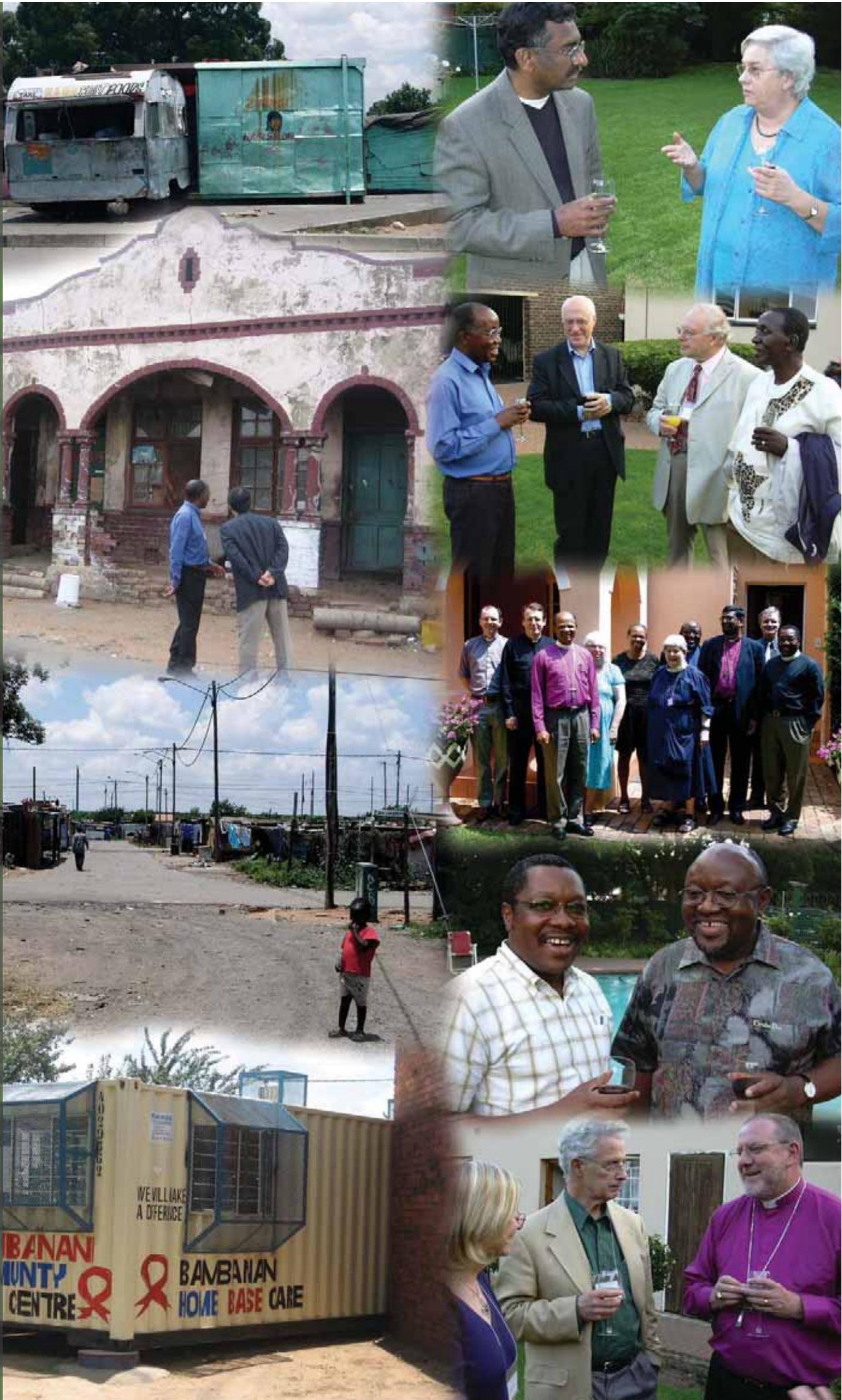




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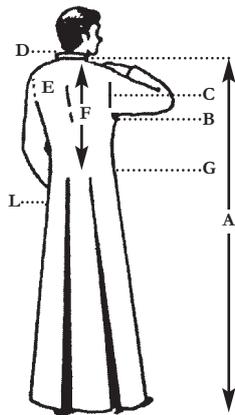
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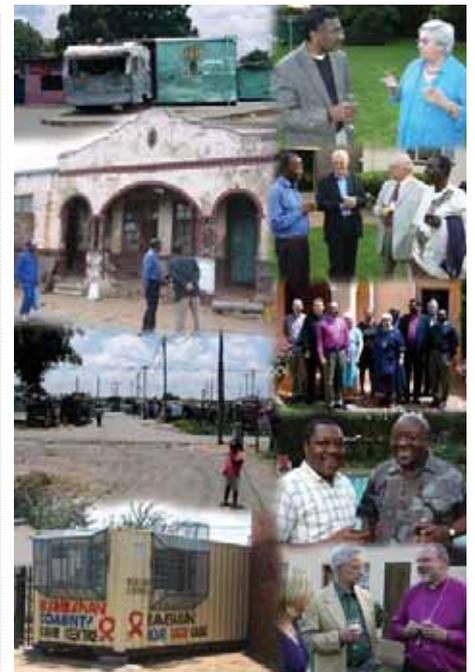
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Cover: The TEAC meeting in South Africa, pictures by Mike McCoy, David Mills, Robert Paterson



Spring 2006 Volume 103 No.1

THE READER



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Being a child of the 1960s, I still remember the song, based on Ecclesiastes 3, which spoke of ‘a time for every purpose under heaven.’ The Seekers – my favourite pop group of the time (which shows how depressingly clean-living I must have been!) – recorded a particularly powerful version of it.

It does rather feel that ‘now’ is the season when a number of key issues are coming together in relation to Reader ministry. We have tried to draw attention to them in this issue. There is first of all the motion to be aired at General Synod, proposed by Nigel Holmes, Reader in Carlisle Diocese, and Chair of The Reader Editorial Committee. This will be discussed on February 8. I am writing this editorial before the debate – but hope to slip in a last minute post-script about it in Gleanings, see p.32. Nigel’s motion asks for a study of the role of Readers, bearing in mind that reflection on Reader ministry in recent years has not been altogether coherent – at various levels within the church. Insufficient attention has also been paid to the way in which the proliferation of both ordained and other lay ministries inevitably impinges upon the understanding and self-understanding of Readers. From my editor’s post-bag I am aware that it is an issue which a number of Readers feel strongly about. They are simply asking for some joined-up thinking from the powers that be.

