compelling, not lacking in wit, and at times provocative in its criticisms of some modern translations. Above all the reader who completes the 900 pages cannot but thank God for the wonderful heritage that 21st century English speaking Bible reading Christians have received.

RICHARD CARTER

P S E
Seeking the silences

Charles R Ringma
SPCK £9.99 pbk.
0 281 05604 8

To learn how to speak from silence and to act from stillness are the twin thrusts of a book I found hard to put down. The author brings to bear his own urban ministry and mission experience in Australia, the Philippines and Canada, on the contemplative yet pro-active tenets of Merton. The result is a compendium of short conversations which touch many parts of life which other works do not reach. Merton observed: 'The mystery of life can only be known by being lived'. It is a measure of the success of the author's writing that life is arguably a little

less mysterious with this book to hand. Don't leave it in the pulpit; it will take wings.

JOYCE CRITCHLOW

B S W
What Jesus meant

Eric Kobell
WJK £9.99 hbk.
0 664 22292 7

This book is subtitled *The Beatitudes and the meaningful life*. The eight Beatitudes are described as pillars which could be used as codes of conduct by busy people – obviously including Readers! There is an introductory chapter followed by a chapter on each Beatitude prefaced by a one word title, for example: *Surrender; Blessed are the poor in spirit*. The book provides a challenge to our life style. Written by an American with a wealth of experience as a psychotherapist and minister who has worked in inner city New York, most of the illustrations are from USA and so will be unfamiliar to British readers. The book provides a refreshing approach to the Beatitudes and would be a useful source book for preaching or teaching.

HUGH MORLEY

J P B
Unfettered hope

Marva J Dawn
WJK £12.99 pbk.
0 664 22595 0

This well written, well researched and challenging book, subtitled *A call to faithful living in an affluent society*, takes as its starting point the events of September 11 2001 when some 2800 people died as a result of terrorist action. While sympathising with the victims the author points out that on the same day 35,615 children in poor countries died but the media and governments seemed not to notice. At first I thought this book would be useful preparatory reading for Christian Aid week or appeals for Tearfund but as I read on I realised there was much more. Needs versus wants, user friendly churches, God's

anger versus human anger, Jesus's suffering, resurrection and ascension, his commission and the coming of the Spirit all receive consideration. There is a useful section on the relevance of the Ten Commandments for today's world. The author's warnings about busyness reminded me of Archbishop George Carey advising a crowded congregation in Liverpool Cathedral to persuade their churches to do less, better.

KEN BAKEWELL

B T
The Resurrection of the Son of God

NT Wright
SPCK £35 pbk.
0 281 05550 5



The Bishop of Durham's widely acclaimed blockbuster on Jesus, like his earlier articles on Paul, is full of new ideas which challenged other scholars and excited many readers. The latest large work is more conventional, but answers a felt need in the church today for a cautious scholarly account of the biblical evidence, written in a colloquial style and with great verve. Tom Wright has taken note of what others have written and does not conceal his disapproval, but his own presentation is fresh, full, and sometimes persuasive. With such a big book (Vol. 3 of a now six-volume project on 'Christian Origins and the Question of God') readers can pick and choose, treating sections as lively commentary on particular passages, rather than (say) reading the 200 pages on St Paul at one bite. The exegeses are the best parts of the book; here Dr Wright is a professional as well as a brilliant populariser. The more hermeneutical discussions are also lucid, but the gaps in systematic theology (especially Karl Barth) and spirituality raise questions: a one-sidedly historical approach to divine mystery has limitations. The uncertainty of historical judgment is acknowledged:



'Some stories are so odd that they may just have happened. This may be one of them, but in historical terms there is no way of finding out' (p.636). That is about Matthew 27.51-3 where remaining 'puzzled' is preferred to 'a cheap and cheerful rationalistic dismissal of the possibility' (*ibid.*). The idea of building up a historical case for the resurrection of Jesus will seem to some misguided, but equally bad historical arguments against it have to be answered, and readers will find much to admire and learn from this fine work, and will want to return to it often. The passion and enthusiasm with which some traditional approaches to the mystery are defended will inspire many. Those who think of God in a less interventionist way will recall the disciples at Matthew 28.17, but even sceptical readers should find their appetites whetted for the next instalment, on Paul.

