

**MIBIC Annual Training Conference
Ushaw College, 10-12 November 2008**

**Understanding Workplace Chaplaincy in the Context of Contemporary Culture:
The Workplace as a Cathedral**

Some Notes and Themes...

Monday 10th November

Gathering: An Introduction to the Theme

- A time for us as chaplains to share what we have and who we are as well as the prepared content of the conference – resources to each other.
- A sense of exploring a different perspective of the North East: it would perhaps be more expected for chaplains to visit sites related to the North East's industrial identity and heritage.
- An opportunity to reflect upon the icons around us – from past and contemporary culture.
- Engaging with the theology of work.

Reflections on the relationship between a factory and a cathedral...

Similarities: wow factor – people coming together – factory hooters and cathedral bells – both potentially 'thin places'...

Clocking on everyday in holy places.

Wherever people are they have needs, whether that happens to be the cathedral or the factory.

Durham Cathedral – Talk, Tour and Evensong

Presentation: Revd Canon Maurice Simmons & Anne Heywood (Chapter Steward)

Maurice Simmons spoke reflectively about chaplaincy as 'being there', rather than doing. He made comparisons with the life of Jesus, suggesting that Jesus is 'there' responding to situations. He drew upon the Benedictine tradition of seeing Christ in the ordinary, in the stranger. There were ongoing themes and resonances from the Rule of St Benedict (for me) throughout his talk... the need to learn to listen, and the need to learn to see people and helping to unburden the load. Other aspects of his talk included: 'significant conversations', religion as different from faith and chaplaincy and friendship.

Anne Heywood spoke about a ministry of welcome within the Cathedral, and the different groups who make up the welcoming team (including volunteer stewards, listeners, chaplains...). She also spoke about the patterns of visitors, people popping in and out and of the Cathedral's identity as a place of quiet, a place people can

come to. Issues for the welcome team included questions with regard to anonymity and those who want to be left alone.

Striking cords particularly with something shared about the listeners, those whose role it is to simply be present in an advertised place – near the votive candles – to listen to anyone who wishes to talk about something. Some of them desiring to take a more active role – to do rather than be. It felt like a tension present for chaplains, for chaplaincy, for church expectations of chaplaincy.

Evensong, potentially drawing back again to Benedict - the opus dei, the daily pattern of the church's prayer – nothing to be preferred, for Benedict, before the work of God.

Session 1: A Reflection on the Theology of Work

Presentation: Vince Purcell

The impossibility of doing the theology of work in 20 mins, so...!

Vince Purcell began by contrasting a theology of work with a spirituality of work. He spoke of a spirituality of work as a total response we make with our whole being to take part in God's creation, our orientation towards both God and work. He also highlighted the theme of balance: spirituality + work + life.

The theme of the talk came from Matthew 11.28-30: 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

A focus on the word 'yoke'....

- The way to get two oxen to work together is to get a novice ox to walk with an experienced ox – pairing up, walking alongside.
- Jesus' yoke – sharing the same yoke as Jesus.
- Balance in the image of the yoke: it is easier to carry two heavy things when they're well balanced than one heavy thing alone.
- The loads we impose upon ourselves are greater than, heavier than, those He imposes upon us.
- Jesus' first and second commandments: ' "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." ' (Matt 22.37-9) So: God **and** neighbour **and** yourself - attention to all three.
- Balance – rather than the stress of a distorted burden, so both/and rather than either/or:

scripture **and** tradition, word **and** sacrament, faith **and** works – dynamic complementary forces.

[Book: Wilkie Au, By the Way of the Heart: Towards a Holistic Christian Spirituality]

Strands of a balanced spirituality:

1) Self-esteem and Self-denial

- 'You shall love your **neighbour as yourself**'
- vocation and self-denial: what selfish bit of me might be getting in the way of the kingdom?

2) Ministry and Leisure

- the temptation to believe that we are needed – we need legitimate recreation
- 'stronger faith in ourselves as people made worthwhile through God's love and not by our achievement'
- 'greater trust in God's power in the world today'
- 'let go and let God'
- the temptation to over-activity

3) Friendship and Generativity

- Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs
- isolation in ministry
- we're not called to be solo practitioners
- sacrament of friendship
- friendship as a source of divine revelation – but generativity, not cliques etc.
- mutual friendship not exclusive friendship

4) Prayer and Humour/Light-heartedness

- our desire for God in prayer is more than matched by God's desire for us
- earnestness needs to be balanced by light-heartedness
- being Easter people

5) Community and Solitude

- solitude offers us the opportunity to monitor ourselves, making us obedient to the guidance of God
- the still small voice as well as Christian community

Other words: conscience, consciousness, conscientiousness... re-membering, re-creation

An early image of Christ the Good Shepherd shows him carrying two buckets with a lamb over his shoulders.

Life and love as risky – 'Do not be afraid' – the risk of indifference

Tuesday 11th November

Session 2: Questions for the day ahead

- What is going on? What is this about?
- What is there to affirm in this?
- What is there to critique?
- Are there any biblical resonances?

1st Stop: The Angel of the North

Different reactions and responses... The shadow – and one chaplain walking down the hillside, through the shadow of the Angel to stand at the head. The two minutes silence here. What does it mean to be in the shadow of an angel??