But there are also some important developments in relation to Reader training, which are coming about because of The Hind Report. We take a look at these (see p.10 and p.12). Potentially they are very exciting – and significant for the standing of Readers. A principle of The Hind Report is that training for ministry does not stop at the point of licensing, and the need for continuing ministerial education is affirmed. So these changes may affect you all, even if you have been licensed for a number of years.

My own ‘day job’ is evolving. I now work almost full-time for the Anglican Communion Office, with a focus on theological education. In that capacity I have just come back from 10 days in South Africa as Secretary to the Theological Education Working Group (TEAC) which met there in mid-January. We had 34 people present, representing most of the Provinces of the Anglican Communion, and we were reflecting on how to improve theological education throughout our Communion for all – bishops, priests, licensed lay ministers (which includes Readers) and the laity. It was a real privilege to be there, among such a ‘rainbow’ of committed fellow Anglicans. We spent a day visiting HIV/AIDS projects supported by the local Anglican Diocese, Highveld. In South Africa theological education needs to grapple, theologically and practically, with the reality of AIDS – or else it seems irrelevant. Our cover pictures were taken at that meeting – although they do not show the many hours we spent in a rather warm conference room wrestling over discussions and documents. The ‘motto’ for the work of TEAC is ‘To equip the saints for the work of ministry’ – a quotation from Ephesians, which surely sums up the challenge before Readers and those involved in their training in the Church of England as well.

Clare Amos,
Honorary Editor

Preaching: a dying art?

Revd Lord (Leslie) Griffiths is the Superintendent Minister of Wesley's Chapel, London and a former President of the Methodist Conference. He is also the Chair of the College of Preachers.

I was a student at Cambridge University in the year King Uzziah died! Well, not quite. But I was certainly there in the days that preceded the current Federation of Theological Colleges which unite 10 bodies in one ambitious union so that Roman Catholics and Protestants, Anglicans and Methodists, men and women, Eastern and Western Christians, and (for good measure) Jews can approach theological education together and learn from each other in the process. It's simply brilliant and I commend it whole-heartedly.

In my day, such ecumenical outreach was more spasmodic and haphazard. I was at Wesley House just across Jesus Lane from Westcott house. It was a heady time to be there. John Robinson had only recently published his *Honest to God*; Harvey Cox was telling us about *The Secular City*; some were crying out that God was dead and others that He needed to be reinvented. With all this theological ferment surrounding us, Anglicans and Methodists were tentatively (oh so tentatively) feeling their way forward into a relationship which, the most progressive of us yearned, would bring our churches together. Alas, history was to show that this was not to be.

One of the activities which brought Anglicans and Methodists together was a homiletics class. I can only say, with hand on heart, that it was a total and utter disaster! Six or eight of us sat round and considered the importance of preaching. But there was almost no possibility for meaningful dialogue. Every Methodist candidate for the Ministry was obliged to have completed his study and engaged in the practice of preaching *before* going off for ministerial training. That is, each of them would have followed a lengthy course (sometimes lasting 4 or

5 years) that covered the main elements needful for a preacher, namely the Old Testament, the New Testament, Homiletics and Christian Doctrine. At every stage his progress was mentored and sermons reported on to a peer group meeting of fellow preachers. Thus, before ever getting to Cambridge, I was 'an accredited Local Preacher' with some years of experience behind me. Please note that I was only 25 at the time! Meanwhile, our Anglican sparring partners were in an altogether different position. Not one of them had ever preached a sermon in his life. Their sense of vocation had been formed in an entirely different cultural matrix and their qualifications for training issued from an assessment of their suitability to become good priests. Clearly, an ability to (or some competence in) preaching was not considered a necessary prerequisite for that assessment.

It's not difficult to imagine the painful encounters that took place on those weekly occasions. The Methodists thought they knew everything whilst the Anglicans scratched their heads and wondered what on earth all the fuss was about. For the teachers, it proved almost impossible to find an agreeable starting point. As I say, the exercise was both futile and disastrous.

Varied expectations

I begin in this way in order to show how varying are the expectations of preaching within our main theological and ecclesiastical traditions. We often joke that Methodists are likely to go on forever in their sermons or else that Anglicans produce trite little homilies that barely demand anything of their hearers. But beyond these flippant asides, where lies the truth?

The fact must surely be that

preaching has to be held in the highest possible place in the life and worship of our churches whatever our own temperamental or theological or cultural assumptions about the nature of worship. Whether our style be demotic and populist, contemporary and charismatic, or (at the other pole) bells and smells, Byzantine or Tridentine, – the place of the spoken word must surely be honoured. As bread is broken on the altar so the Word is broken in the pulpit. Only the highest understanding of both will do. From both flow the promise and the actualisation of life.

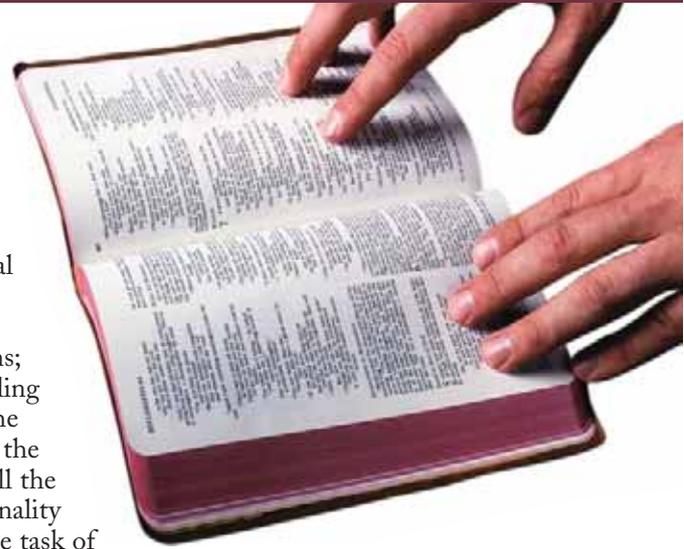
Of course, anyone can make a man of straw out of preaching. There are plenty of horror stories around. Longwinded gasbags, trite and trivialising dimwits, pedestrian and didactic bores, trendy and gimmick-ridden crowd-pleasers – all these could furnish a book of anecdotes about the abuse of preaching. And it wouldn't be a slim paperback either!

I could add here that a similar catalogue of woes could be created out of other moments and styles in the performance of Christian worship. Lugubrious Gregorian chant, a pseudo-magical performance of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving (or the Canon of the Mass), useless and recondite ritual, camp and kitsch 'ritualism', complicated service books where no-one can find the right page, – all these provide ample fare for those looking for grist for their mill.