ROBERT MORGAN

P W
In Sure and Certain Hope

Paul Sheppy
Canterbury
£12.99 pbk.
1 85311 514 2



Funerals, like buses, can come in bunches. Making each one special is challenging for busy ministers. I am already thankful for this collection of liturgies, prayers and readings for funerals and memorials. This book is 'supplementary and complementary' to any form that is normally used. Theological considerations remind us that, because it proclaims Christ's victory over death, there is an evangelical dimension to any funeral service, enabling us to tell of God's love and the hope we find in scripture. The comprehensive range of material includes: prayers at the time of death; reception of a body into church; prayers and readings before a funeral; reflections and prayers at a funeral; returning

home; All Souls' Day commemoration; remembrance on the anniversary of death; affirmation of the living. Each section is clearly set out with helpful introductory pastoral notes and the sources of scriptural and non-scriptural readings. Reflections and prayers in an appendix acknowledge that some deaths occur in circumstances requiring extra sensitivity. This slim volume is an indispensable resource for Readers.

CYNTHIA WHITTLE

S P
Devout sceptics: conversations on faith and doubt

edited Bel Mooney
Hodder & Stoughton
£10.99 pbk
0-340-86202-5



This collection of edited transcripts originates from conversations broadcast in the series of programmes *Devout Sceptics*. It would be invidious to mention any one contributor, but all are well known in their fields and reflect at depth upon the business of faith. Whether by design or chance, certain themes emerge: understandings about God; importance of religious belief; cultural appropriation in childhood, the influence of the Church upon those interested in belief; the attractiveness of belief as well as the problem of faith as a step beyond reason.

These conversations make clear the imperative laid upon us to listen closely to the concerns of those who are not indifferent to the Christian faith but are reluctant to accept the face that its adherents so often present. 'To see ourselves as others see us' and not to become defensive is a salutary experience, for if we are to reclaim those who are aware of spiritual matters we need to appreciate their feelings: here is a good guide on our way to achieving this objective.

PETER ANDREWS

H
Christianity and the Celts

Ted Olsen
Lion £8.99 pbk.
0 7459 5105 8



In eight chapters the author deals expeditiously with the principal aspects of the Celtic contribution to Christian history. He covers the coming of Christianity to Gaul, legends about Glastonbury and about Celtic saints – Alban, Ninian, David, Pelagius, Patrick, Brigid, Columba, and Brendan. He writes about monks and monasteries, the evangelisation of continental Europe and about conflicts about the tonsure and the dating of Easter. The writing is clear and the illustrations are plentiful and of good quality. This is an excellent addition to the Lion Histories.

GEORGE MACKNELLY

J H
After the evil

Richard Harries
OUP £16.99 hbk.
019 926313 2

There are a number of reasons why this is not just another book on post-holocaust theology. Although Bishop Harries makes it quite clear that Christianity has committed some dreadful acts against Jews for well over 1500 years the aim of the book is not to make artificial protestations of remorse but to consider where we, and that means Christians, stand now in relationship to Judaism. The task is easier in some ways than even twenty years ago when it was much more shocking to view Jesus as a Pharisaic Jew. For Harries the common ground is the shared sense of covenant and of God the Father who, as creator, sustains and inspires his creatures. Even major Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and Resurrection have their roots in Jewish theology and if dialogue is to be fruitful then both sides have a lot to learn from each other. The most difficult aspect of all this, as Harries struggles to explain, is how

both Christianity and Judaism can retain their integrity and sense of the truth without compromise. Inevitably there will be compromise. There is for instance, no discussion of the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. But on the other hand there are fascinating chapters on the elements of Judaism which Christians often forget, such as the fraught problem of election, land and the State of Israel. I strongly recommend this book. It is written in a direct, lucid and engaging manner and is easily accessible to anyone who is concerned to understand that the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is not just an intellectual exercise.

MICHAEL WILCOCKSON

S P
Building your spiritual life

Edited Ian Paul
Zondervan £9.99 pbk.
0 00 713332 4



This volume brings together 12 essays that have already appeared as Grove booklets in the Spirituality series. There are four main parts: Prayer, Spiritual Practices, Past and Present, and Forgiveness and Freedom. The approach is, in George Carey's words from the foreword, 'confidently evangelical'. The editor suggests that the book can be used in three ways: for personal study and reflection; as a resource for group studies; or as a stimulus for putting together a themed service. One of the strongest contributions – in a volume sub-titled 'The Best Contemporary Writing on Christian Spirituality' – is John Goldingay's 'Praying the Psalms'. His positive commendation for the 'recovery' of the Psalms for public worship is magisterial. Other striking offerings include Jonathan Baker's 'How Forgiveness Works' that expresses 'The Church as the community of forgiveness'. Personal spiritual development and growth in discipleship are two good reasons to read this book and share it with others.

DAVID GILL



B H

Jesus and His World

Peter Walker
Lion £8.99 pbk.
0 7459 5103 1



'This book ... is an invitation to go on a journey – to find the authentic Jesus.' So the Introduction to this excellent little book states. The opening chapters explore the world of Jesus, geographically, historically and in the context of the Judaism of his time.