2nd Stop: The Sage Gateshead and the Baltic Gallery

Stumbling around in the darkness of an exhibition, performance spaces and moving ceilings, the River Tyne, the horse...

Steve McQueen exhibition: 'Running Thunder'

<http://www.balticmill.com/whatsOn/past/ExhibitionDetail.php?exhibID=108>

3rd Stop: St James' Park

A tour of the home of Newcastle United, but a sense of far more than a football stadium – snapshots of backstage as well as front of house and performance area... The Corporate aspects mingling with views from the back row of seating, changing rooms and the place of press conferences. Certificates to prove we'd been there!

Session 3: Practical Input – Shared Conversations

Issues & themes arising out of our own chaplaincy contexts:

- issues for chaplaincy in a multifaith society (and perceptions within the church world compared to the non-church world)
- explaining the Christian faith ...in a positive context, rather than defensive
- relationships with other denominations (lay v ordained chaplaincy, different understandings of priesthood across denominations – people asking to talk to a priest in the Cathedral – what are they really asking for? What does it mean to minister in the context of a denomination other than your own?)
- LEPs – conflicts
- change: restructuring...redundancy...living with change...potential change...change and pain
- data protection (the frustrations of this particularly in a hospital chaplaincy context)
- local church ownership of chaplaincy and issues re: church member involvement in a chaplaincy project
- the need for persistence: in cold calling, in dealing with changes of management

- enthusiasm & looking for opportunities

other words: vulnerability... job security... media... need... managing change... transition... journeys... callings... experiences (and coping with these)

Responses from within the room:

- The theme of change – to be Methodist means to change
- Multifaith – the way it’s got to be
- How do we as a church respond to multifaith issues?
- The gap between chaplains’ understanding – the big thing and the individual thing – and local churches’ understanding
- Situation: integrity – people knowing that if they approach you with issues from another faith that you will contact the appropriate person... doing research and finding the appropriate person to help
- The recognition of a chaplain as a person of faith – people only hearing the word ‘chaplain’, rather than ‘volunteer lay chaplain’
- Lay Chaplaincy – issues surrounding accreditation, training, formation, theological education... under-resourcing lay chaplains – do we do enough to help?

Session 4: Theological Reflection

Question 1) What’s going on?

The Angel of the North	Sage & Baltic	St James’ Park
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all had a different perspective - question re: gender - depth - different for everybody - hope & rebirth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cathedrals for the arts - regeneration - civic pride - territory? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - paradoxes and tension - slavery & tribalism? - visitors - community - identity

Question 2) What is there to affirm?

The Angel of the North	Sage & Baltic	St James’ Park
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shadow - looking over the landscape and people - hope - - chaplaincy...wings...shadow & protection - point of reference - standing & being in the shadow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gathering places - seeking to be inclusive - celebrations of creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community - togetherness - leisure - cooperation & belonging

Question 3) What is there to critique?

The Angel of the North	Sage & Baltic	St James' Park
- confusion??	- possible exclusivity... a sense of it isn't for us - style of architecture potentially exacerbating a sense of exclusivity (q. do they do outreach? yes)	- indoctrination - pack mentality - competition - hype etc.

Question 4) Are there any biblical resonances?

The Angel of the North	Sage & Baltic	St James' Park
<p>'Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.'</p> <p>(Isaiah 40.30-1)</p> <p>You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.' [...] he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge...</p> <p>(From Psalm 91)</p>	<p>The Resurrection narratives</p> <p>Parable of the Talents</p>	<p>Creation narratives – Genesis</p> <p>vs</p> <p>Judgement</p> <p>- treading the line between affirming what is good and critiquing</p>

Wednesday 12th November

Session 5

A Presentation by Brian Draper

What does it mean to marry faith and culture?

Bible & newspaper

Getting into the heart of heartbreaking headlines

Spiritual Intelligence & Heart

1) Meditation Psalm 139

When you gaze, how do you react?

What unique mark do you make on the world around you?

2) Awakening to eternity in our hearts

[Eckhart Tolle – The Power of Now]

nagging moments – gifts rather than threats

What is God awakening in you?

When did you last truly overhear yourself?

Whose image are we moulded on...moulding ourselves into?

Who do you see staring back when you look in a mirror? What is it, culturally, that prevents people from truly living?

Ecclesiastes 3.11 – God has set eternity in the hearts of people

[Book: Eldredge, The Sacred Romance]

overhearing God

‘The glory of God is a human being fully alive’

3) Finding your heart, unearthing your treasure

Luke 12.34 ‘where your treasure is, there your heart will be also’

What and where is your treasure?

[Oliver James, Affluenza]

4) Hearts and minds

What traps us? Deadens us?

desire – being seen to be someone

playing the game of appearances

‘Be still and know that I am God’

contemplation – an offer for a culture on fast forward

5) After God's heart

deep trying to call to deep

'I have come that you may have life, life to the full'

Christian Aid: 'life before death'

what / who do we think are worth fighting for?

fighting for our own hearts by going after the heart of God, even as God goes after us

God as warrior – fighting for life, for the wounded, the broken

God's heart revealed through Jesus

6) Becoming whole hearted – conclusion and summary of the reflection.