Preaching is important

Let's try to avoid creating such stereotypes or dwelling upon such aberrations. Preaching is important. If the eucharistic liturgy presents *continuo*, then preaching is *recitative*. The one contains all the elements of timelessness and the under girding of a perpetually available offer of grace. The other, more punctiliar, breaks into our settledness, destroys any complacency, disturbs us into new awareness, shakes the whole place up, speaks to our present condition.

Yes preaching is all of that. And it needs to be taught in all of our theological colleges precisely as that. Preaching must be passionate, urgent, persuasive, engaging, eye-opening, mind boggling, poetry, prophecy, uplifting and upsetting. All of these in different combinations at different times. Is this over the top? Or are we refining something that's become a lost art?



A dying art it certainly is. And one that needs to be rediscovered in all its glory. Preaching is unlike any other art form. It is not an essay, full of erudite and closely argued propositions, its style nicely syllogistic and conforming to the rules both of grammar and reason. Nor is it a short story with a beginning a middle and an end. There is no delineation of character, presentation of plot, or climactic dénouement. Preaching is not mere exposition of the Scriptures with some pat background material helping to flesh out an incident from the Bible that's already been adequately presented in the Bible reading earlier in the service. Nor is preaching empty bombast, a rhetorical tour de force, a triumph of what the Welsh call *hwyl* (oratorical over-drive) against the legitimate demands of argument. Preaching may well contain elements from all these sectors – it must, after all, be reasonable, there must be some narrative element on display, there has to be a sense of urgency and no-one is harmed if the preacher can pull out a

A reticence on this point will almost always lead to colourless and insipid efforts. So the preacher must endeavour not to sink the objective values of the material he's presenting beneath the swirling waters of his own projections and preconceptions; that is, whilst he avoids belittling God with his own littleness, he must never be afraid of being the person he really is, bringing all the fruits of experience and personality and character to bear upon the task of presenting the Message.

The second of my clichés is one that exponents of the art of preaching have adumbrated from Reinhold Niebuhr to Donald Soper. The preacher is to imagine himself with the Bible in one hand and the latest issue of the daily newspaper in the other. Somehow, he's to relate the one to the other. What light does the Bible throw on our contemporary world? How does God's disclosure of himself in the person of Jesus Christ affect a

the lesson remains. The training of a preacher is a delicate affair. There must be intrinsic gifts, a sense of vocation, a discernable desire to share the Message. That has to be developed and broadened and disciplined. And that's where training comes in. Not to knock the stuffing out of a 'natural' preacher but, in an age of universal education, to make it possible for the preacher to find a way of telling his or her tale, making their case, pushing home their point to the widest possible spectrum of audiences. And to sustain that over many years.

The art of preaching orchestrates all the gifts of the individual who employs it.

few rhetorical stops, yet none of these are sufficient in themselves. There must be more. There's no point avoiding the clichés which have lain barely hidden beneath the surface of this analysis. Clichés have only acquired that status because they've accumulated common sense and simple wisdom over the generations. So here are my two clichés, stepping stones to help us gain a high vantage point in our consideration of the art of preaching.

A couple of key clichés

The first is *The Definition of Preaching* by Phillips Brooks, a nineteenth century Anglican divine from Boston, Massachusetts. True preaching, he declared, is 'truth through personality'. Brooks goes on to point out that the two poles of this definition have to be kept in a very careful balance. No preacher should so impose him/herself on his material that his efforts become a mere presentation of his own feelings or, even worse, prejudices. But the preacher's personality is important. The art of preaching orchestrates all the gifts of the individual who employs it.

world which, 2000 years later, has become so bewildering and depressing, threatening and yet wonderful? How do we maintain the relevance of the Gospel in an age which has been ravaged by a tsunami of secularism and the temptations of hedonism?

If we subscribe to such a 'high doctrine' of preaching then we must surely recognise that we must commit real resource to the training of those who will carry it out. In the early days of Methodism, it was believed that God would raise preachers up and equip them for their task. There was a huge struggle around the very idea of theological training. To many 'primitive' Methodists the expressed need to train ministers smacked of decadence and a lack of faith. Had not God already shown his capacity to raise up tin miners and agricultural workers, stonemasons and colliers, simple people from among the working classes, for the task of preaching his Holy Gospel? So why bother to open a theological college?

Those days are now long gone but

The College of Preachers

When I took over the chairmanship of the College of Preachers from Bishop James Jones, I was far too busy to be able to do so without deep reflection. And yet I could not refuse. I'll give my weight to any organisation that seeks to equip a preacher for his/her task. And I want to stand alongside anyone committed to improving the standing of preaching, to move it up our order of priorities, to help us rediscover its potency for accomplishing the will of God. And I recognise in the training programmes and seminars of the College of Preachers a very valid strand of initiatives and opportunities that are aimed at precisely those objectives.

St Paul puts it so well. 'How,' he asks 'are people to call on One in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in One of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written "how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"'

To find out more about The College of Preachers and a conference they are running see p.32.

Faith Seeking Understanding

The issues confronted by Anselm of Canterbury a thousand years ago, and the responses he offered seem strangely contemporary and relevant to our modern age. Here the **Revd Dr Jeremy Worthen**, Principal of the South East Institute for Theological Education and himself a resident of Canterbury, provides a helpful reflection on Anselm's thought.

'Faith seeking understanding' is a phrase used by St Anselm which has been taken as the motto for his theology. It can be read as placing him at the crossing of two great streams in the history of Christian thought in the West in the Middle Ages. It also gives us some important clues as to why he remains so important and inspirational for Christians studying theology today.

The first great stream of Western medieval thought might be called the *monastic*, with the accent on faith in Anselm's phrase: *faith seeking the face of God through disciplined life in religious community*, and as part of that quest devoting itself to theological studies that can resource the community and keep alive sacred tradition. The second stream, which flowed from the new schools and then universities of the twelfth century, might be called the *scholastic*, with the accent in this case on *understanding*: seeking understanding of the God in whom we believe through engagement with public and ultimately universal norms of rationality, with the consequent potential for significant critique of existing tradition.¹

The monastic and scholastic visions

Anselm himself can be seen both as part of the culmination of the 'monastic' stream of theology in the first part of the Western Middle Ages, and also a key figure in the emergence of the 'scholastic' stream in the second. His writings come from a place where these two streams cross and mingle together, and that is part of what has made them such a significant resource

to which later theologians keep returning. Not surprisingly, the fact that they did not fit neatly into either of these two powerful streams constituted something of a problem in Anselm's own time and indeed beyond. As a 'monastic' writer seeking the face of God in community, his most important works are dialogue – dialogues of the interior person addressed to God (*the Prosligion, Monologion and Prayers and Meditations*), or dialogue between two people (*Why God Became Man*). That made them somewhat difficult to assimilate for the 'detached' class-room and debating style of subsequent scholastic theology, where God was not expected to be an actual partner in the conversation.