The author then goes on to the story of Jesus told in the four gospels, linked with Jesus' teaching, storytelling and healing. He explores what the aims and challenges of Jesus were, and moves on to the meaning of his life, death and resurrection for us in today's world. Its well-produced illustrations and maps are up to Lion's usual high standard. Many of our churches include adults and teenagers with little knowledge and experience of Christian scripture and teaching, and this book would be helpful to them in learning more, as well as useful to all of us in keeping the broader picture in our minds as we preach and teach.

WENDY AIRD

T H

The Futures of Evangelicalism

edited Craig Bartholomew,
Robin Parry and Andrew West
IVP £12.99 pbk
0 85111 399 0

This collection of essays is in honour of Fred Hughes, the last Head of the University of Gloucestershire's Department of Theology and Religious Studies, which has recently been integrated into the School of Humanities. Whatever the future there, these essays explore the challenges facing evangelicalism, a tradition that Alister McGrath, calls 'the largest and most actively committed form of Christianity in the West' ... 'the tradition that is most biblical and true to the Christian faith'. Despite the copious footnotes and bibliographies, the book

seems aimed at the non-theologian rather than the academic. Some contributors display a lack of recognition of Christian traditions outside evangelicalism, and there is an over-simplification of reasoned challenges to faith or awareness of the complexities of life. I doubt it will do much for debate beyond the evangelical world, but it is encouraging that some within the tradition are at least aware that there is more than one possible future for it.

DAVID BONE

T P S

Why?

Russell Stannard
Lion £6.99 pbk.
0 7459 5122 8

This easily read slim volume makes a helpful contribution to the mountain of literature which seeks to answer the age-old questions concerning evil, suffering and death and asks whether God is all powerful or impotent in the face of the crises which afflict individuals and the world. In pastoral ministry Readers may have encountered some of the problems posed by a God whom we believe suffers in our suffering yet appears not to offer relief in answer to prayer. The author does not offer human consolation but has drawn on his scientific expertise to provide a philosophical exploration of life's fundamental questions. In each of the three main sections he examines questions which lead the reader into a deeper and more perceptive understanding of God's purpose for humanity including some commonly held propositions which are unprofitable and lead into blind alleys. There is opportunity for personal meditation on one's own experience of life. The author writes in a clear and simple style.

S JOHN HAZEL

S

A Condition of Complete Simplicity

Rowan Clare Williams
Canterbury £7.99 pbk.
1 85311 538 X

I enjoyed reading this book very much and have been pleased to see several extracts in *The Church Times*; I hope those who have read these may be tempted to buy this book. I do recommend that as an addition to our bookcases. I particularly like the image of the teapot, and there is a great deal of truth in what was written about this. It is very tempting to think that St Francis and St Clare have no place in today's world, but very clearly the author suggests that St Francis is just as important today as he was in Assisi. Sometimes God raises up figures like St Francis who are able to speak directly to people's hearts and souls in any generation. The book gives us a practical exploration of three important aspects of Franciscan Spirituality, they are joy, humility and love; and how we can achieve this in the world in which we live today.

At the end of each chapter there are a series of exercises that anyone can do, some of them are quite challenging.

CHRIS GREGORY

B J P

Understanding Old Testament ethics

John Barton
WJK £17.99 pbk.
0 664 22596 9



Two key questions are addressed in the first part of this study: how can we best understand the different ways in which ethical issues are handled in the Hebrew Bible and how might that understanding usefully inform ethical decision making in our own day? Part two focuses on the moral vision of the prophets. This is not a book for the faint-hearted. It is rather a book for those with substantial prior interest in the subject. It is a collection of published papers written by the author over a period of 25 years. In the conclusion he considers other recent work and assesses the prospects for the study of Old Testament ethics over the coming years.

WILLIAM REARNS

B W

Preaching Mark in two voices

Brian K Blount and
Gary W Charles
WJK £15.99 pbk.
0 664 22393 1



Good idea; execution could be better. One foundation of preaching should be an exegesis of a large passage. This book attempts this for the whole of Mark's gospel. In 12 chapters, taking literary or theological units. We then have a sermon preached by the author using exegesis from within the unit and a sermon by the joint author. It is helpful to have the background of these initial sermons: a white Southern male and his passionate long-standing African American friend, who are respectively a Presbyterian pastor to a prestigious Washington congregation and an Associate Professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary. Each author writes from a distinctive perspective. First, white Christians have in the past marginalized African Americans and now American culture marginalizes all Christians. Second, Mark a supreme story teller, tells of Jesus, however obscurely, breaking down barriers that separate us. I am not persuaded by this latter contention based on Mark 1.9-11 and a hypothetical Markan community. Some of the exegesis is too sketchy and there are only two sermons based on some long units. I prefer a good commentary.

CLIFFORD BOOTH

J P B

Urban ministry and the kingdom of God

Laurie Green
SPCK £12.99 pbk.
0 281 05530 0



Laurie Green is Bishop of Bradwell. Birth, experience and interest fit him ideally to examine the challenges to God and the gospel in inner-city areas. He believes that despite *Faith in the City and the Methodist Mission Alongside the Poor*



programme, 'the British Church at large still seems unable to integrate practical urban action with theological reflection' (p.39). For him, the need is for a 'contextual theology', going from real experience to Scripture: 'Kingdom of God theology is not just a great crossword puzzle in the sky', p. 126, – rather than from Scripture to theory – and he practises what he preaches by examining the Bible in terms of the situations, frustrations and families (and non-families) he knows on the ground. He writes clearly, only rarely lapsing into jargon – 'Our task must be to create a framework of listening and mutual empowerment', p.66. The author is a powerful advocate for Christ's work in the urban context; and he makes a strong case for his way of doing theology.

SAM BERRY

And finally...

Church House has reissued its Pastoral Leaflets on Baptism, Marriage, Funerals and Becoming a Godparent, to take account of *Common Worship*. They would be a useful introduction for clergy and Readers to put into the hands of anybody asking for the church's occasional offices. Each leaflet is A4 size, is attractively produced and illustrated and contains four pages. They are published in two forms. A pack of 20 leaflets (Baptism 07151 140019, Marriage 0715 140035, Funerals 0715 140078, Becoming a godparent 0715 140027) or a mixed pack of five copies of each of the four (0715 140094)

Packs cost £12.50 each.

SCM press has published a paper back edition of Trevor Beeson's widely acclaimed book entitled *The Bishops* (£12.99 pbk. 0 334 02916 3) which was reviewed in *The Reader Vol.99 No.4* Winter 2002.

Raymond Chapman's latest collection of intercessions is entitled *How to pray, Gospel based intercessions for Sundays, Holy Days and Festivals Years A,B & C*. It contains an After-word with advice On leading intercession. (Canterbury press £12.99 hbk. 1 85311 556 8)

John Kinross, a Reader in the diocese of Truro, has written *Discovering England's smallest churches* – a countrywide guide to over one hundred small churches and chapels. (Weidenfeld & Nicolson £14.99 hbk.1 84212 728 4).

Recent Grove books likely to be of interest to Readers

include: B27 *Blessing* Keith Gruneberg (1 85174 526 2); B28 *How to read the book of Revelation* Ian Paul (1 85174 533 5); B29 *(When) did it happen? - new contexts for Old Testament history* John Bimson (1 85174 541 6); E129 *The ethics of the Johannine epistles* Greg Forster (1 85174 528 9); P94 *Community led regeneration of the local church* Samuel Wells (1 85174 532 7); P95 *Faith in suburbia* Jane Gibbs (1 85174 540 8); W177 *How to read the Bible in church* Anna de Lange and Liz Simpson (1 85174 542 4). Grove books are available from Ridley Hall Road Cambridge CB3 9HU 01223 464748 and cost £2.50 each including postage and packing.

THE READER MISSIONARY STUDENTSHIP ASSOCIATION

Registered charity no: 1040012

President:
The Revd Professor Owen Chadwick OM

The Association, a registered charity, was founded in 1904 to provide grants to Readers who are training for the priesthood and who intend to serve the Church overseas.

Further enquiries and donations should be sent to:

Mr Hugh Morley Hon Secretary, 6 Kilworth Drive, Lostock, Bolton, Lancs BL6 4RP	Mr Ron Edinborough, Hon Treasurer, Glendevon, 3 Manor Road, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2HT
---	--

Watts

Est.1874

Readers' Robes

Cassocks

Surplices

and Scarves

Brochure sent on request

Watts
& Company
7 Tufton Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3QE

edwincook@wattsandcompany.co.uk
ceinwenwoods@wattsandcompany.co.uk

T 020 7222 1978
F 020 7233 1130



Gazette of newly admitted and licensed Readers

BLACKBURN

14 NOVEMBER

Admitted and licensed

Marcus Bagg, St Mark, Layton, Blackpool
 Alan Brindle, St Nicholas, Ribby-cum-Wrea
 Jeffrey Lee, St James, Briercliffe
 Polly Mason, Chorley St Laurence
 Andrew Shaw, Christ Church, Thornton
 Zoe Henman, St John the Evangelist,
 Ellel with St James, Shireshead