On the other hand, Anselm's fearlessness in seeking rational understanding of the truths of faith meant that his most influential works did far more than simply recycle the treasured texts of the past, biblical or post-biblical, and that fearlessness helped him become one of the most creative thinkers of the Western Middle Ages. It also left him, however, rather suspect in the eyes of some of the upholders of the 'monastic' tradition in his own time, who perhaps preferred to think that all the truth they ever needed was safely locked away on the precious shelves of their libraries. If his doctrine of God in the *Monologion* was really in line with St Augustine's teaching from half a millennium earlier, then why had he not studded it with quotations to

prove as much, he was asked. Indeed, even later scholastic writers of the Middle Ages would often distance themselves from what appeared to be Anselm's over-confidence in what reason could achieve at the service of faith. The so-called 'ontological argument' for the existence of God that he had outlined in the *Prosligion* is a case in point. It does not even appear as one of Thomas Aquinas' 'five ways' to establishing the being of God in the first part of the *Summa theologiae*, for instance.

The heirs of Anselm – training for ministry today

Of course all kinds of things have changed in the millennium since Anselm wrote, but it seems to me that people of faith who commit themselves to rigorous theological study – a category that would include all the staff and students of the Institute where I work – can still feel themselves tugged by the conflicting currents of something like these same two streams, even though their precise forms have changed. Some students will want to base themselves firmly on the starting point of faith and see theology as a matter of re-articulating truths that have been already established for the spiritual benefit of those who share that same starting point with them. That is not so far from the 'monastic' stream of 1000 years ago, though it might be more helpfully termed something like 'edificatory' today. Others will be passionate about understanding for themselves what they may have previously taken on trust and want to weigh all the arguments for and against key Christian teachings, if necessary changing their own beliefs and practices in the light of that process and encouraging others to do likewise. And that is not so far from

the 'scholastic' stream and its trajectory into what we could later call humanism.²

Neither approach is, in my view, always inherently misguided, although neither, on its own, will really suffice for theology in the context of faith and ministry today. Some people will situate themselves firmly in one of these streams – and perhaps find it difficult to understand or respect the attitude of those standing in the other, in which case some effort at mutual understanding may be called for. Some may start in the 'edificatory' stream and find themselves drawn into more 'humanist' waters during their studies – perhaps to the alarm of their friends and supporters, who may need reassuring that this shift does not of itself constitute a loss or crisis of faith. Theological faithfulness to the gift of the past cannot be reduced to endlessly commentated reproduction of texts from the past, nor can it mean the repression of questions that inevitably arise from the intersection of contemporary mentalities with the sources of our faith. Others, however, who swim perfectly happily in the 'humanist' stream may need to be encouraged to reflect carefully on how they will function in the 'edificatory' currents which are surely intrinsic to the dynamics of spiritual growth in a Church that values the repeating cycles of day and year as rhythms of its life, continually revisiting Scriptures, people and cardinal points in the mystery of our salvation. To give those yearning for good news to be proclaimed to their particular condition out of these abiding sources nothing more than a series of well-honed arguments may indeed be experienced as the ministerial distribution of stones instead of bread.

Theology for faith and ministry today surely needs to be at home, as Anselm was, in both these streams. How can this come about? Perhaps at least one vital factor is the character of that faith with which we begin the quest for understanding. Faith is not just mental assent to a list of propositions, but trust in the living God who meets us on our way. For Anselm of Canterbury, that trust enabled a confidence to seek God with all his heart – he was also one of the pioneers of the new, intensely emotional devotion of the later Middle

Ages – and all his mind as well. It is that confidence in God that underpins his passionate searching to know more. Because he was sure that truth was one, and that Christ was the Truth, there could be no final tension between, on the one hand, feeding the spiritual life of the diverse communities he served as Abbot and then Archbishop and, on the other, seeking to establish reasons for Christian believing as a thinker on the leading edge of intellectual development. He would never have put it this way, but we might perhaps recall the words of another person whose faith was inseparable from the search for understanding, Simone Weil: 'Christ likes us to prefer truth to him because, before being Christ, he is truth. If one turns aside from him to go towards the truth, one will not go far before falling into his arms.'³ The 'faith' that seeks understanding in Anselm's case is not code for a brittle defensiveness about the past or a vague sigh of truth-free piety, but a generous



and humble confidence that those who seek God will find God in Christ – and those who truly seek God with the understanding will indeed meet the one who always leads us deeper into the love that surpasses knowledge. The two streams – monastic and scholastic, edificatory and humanist – will both draw us towards the one God, the one truth, if we swim deeply enough within them, as Anselm did. 'Faith seeking understanding' remains an excellent motto not just for his writings but for all people and institutions today that study theology, as he studied it, from the love of God.

Note by editor: The idea of including a feature on St Anselm came partly from hearing Dean Robert Willis, the Dean of Canterbury, talk about how the Cathedral has recently received the gift of an altar to be dedicated to Anselm. Here

is part of what Dean Willis has written about this:

I have now learned not to be surprised in Canterbury when a visitor from some other part of the world suddenly arrives and has a story to tell or a suggestion to make. One of the most surprising of these, however, almost four years ago, was the arrival of two distinguished looking gentlemen who came without announcement and asked for a meeting. One was the Bishop of Aosta and the other the President of the Republic of Aosta in Italy. Aosta was the birthplace of St Anselm who was Archbishop of Canterbury in the late eleventh century. I offered them both hospitality, thinking that this was a courtesy call but to my surprise it was they who had come with the desire to give me something. The Bishop explained how he and the President, on behalf of the Church and people of Aosta would like to present to Canterbury Cathedral the gift of an altar carved out of the famous Aosta marble which would stand in the Chapel of St Anselm over the place where Anselm himself was buried... It would be a sacramental gesture which bridged the Anglican/Roman Catholic divide... [After various difficulties linked to gaining the necessary "permissions" the altar is now in place and] the green Italian stone in the midst of the light coloured French stone in this English Cathedral speaks of the Italian stranger who came from a French ministry to be the Archbishop of the English. Hopefully, on St Anselm's Day, 21 April 2006, the Archbishop of Canterbury will dedicate the new altar in the presence of the Bishop of Aosta, the Abbot of Bec and members of both their communities. It will be an occasion of ecumenical pilgrimage on the part of those who come from France and Italy and an occasion also of great thanksgiving for the life and teaching and ministry of Anselm. I very much hope that this simple and beautiful gift will be a sign of pilgrimage, of unity and above all of God's loving generosity in the gift of his son Jesus Christ.'