EXETER

18 OCTOBER 2003.

Admitted and licensed

Denis Allison, Abbotskerswell
 Tim Collins, Abbotskerswell
 Tessa Amies, Ipplepen, Torbryan & Denbury
 Peter Askins, Axminster Team Ministry
 Judith Ayers, Ivybridge with Harford
 Pamela Cornwell, Tiverton: St Peter and
 Chevithorne with Cove
 Harry Davies, Bere Ferrers with Bere Alston
 Wendy Ellis, Moretonhampstead, Manaton, North Bovey
 and Lustleigh
 Richard Frost, St James, Exeter:
 John Hartfield, Barnstaple Team Ministry
 Carole Hawkins, Sid Valley Team Ministry
 Michael Hawkins, Hartland Coast Team Ministry
 Peter Kennett, Ashburton with Buckland in the
 Moor and Bickington
 Margaret Provost, Plymstock Team Ministry
 David Roff, Heanton Punchardon with Marwood
 Jane Sanham, Whitchurch
 Michael Skudder, Georgeham
 Thomas Thompson, Silverton, Butterleigh,
 Bickleigh and Cadeleigh
 Jennifer Townley, Newton Ferrers with Revelstoke
 Georgina Vye, Kenton, Mamhead, Powderham,
 Cofton and Starcross
Licensed
 Lynda Buckley, St Michael and St Barnabas, Devonport
 Robert Hall, St Michael and St Barnabas, Devonport
 Trevor May, Ashwater, Halwill, Beaworthy, Clawton and
 Tetcott with Luffincott
 Robert Smith, St Mark, St Sidwell and St Matthew, Exeter

NEWCASTLE

11 OCTOBER 2003

David Bramley, Cramlington
 John Carr, Haydon Bridge and Beltingham with Henshaw
 Jonathan Cummins, Holy Trinity, Widdrington
 Ann McGivern, St Bartholomew, Benton

Cynthia Makin, St James, Shilbottle
 Alan Meighen, St John, Killingworth
 Paul Rusby, St Mary Magdalene, Mitford
 Carol Wolstenholme, Holy Spirit, Denton

OXFORD

8 NOVEMBER 2003

Admitted and licensed

Clive Berry, Hanborough and Freeland
 Jon Bowden, St Mary and St John, Cowley, Oxford
 Michael Forsdyke, Holy Trinity, Henley
 Jeremy Hopkinson, The Brickhills and Stoke, Hammond
 Joanna Howard, St Andrew, High Wycombe
 Pat Lewis, Holy Trinity, Henley
 Christine Marsh, Holy Trinity, Prestwood
 Alison Salvesson, St Michael and All Angels, New Marston
 Sue Saunders, Uffington St Mary, with Shellingford,
 Woolstone and Baulking.

RIPON AND LEEDS

6 OCTOBER

Admitted and licensed

Ruth Beckett, St Mark Harrogate
 Paul Chubb, Ainderby Steeple with Yafforth and Kirby
 Wiske with Maunby
 Christine Jack, St. Peter Thorner with Scarcroft
 Jonathan Slater, St Giles Bramhope
 Dyfrig Lewis-Smith, Emmanuel, Leeds
Licensed
 Karen Pusey, Barton and Manfield and Cleasby with Stapleton

ROCHESTER

OCTOBER 2003

Admitted and licensed

Tiffany Allen, Leybourne
 Christopher Bates, Christ Church, Beckenham
 Judith Bishop, Crayford
 Barbara Ferguson, St Andrew, Orpington,
 Barry Fisher, Wateringbury
 Alan Gardiner, Christ Church, Beckenham
 Bill Lattimer, Otford
 Alison Lovelock, Holy Trinity with Christ Church,
 Tunbridge Wells
 Jonathan Munn, Swanscombe
 Ruth Murfitt, Biggin Hill
 Timothy Nunns, Northumberland Heath
 Joseph O'Neill-Byrne, Ash with Ridley
 Peter Ridge, St Nicholas, Chislehurst
 Richard Saunders, Ightham
 Victor Tasker-Walsham, Longfield

Susan Taylor, Borstal
Gretel Wakeham, Seal Chart
Diane Welch, High Halstow with All Hallows and
Hoo St Mary

SALISBURY

4 OCTOBER 2003

Admitted and licensed

Alistair Coke, Hazelbury Bryan and the Hillside Parishes
Anthony Cooke, Stuart Miller, West Moors
Anthony Desmond, Westwood and Wingfield
James Hepburn, Hazelbury Bryan and the Hillside Parishes
Jacqueline Massarella, Hamworthy
Martyn Saunders, Clarendon
Anthony Thomas, Buckhorn Weston, Fifehead Magdalen,
Kington Magna, East Stour, West Stour, Stour Provost,
Stour Row and Todber

Licensed

Judy Anderson, St John the Baptist, Tisbury
Les Blake, Wyllye and Till Valley
Graham Dove, Holy Trinity, Bradford-on-Avon
Andrea Hagenbuch, Okeford Benefice
Elise Harding, Wimborne Deanery
Jane Randells, St John, Studley
Malcolm Walsh, Holy Trinity, Bradford-on-Avon

SHEFFIELD

SEPTEMBER 27 2003

Admitted and licensed

Katharine Boyd, St Mary, Walkley
Anne Lewis, St Mary, Walkley
Tina Powell-Wiffen, Christ Church, Fulwood
Yvonne Smith, St Chad, Woodseats
Fiona Stevens, St Columba, Crosspool
Trevor Tindle, St Michael and All Angels, Great Houghton

SOUTHWARK

27 OCTOBER

Admitted and licensed

Geoffrey Barnett, St Mary, Barnes Team Ministry
Tini Brodie, Battersea Fields
Sandra Bryan, Holy Trinity, Wallington
Marilyn Burkett, St John the Baptist, Malden
Celia Ensum, St Alban, Streatham Park
Maureen Kyle, Caterham Team Ministry
Penelope Lohead, Parish of Horley: St Bartholemew with
St Francis and St Wilfred, Reigate
John Ohen, St James, Clapham Park
Paul Parmenter, St Matthew, Croydon
Hilary Rosser, St Barnabas, Dulwich
David Rowbotham, St Matthew, Redhill
Pauline Simpson, Christ Church, Gipsy Hill
Timothy Spargo-Mabbs, Holy Trinity, Wallington
Victoria Yeadon, Christ Church, Gipsy Hill

WAKEFIELD

OCTOBER 12 2003

Admitted and licensed

Christina Bentley, All Saints, Batley
Philip Chadwick, Elland Team Parish
Stuart Kilpatrick, Ovenden St George
David Ramanauskas, Christ Church, Mount Pellon
Lisa Senior, St Saviour, Brownhill
Barbara Tomlinson, All Saints, Batley
Victoria Wilson, St Mary Magdalene, Altofts

CHURCH IN WALES

BANGOR

SEPTEMBER 2003

Admitted and licensed

Linda Gibson, Llifon and Talybolion Deanery
Hugh Vaughan Jones, Malltraeth Deanery



In Memoriam

The deaths of the following Readers have been notified to us:

Bath and Wells

Sarah Taylor

Birmingham

Harry Shaw

Chelmsford

Janet Thompson

Chichester

Mary Bailey

London

Norman Wiggins

Norwich

John Moore

Patrick Ash

John Ellis

John Hackett

Carol Henderson

Charles Oldroyd

Freddy Winterton

Rochester

Peter Fagan

Winchester

Bas Girard

Ernest Major

Kenneth Neeves

We give thanks for their work and witness and remember those who grieve.



GLEANINGS

Sing of our Mother

We printed a hymn by Sadie Yates written for Christmas/Candlemas in the November 2003 issue. Here is another song by Sadie – with Mothering Sunday in mind:

Sing of our Mother, she who has held us
when we were weary, when we were sick.
Arms which enfolded, arms ever open,
Mother to you now, our thanks we bring.

Sing of our Mother, who shows us loving
all of our life through, whate'er we do.
Gently correcting, pointing the right way,
Mother to you now, our thanks we bring.

Sing of our Mother, patiently waiting
for our return home, from near or far,
waiting and longing, always there for us,
Mother to you now, our thanks we bring.

Sing of our Mother, thank you for all things,
thank you for guidance, comfort and love.
May we remember what you have taught us,
God's blessing on you for all that you give.

Sing we of Mary, Mother of Jesus,
guide for all mothers in sorrow and joy.
May her example of courage and loving
shine in our own lives, in all that we do.
(Suggested tune, 'Morning has broken')

Guide dogs in their 'own' words

Jenny Trew a Reader in Newcastle Diocese, writes that she was delighted to read about Laurence Myatt's licensing ceremony where he was attended by his guide dog, Otis, in *The Reader* August 2003. Jenny is a 'Puppy Walker' for Guide Dogs for the Blind. As part of his important socialisation training, Jenny's previous Guide Dog puppy (Simpson) would attend church – often up to three times each Sunday! He has now moved on to K9 College in Bolton and Jenny now has a new golden lab/retriever called Molly. But with affectionate memories of Simpson, she has penned the following lines – with Simpson's help in the last verse:

The Church Mouse

From that very first day you accompanied me, as I ministered in God's house;

An innocent bundle, curled up in the pew - the proverbial true Church Mouse!