¹Cf. Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and The Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture* (Fordham University Press, 1961).

²Cf. Martin Stringer, *Sociological History of Christian Worship* (Cambridge 2005), pp. 179-83.

³Simone Weil, *Waiting on God* (RKP 1951), p. 22.

Vision – Despite the Differences



Canon Peter Garner is Diocesan Moderator of Reader Training for Ripon and Leeds Diocese and convener for the NE region of Moderators of Reader Training. His research project forms part of a PhD programme at the University of Leeds.

A Reader today has a unique place in the Church of England, but there are a wide variety of interpretations of his or her role and task and a broad spectrum of training schemes. My own experience of working with Readers as colleagues, and of sharing in selection, training and moderation, confirms this diversity of approach and practice; it also indicates the critical role held by Readers, on our behalf, as the Church of England responds to the challenges and opportunities of an unpredictable world and society.

History gives a clue to the critical place of the Reader in society and in the church, and this is something that I hope to explore in a future article. If you would like to learn about the roots of Reader ministry and its history then I thoroughly recommend *Mike's History of the Reader* which can be found on Mike Cranston's website at:

<http://www.futurechurchsouthcoast.com/index.htm> Those, who more than any, have an insight into the present and future role and task of Readers are the Diocesan Wardens of Readers and Directors of Reader Training. Therefore between October and December 2004, as part of research located in the University of Leeds, a questionnaire was sent out to these officers in the 44 dioceses of the Church of England plus those in the three armed forces.

41 of the 44 dioceses replied (93 %) some from both diocesan officers and

some from one or the other. Separately the Wardens provided 71 % and the Directors of Training, or equivalent person, 73 %. Two out of the three armed forces provided a response. There were some thoughtful and detailed replies and a great deal of helpful material. I very much appreciate the response from all who replied to the questionnaire.

The following is not a detailed breakdown of the replies since there is still much work to be done on the response. It is simply an overview that may suggest certain themes and may raise a number of questions that could be helpful to all of us who are concerned about the future of Reader ministry.

The Wardens of Readers reply

Some of the statistical information I asked for is in the Church of England Year Book but in a number of cases there was a marked difference between the figures given for active Readers by the Wardens and the 'official' yearbook figures. Even allowing for variations arising from the different times when the figures were given, the extent of the discrepancies in some dioceses suggests difficulties in diocesan record keeping or problems in communication with 'the centre'. However the overall figure was consistent at just under 10,000.

Age, retirement and place of work

The age distribution of Readers within the dioceses that responded is, 23-29 years, 5 %; 30-39 years, 3.5 %; 40-49

years, 33 %; 50-59 years, 32 %; 60-69 years, 31 %. This simply confirms the known statistic that there are very few Readers under the age of 40 in the church at this time.

Confusion arose when a question was asked about the number of Readers aged 70 or over with permission to officiate. One diocese licenses Readers until they are 75, another issues 'permission to officiate' without any question, valid until death, and others appear to make little distinction between permission to officiate and emeriti! The overall picture however is of a large number of active Readers over the age of 70, whatever they are called and however they are authorised.

There were some interesting responses to a question that looked at the type of parish in which the Reader works. From those that replied to this question 1007 (25 %) of Readers work in urban parishes, 1,403 (34 %) in suburban parishes, 641 (16 %) in Market Towns, 759 (19 %) in rural parishes and 258 (6 %) in deep rural parishes. Using Year Book figures, we learn that in London there is 0.6 of a Reader to every 10,000 of the population whereas there are 3.6 Readers per 10,000 of population in a southern rural diocese. In 5 dioceses there are enough Readers to have one for every church in the diocese and in a deeply rural diocese the 'paper allocation' is nearly 6 churches to every

Reader. This picture may suggest that we should revisit the ABM Paper of November 1998, *The Deployment of Readers: a way forward in ministry!*

Who pays and what authority?

The funding of Reader ministry varies. From those who replied to this question 11 dioceses put funding for Reader ministry and training on the diocesan budget; 18 place it in the ministry budget (or in the equivalent board or group) and 8 in the lay training budget. The Reader Council

Having looked at these licences I was left in no doubt that Reader Ministry is dependent on the diocesan interpretation and not on a national policy or programme.

What type of ministry?

A question about the type of ministry exercised by Readers produced an exciting list, including the comment from one Warden, 'practically everything done by clergy except sacramental'. And from another Warden, 'hugely varied – and we place

At least no one thought that those in authority considered Reader Ministry to be of no importance!

budget provides the funds in 2 dioceses and in 3 dioceses the money comes from those parishes that have Readers. This indicates something of the uncertainty about the place of Reader ministry within the whole of the ministry of the Church; a theme that surfaces elsewhere in these replies and in much of my other research.

The licences issued by the bishops show some interesting variations. 3 dioceses issue a very basic licence with geographical and time boundaries for the exercise of ministry plus a commendation. Others expand this in many ways with details of specific geographical areas (diocese/area/deanery, group of parishes, parish) and a list of duties and tasks, including work in schools, in an ecumenical setting, pastoral work, communion to the sick, etc. or there are references to Canon E4 or to the Bishop's Regulations for Readers.

a great emphasis here on ministry "outside" the church, at workplace etc., as modelling lay ministry'. The list included, as would be expected, preaching and leading services but it also included funerals, pastoral work, baptism and confirmation and wedding preparation, chaplain to hospital, to school, to an airport, to prison, to college, tutoring, administration, extended communion and house communion, 'in charge' of a parish, evangelism etc.

From this it is obvious that the ministry of the Reader is already moving into new areas in response to God's calling.

Perceptions of ministry

A subjective question asked how the Wardens 'rated' the way they thought church communities in their diocese perceived Readers and their work.

The response to this question

suggests that those who have contact with Readers and churches, namely the Wardens of Readers, understand that the majority of church communities see the Reader as very much rooted in the Church. He or she is there primarily as an assistant to the clergy and part of the ministry team. But there is also support for the view of the Reader in an interpretive role between laity and clergy and as a resource person.

A response that depends on personal perception was also called for when the wardens were asked 'How important do you think Reader Ministry is to those in authority in your diocese?' Useful because Wardens do have regular contact with the church hierarchy in the diocese as well as with those 'on the ground'.

At least no one thought that those in authority considered Reader Ministry to be of no importance! A percentage breakdown of the replies showed 15 % thought those in authority see Reader ministry as vital, 27 % as very important, 54 % as important and 4 % as incidental. This shows a positive acceptance of Reader ministry by those in authority although it must be noted that there are those who 'really prefer clergy'.