At first you feared those strange people and that big noisy box scared you stiff.

It played 'hymns', which they sang with great gusto, but you're not impressed, not one bit!

But little by little it wasn't that bad, and folk were ever so friendly.

Really you're glad that I'd asked you to come and whispered, 'They're really quite trendy!'

At first, you'd just snore on the stony aisle floor, you were hot – it was cool and inviting;

But quickly you learned opportunities there, which really could prove most exciting!

You decided to sample the floorboards – not tasty and somewhat suspicious

Then a nice leather strap on a bag you espied, then ate it.

'Yum, that was delicious!'

You decide that to hide, might just be your best deed, so under the pew you retreat.

A wrapper you spy. 'Someone's caring for me, 'cos it's come all complete with the sweet!'

It's time for the boring old sermon, but if it continued too long,

You'd got a cute plan to confuse me – you'd serenade us with a song.

At first, you're quite calm, as I go 'on and on', a quiet, gentle old crooner,

But after each seemingly endless remark, you turn up the heat on the tuner!

'Now that I've grown up a real good lad – respected in that forum.

The most regular attender and a model of decorum.

They miss me and they're sorry now, they say I was a real gent.

They're sitting there, with bated breath, awaiting my replacement!'

Letters received

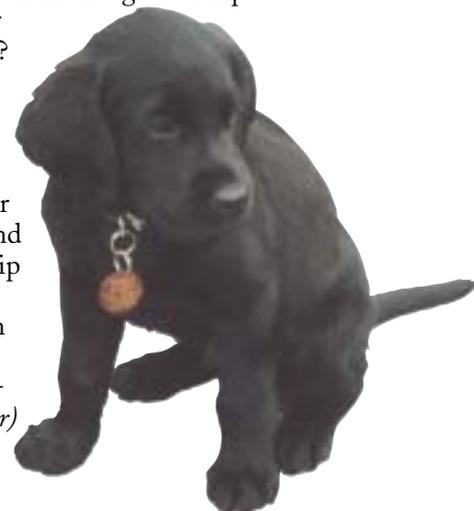
George Leckey a Reader in Ballymena, Co Antrim, Northern Ireland, wrote just before Christmas. 'I really appreciate your magazine but would make a plea for some more 'practical' articles on matters like the preparation and delivering of sermons.'

It is very good to have a letter from Northern Ireland – and thank you, George, for your comment. I hope that this current issue meets what you are looking for. My 'aim' is broadly to alternate issues between those with a more practical focus on Readers' ministry in the Church, and issues that are linked to social and theological themes. It is important we get the balance about right, and please let us know if you feel we don't. (*Editor*)

Alan Walker from Herne Bay, in Kent writes: '...You raise the matter of Letters (p.28 of the November 2003 issue). God forbid that we go back to the dreadful whingeing of 25 or 30 years ago! But I wonder if there might be mileage in a 'feedback' column of shared experience. The Editor might set out a different 'theme' each issue, and invite Readers to send in comments – recommendations or warnings – based on their actual experience. What sort of theme? This is all for grabs! Here are some starters:

- Keeping cool in Readers' rig in Summer 2003 heat
- Which analogies have proved helpful in presenting the 'incomprehensible' Trinity?
- Useful chalice tips (no double-entendre!) with awkward communicants
- Have choruses worked well in all-age worship?
- Has the Apocrypha ever been helpful in teaching?
- How does one answer an outsider baffled by the term 'Reader'?

Good idea, Alan, what about people giving us their thoughts on the Trinity and choruses in all-age worship for the May 2004 issue? That would fit the season in the church year, and the 'theme' of that issue – which is *The Family*. (*Editor*)





The Last Word – from Church House

Every New Year brings its changes and 2004 is no exception. Wendy Thorpe has come to the end of her contract as National Moderator for Reader Training and we send our grateful thanks and best wishes to her and to her husband Tony who not only ferried Wendy to some regional meetings but used his computer skills to great effect.

The National Moderator is 'employed' by the Ministry Division – not by the Central Readers' Council – and so the Ministry Division now welcomes the new National Moderator, Revd Alec George as Wendy's successor. Alec will be present at the Central Readers Council AGM in March and members will meet him at the AGM in March.

Preparations are in hand for the next national conference in July 2005 at the Swanwick conference centre and for a conference for younger Readers (under 40) in June 2006 at London Colney. The Readers' Board in the Diocese of Newcastle celebrates its centenary in 2006 and has invited us to hold the AGM that year at the University of Newcastle.

The task groups involved in the implementation of the Hind report *Formation for ministry within a learning church* begin their work in the New Year. The Readers task group comprises three Readers as well as representatives from the Methodist and URC churches. The time scale is short as all groups are meant to complete their work by July.

A summary of the CME report recently accepted by the Executive Committee will be circulated to the dioceses shortly. I had a request some time ago from Readers that there should be a grievance procedure available and the Executive Committee has discussed a draft. As a result of

further discussions with the officer responsible for the drawing up of the clergy procedure I hope that a revised procedure, which will provide for both clergy and Readers will be available in the Spring.

Moving on...

As you know, my contract expires at the end of April and my successor will be appointed in February, so my next and last *Last Word* will be to introduce him or her to you. In the meantime it is business as usual and there is much to be done in the preparations for the residential AGM to be held at the end of March.

I hope, that after a year in which war and violence has played a major part, 2004 will be a year of peace, not least for the church which we serve. I close with a prayer from a book by Janet Morley, which Wendy quoted at her Church House farewell party. It is a prayer for those who leave office as many of you have done in the past year or will do in 2004.

May the God who rested on the seventh day
To delight in all her creation,
Hold you in her arms
As you have held this work,
Celebrate with us
The life that takes life from you,
And give you grace to let go
Into a new freedom. Amen
(© Janet Morley, used with permission)

With best wishes to you all

Pat Nappin, *Honorary Secretary*

The 'Reader' window

A little more detail about the picture on our front cover. John Haigh, 1945-1998, worked as Assistant Education Officer for Wakefield MC and from 1995 as part-time Schools Officer for the Diocese of Wakefield. He was admitted as a Reader in 1990 and ministered in Christ Church, Moldgreen. Hilary, John's widow writes, 'John was loved and respected by all the church family and when he became ill in 1996, they offered loving support to all our family. To thank them for their love, it seemed a good idea to commemorate John's ministry with a stained glass window, depicting John's love of God and the world he created. It was dedicated on Mothering Sunday 2003. The hymn Come let us sing of a wonderful love was instrumental in John's conversion, so the window incorporates that line. The parables depicted are the Lost Sheep, the Lost Son and the Lost Coin. To reflect John's love of the country-side the small windows include depictions of bluebells, cowslips, a heron, spiders and ladybirds: the Reader's badge is in the central light. The artist is Adam Goodyear.

It is my hope that this window will be both a reflection and a continuation of John's ministry, as it speaks to us of God's love.'

KICK START YOUR NEW TESTAMENT GREEK

30 July – 3 August

Spend five days at St John's College discovering that New Testament Greek can be fun. A crash course for those starting to study Greek and those who are too scared to begin!

Fully inclusive price £200.

For more details about the Greek Week or other Christian distance learning courses contact us at

Call: 0115 925 1117

Write: St John's Extension Studies
Bramcote, Nottingham NG9 3RL

Email: ext.studies@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk

ST JOHN'S
NOTTINGHAM

**THE CENTRAL
READERS'
COUNCIL**
wishes to appoint a

**WEBSITE
EDITOR/WEBMASTER**
www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

This is an exciting opportunity for an Editor with flair and initiative to be involved with the re-launch of the site.

He or she will work from home. The hours will be flexible but will amount to two days' work per week in return for an honorarium of £2,000 per annum.

The initial contract will be for 2 years.

The initial task will be to work with professional web designers engaged to create the new site, so you will require sound editorial and theological judgement, an understanding of the needs of Reader ministry and a knowledge of the component parts of website construction.

Self-motivation and enthusiasm to serve the 10,000+ Readers will be important, not least because it is planned to continually increase the use of the website as an active resource for Reader ministry.

For a copy of the job profile and application form ring 020 7898 1419
or write to CRC, Church House, London SW1P 3NZ or look at the website.

**SELWYN
SUMMER
COURSE**

1 AUGUST TO 6 AUGUST 2004

Course Fees:

Registration Fee £25.00 (*Non Returnable*)
Cripps Court and Old Court Accommodation
Half Board only, ie Evening Meal,
Bed & Breakfast £261.44

Lunch may be taken using the College Cafeteria
Any Reader or Reader in Training wishing to attend on a daily basis or for part of the course will be most welcome.

Dr DL Smith

The Church of England 1603-1662

Revd Dr John Sweet

The New Testament – Interpretation for Preaching

Dr Bridget Nicholls

Praying and Preaching the Pastoral Offices

Cheques payable to Centra1 Board of Finance

Apply to:

Tony Hawkins
30 Flintway
Wath-Upon-Dearne
ROTHERHAM
South Yorkshire S63 7TR
Tel: 01709873720 Bursaries are available for
Licensed Readers attending for the first time.