The response from those responsible for Reader Training (whatever her or his title)

Those responsible for Reader training described a disparate situation. Previous experience, training and study can lead to a shortened course, or in several dioceses the first year is an introductory one and only towards the end of that year is a decision made as to type of ministry for which each candidate will train. One diocese has a student-centred course and does not have year groups. 43 % of the dioceses responding run their own training schemes with no external validation, 10 % have courses that are validated by theological courses or colleges and 47 % by universities. These figures pose the question 'what is the task of the Reader and what is the appropriate training for that task?'

Figures and qualifications

Overall in the dioceses that responded to this question 59 % of the trainees are women and 41 % are men and the number of trainee Readers in each age range stands at: 23-39 years, 10 %; 40-49 years, 28 %; 50-59 years, 47 %; 60-69 years, 15 %.

	vital	very important	important	not important	unnecessary
Assistant to the Clergy	5	13	14	1	0
Bringing the real world into the church	2	9	12	8	0
Interpreter of clergy to laity and laity to clergy	2	5	14	1	1
Member of a Ministry team	7	17	6	2	1
Theological resource person for the PCC and the church	1	5	13	10	1

70 % of these trainees are in receipt of a wage, 17 % are retired and 13 % are unwaged.

The educational background of these trainees is: Graduates 41 %; Professional Qualification 21 %; Vocational Qualification 20 %; Life Experience 18 %.

This last set of figures suggests the question 'does this spread of qualifications determine the training offered or does the training offered determine those who apply for training?' Evidence for the latter is suggested where the training in one diocese produced 14 'life experience only' and 5 graduates and another diocese where the reverse is true with 14 graduates and 4 'life experience only'. Each diocese offered very different training schemes. One conclusion is that the theme of 'the task of Reader ministry and the appropriate training' has different definitions in different dioceses.

Difficult areas and selection

22 dioceses identified areas that rarely send candidates for training. The reasons given were:

- Practical: distance to learning centre, few Reader models, competition with other ministries such as NSM, OLM (Ordained Local Ministry) and authorised Lay ministry.
- Churchmanship: clergy and churches that are high catholic or low evangelical.
- Attitudes: Parishes showing 'no great sympathy for Readers', clergy with little understanding of lay ministry.
- Social factors: areas with low levels of educational achievement and low

localised lack of response.

The selection conferences organised by the dioceses that responded to this question ranged through 1 which required a residential, 19 giving a full day, 7 half a day and 8 depending on a single interview. Even if allowance is made for previous meetings with vocations officers, incumbents, Warden of Readers etc, when this selection process is compared with that required for clergy, we are provided with a clear statement about the church's diverse valuation of Reader ministry.

The training course

14 dioceses run training courses that are specific to Readers, 10 courses that are open to interested laity and 18 combine the training of Readers with training for NSM, OLM and Recognised Lay Ministers. A number of these courses are ecumenical and include Methodist Local Preachers.

The make up of the training teams (for both trainees and licensed Readers) varies considerably and in some the local incumbent is seen as part of the team and in others the assessors are included, but the overall figures are: Involvement of Laity other than Readers, 13 %; of Readers 30 %; of Clergy 57 %. These figures disguise the fact that in 6 % of the dioceses the training team is entirely clerical, whereas in others the clergy are in the minority. Readers appear as mentors, tutors, sermon evaluators, course and events designers and leaders and as officers for Reader training. The overall picture from this response is that although training for Readers

the percentages were, academic 50 %; formational 26 %; practical 24 %. This may reflect the different understandings of the task and role of the Reader in each diocese.

Completed the course – what then?

Looking to the future the Directors of Training were asked, 'From your experience what do you think best describes the trainee's perception of her or his future work as a Licensed Reader?' Understandably several of those who responded pointed out this depends on the context of the trainee's future work and on her or his own skills and knowledge. 22 dioceses included preaching, 19 teaching, 17 leading worship, 14 pastoral work, 5 collaborative ministry and 4 ministry in the Reader's place of work. Elsewhere in the replies the future Reader is described as a 'ministerial practitioner' with the 'wider world' as the place of ministry and he or she moving more into an 'autonomous ministry'.

The Licensed Reader and continued training

Continued ongoing training for Readers after their licensing presents a patchy picture ranging from detailed programmes of training to 3 dioceses where nothing is done at the moment. The training offered may be specific to Readers, or combined with clergy training or with other laity and lay ministers, or it may be a mixture of all three. The range of topics covered in training is impressive, including biblical, doctrinal, pastoral, practical, community and mission topics. Sadly a question about the 'take up' of training courses was not so encouraging with 6 dioceses averaging below 20 % or less; 14 dioceses 21-40 %; 3 dioceses 41-60 %; 5 dioceses 61-80 % and only one diocese recording an 81-100 % response. The overall figure for the 'take up of training courses is just under 40 %.

Questions for all

Wardens and Directors of training were asked, first for their thoughts on the impact of *The Hind Report* on Reader ministry in their diocese, then for an indication of any planned developments in their diocese for Reader training and ministry and finally for their own vision for the ministry of Readers in the coming years. The response to these questions was very full and detailed in most of the returns.

There were indications that a number of dioceses are experimenting with different forms of training to meet this localised lack of response.

levels of self-esteem, present day patterns of work included. One director of training wrote that, 'present training requirements for Readers work against the life demands of many and there is a perception that what the CRC/Ministry Division require and what is deliverable are getting further apart'.

There were indications that a number of dioceses are experimenting with different forms of training to meet this

remains mainly in the hands of the clergy there are many positive moves to involve Readers as members of the training team.

The respondents were asked to give a breakdown of the course curriculum into academic work, formational development and practical experience. There was a wide variation with one diocese giving 85 % academic, 15 % practical and no formational and another giving 40 % academic, 40 % formational and 20 % practical. Overall

Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church: The 'Hind' Report

There were a number of negative comments about the effect of the impact of the 'Hind' report including, 'not a great deal', 'little impact', 'very bad' and 'against the ethos of lay ministry'. Other comments were positive, identifying the impact as 'considerable', 'enormous' or 'significant'. The majority of respondents however were uncertain because 'it is still early days' and several indicated that their dioceses were already following the lines suggested by the report.

Working with the clergy and with other lay ministries was a matter of some concern. It could mean greater collaboration in training but 'It might force a division between clergy training and training for lay ministry'. The development of collaborative ministry is seen as one of the results of the implementation of the report with 'the traditional role (of the Reader) as "back-up" to clergy likely to become less dominant.'

The future

The number responding to the question about future developments shows that at least 65 % of the dioceses in the Church of England have planned developments for Reader ministry. These include the introduction of accredited prior learning and life experience into training schemes, using a scheme led by formation and journey rather than the academic/vocational package, combined training for Readers and clergy, possible deployment of Readers, consideration of changing the title of Reader to that of 'Licensed Lay Minister', more Readers responsible for extended communion, Readers working as Pastoral Assistants or becoming 'Reader-in-Charge' or 'House-for-Duty Reader' and the introduction of a Ministry Review system for Readers, plus many other suggestions.

A vision for the future

The last question was very much a 'feel free' type question in which the Wardens and Directors of Education were asked, 'what is your own vision for the ministry of the Reader in the coming years?' The answers to this question were very full and, to me, make exciting reading, although one reply suggests that there is widespread questioning whether the church needs

Reader ministry, especially at a time of interest in authorised lay ministry. 'Reader ministry is less significant'.

However the majority of those who replied see Readers as being an essential part of the structure and work of the church and they look for 'a continued increase in numbers', including an increase in younger Readers. Already in one diocese there are twice as many Readers as clergy. There is a vision of Readers providing a 'vital' ministry and becoming 'increasingly central to the mission of the church' with a Reader in every benefice. One diocese already has a stated aim of two Readers to every congregation.

The hope is expressed of a move from the view of the Reader as a minor cleric or 'not quite clergy' and for there to be 'the same appreciation for Reader ministry by the bishop as

questionnaires reflect and confirm the confused but exciting life of the Church of England at this time. We live in a multi-faith and multi-ethnic society, conscious of issues of poverty and of the use of wealth and power; enjoying new opportunities for leisure and for personal acquisitions, and at the same time faced with basic questions about our use of creation itself. Is it any wonder that as a church we question the validity of our traditional structures and understanding of ministry and mission? Is it any wonder that as a church we are struggling to find God's will and guidance at this time?

In many ways it was the response by the Church to this challenge alongside the apparent variation in Reader training schemes together with the observable diverse ministry of Readers that motivated this research. The

Historically Reader ministry has come to the fore at crisis times in the life of the church.

that shown to the ordained'. Further quotes are: 'Readers are not deacons they are defiantly lay', (yes 'defiantly' not 'definitely') and 'Readers to be seen as the best trained lay theologians in our church'. 'The Reader is to become less parish-focussed and to be a bridge ministry between the church and the world, doing theology and preaching out of secular and daily life experience.' 'The Reader should be more widely deployable and not tied to his or her home parish.'

Running through most of the replies there is a strong emphasis on the development of the integration of ministries and increasing collaboration in the mission of the church. But without question, the vision held by the majority of Wardens and Directors of training is positive, exciting and realistic.

So what?

At this stage the inter-related themes that are emerging from these questionnaires are those of (i) the struggle to define the task and role of the Reader, (ii) the implications of the Reader as occupying a bridge ministry, (iii) the problem of identifying the boundaries between Reader, clergy and other authorised lay ministries and (iv) matching ministry to a changing context.

In other words the replies to these

response to these questionnaires and to the interviews I have conducted indicates that, at this time, the Reader is carrying a lot of the pain, the exploration and the energy of this struggle and searching in the Church of England. The evidence is the growth in numbers, the certainty of calling to ministry, but defiantly as a lay person, the wide variety of backgrounds, the diversity of training schemes and forms of ministry and the ambivalence in response to Reader ministry from the 'parent body'. All this indicates a body of men and women who are clearly holding something on behalf of the church and who may, under God's guidance, be able to point the way forward, if the rest of us are prepared to look and listen.

Historically Reader ministry has come to the fore at crisis times in the life of the church. Is it possible that this is what is happening now?

I would welcome any comments that any reader of this article may have about the above or about Reader training or ministry generally. Either to Canon Peter Garner, Laver House, 29 Hell Wath Grove, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 2JT or by email peter@bellwath29.fsnet.co.uk

The Feat/Feet of a Hind: A Vision of Good Practice!

Geoff Budd is Reader at St Mary's, Luddenden in the Diocese of Wakefield, Chair of the Wakefield Diocesan Reader Training Steering Group, a Moderator of Reader Training and Chair of the Hind Reader Task Group and a member of the Hind Implementation Steering Group

Opportunity or threat; long overdue or totally unnecessary; a step towards the real world or a bridge too far. Any new initiative draws a variety of reactions and *The Hind Report/Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* has been no exception. Fortunately not every one has been as outspoken as the person who described it to me as 're-arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic' or as ill-informed as the member of the clergy who asked me what the acronym 'H-I-N-D' stood for – a copy of Crockford's is on its way to him! But within Reader circles, generally speaking, reactions have been low key and I suspect that this stems from many Readers not appreciating the relevance of the Report to the future of Reader training and the challenges and opportunities that it provides to those training the preachers and teachers of the future.

The Hind Report is not simply about training for ordination. Whilst this is clearly at its heart, the Report states that 'the review of ministerial education and the formation of clergy has been undertaken in the context of the Church's total provision for ministerial training, lay training and lay education'. This broader view leads to proposal 3 of the Report which states that 'opportunities for learning under the general title of Education for Discipleship are offered on a Church-wide basis for a range of students which might include lay people seeking to develop their Christian discipleship, trainee Readers and other lay ministers and potential candidates for ordination.' It is within this framework that Reader and Education for Discipleship Task Groups were set up as two of those charged with enabling the Hind principles to move forward.

The Reader Task Group started its

work in January 2004, working under the umbrella of the Hind Implementation Steering Group. Its remit was simple; to encourage the Regional Training Partnerships to embrace Reader Training. As a Group, I believe our Report, to be published shortly, offers positive ideas for the future of Reader training within the post-Hind context.

Responding to the challenge

The membership of the Task Group was intended to be small enough to enable the job to be done effectively and large enough to ensure that a broad range of expertise was available. The Group included the Chair of the Reader Education Panel, the National Moderator of Reader Education, one member actively involved in the delivery of Reader training and representatives of lay training at national level in the Methodist and United Reformed Churches. As Chair, I came as a practicing Reader, a moderator of Reader training and chair of my own Diocesan Reader Training Steering Group. Our deliberations were guided by David Way from Ministry Division who also formed a link with other task groups, whilst one of our members also sat on the Education for Discipleship Task Group, forming a useful link with that group which was treading a parallel path to our own.

The Hind Report identified a number of issues which we had to address:

- It placed the future of training within new Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs) and it was necessary for us as a Group to identify the strengths of such a form of organisation as far as Reader training was concerned.
- It established the principle that theological training should be within the context of current

Higher Education practice and laid down a clear expectation that Reader training courses should in future be accredited by an appropriate HE institution, something which was in place in only one third of existing diocesan courses.

- It emphasised the importance of individual learning pathways, enabling individuals to move forward in their Christian education and ministry, gaining credit for studies already undertaken and avoiding unnecessary repetition or delay.

But the aspect of Hind which challenged us most as we began to meet as a Group was its ecumenical nature. At our first meeting, as we explored the task ahead of us, our ecumenical composition came very much to the fore. It was the realisation that the number of Lay and Local Preachers training in our partner churches was very similar to the number of Church of England Readers in training, which made us resolve that we should work as equal partners and produce a report which was ecumenical in character.

This led to an analysis of our existing training schemes to see where there was common ground and where there were substantial differences. Once the barrier of denominational language had been broken and the contents of the national courses provided by the partner churches and the Church of England's national guidelines had been laid out side by side, there was sufficient common ground in both objectives and content for us to take on the challenge of writing a 'Specification for Reader and Preacher Training' which might become the





accepted course of training in all three churches. Three members of the Group spent two days closeted away producing a first draft of the specification which was to become central to our final report. Its importance is that it opens the door to training together where this is appropriate to meeting the needs within a particular Region. Of course there are areas where different elements are necessary; we remained very aware of the greater responsibility that Lay and Local Preachers have in leading worship and of the different traditions enshrined within the different churches, but bearing in mind the likelihood of a modular structure of any future training course, a majority of modules could be common. Further, this piece of work allowed us to recognise that thinking within each of our churches had moved on since the existing training schemes were adopted especially in the areas of mission and evangelism.

A new vision



The concept of Regional Training Partnerships is new and challenging, for it breaks down diocesan and denominational boundaries as far as training is concerned and introduces a new relationship between clients and providers. We remained conscious that much of the thinking was in terms of the future of training for ordination, but felt that the new structure could offer substantial advantages to Reader Training including:

- the more effective use of resources, especially human resources;
- a larger client group when developing a working relationship with an accrediting body;
- efficient and effective training provision in terms of location of centres, viability of group sizes and quality of teaching and assessment;
- keeping open and developing further, appropriate opportunities for Readers and Preachers to train alongside ordinands and/or other lay people.



Such advantages can only be accessed by throwing open doors that have until now been closed. Within the Group, we all had stories of how artificial boundaries were impeding good

practice, for example a group of two trainee Readers taking the time of a skilled teacher, when ten miles down the road there is another small group, the two separated by a diocesan boundary, or a college library with an excellent theology section where no-one has considered whether trainee Readers, meeting a few miles away, might be granted access. The job that we see for each RTP is to carry out an audit of the resources available within its area and consider how these might best be used to provide effective training for Readers, Preachers and other lay people within the churches. Of course, we were well aware that the RTPs will vary considerably in character and each will need to find a way forward which is appropriate to meeting its own needs. Outcomes therefore will vary, but we hope that the Task Group Report will at least facilitate the process.

The accreditation of courses was an area of considerable debate. As a Group we felt that accreditation enables:

- assurance that the training programme is of an appropriate standard;
- approaches to learning associated with HE levels 1 and 2 which equip people well for Reader /Preacher ministry;
- assurance that the assessment of individual students is consistent, thorough and fair;
- consistency of provision across the regions;
- access to an HE institution's resources and expertise;
- individual students to gain HE credits for reasons which could be personal, work-related or vocational.

However, none of us wished to see less academic students excluded from training as Readers or Preachers where selectors felt that they had the necessary skills and commitment, and we therefore sought to clarify the difference between an accredited course and any obligation on an individual student to work for credits. We remained firm in our belief that training must remain Reader/Preacher focussed and that the gaining of credits or a certificate must not be seen as the prime goal.

Early in our work we sought examples of existing collaborative practice in Reader training and a

number were identified. These included two or more dioceses using the same course, examples of ecumenical training, Readers training alongside ordinands for part of the course and parts of Reader courses being open to other lay people for 'educational purposes'. There were also many instances of joint post licensing/ordination training for Readers and clergy. We worked in liaison with the Education for Discipleship Task Group and would encourage RTPs to look at widening collaborative practice. A modular structure to a training course, which is likely to come through working within a higher education context, may facilitate such collaboration through certain modules being appropriate to the training of others alongside Readers/Preachers.

An ideal to aim at

In giving our Report the title 'A vision for good practice in Reader/Preacher training', we were, to an extent, putting forward an ideal. In essence this is a single accredited training course for Readers and Preachers within a Region which is based on the new Training Specification and is delivered at a number of locations which relate to where students live and/or work. Modules of the course may be shared with other lay people or with ordinands. Teaching groups should be of a viable size and students should have access to a range of resources which may be diocesan, ecumenical or college based. Learning opportunities within the region should be arranged in such a way that an individual might develop his or her Christian education and vocation in a structured and progressive way. How this is interpreted will vary from region to region, reflecting different starting points and the different characteristics of the region.

The Regional Training Partnerships are now beginning to come together and it is important that the training of Readers and Preachers is on their agenda. As a Group we believe that there is great scope for extending existing good practice and making many excellent resources more widely available. But amidst the talk of modules and accreditation, resources and finance, let us ensure that we remain focussed on Christ and the gospel that we, as Readers and Preachers, are called to proclaim.



A Vision of Ministry education in a Learning Church

Revd Alec George is National Moderator for Reader Education, and a priest in the diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Wherever we look it appears that all is change. On the shelves in the supermarket nothing seems where it was, it's as though the aisles have moved. Five channels of television have become thirty, and the screen keeps on changing shape. The phone is now the camera and you're never left alone. And once home the electronic mailbox is full of junk, spam, worms or trojan horses. All this makes the title of an old play seem very attractive: 'Stop the world, I want to get off'. But the truth is that such an action is not possible, and playing ostrich is no help either. Somehow we just have to struggle on, try to understand, master new skills, survive – and then share the delight as the fog lifts and new creation sees the light of day.

Such is the world in which we live, and so it seems also the church in which we worship, pray, witness and minister. In some places church is now on Thursday evenings as Sunday becomes the day for shopping, under-11s swimming, five-a-side football, whatever. And then the familiar hymns have gone to be replaced by songs on the big screen. No longer quiet and private devotions, hunched in the pew – now it's just as likely to be a comfy chair for working with your neighbour as part of a collective, interactive and guided response to the readings of the day. Yet in this new book, what's it called – *Common Worship?*, there we find what we grew up with. And the challenge is to know that what was and what is belong together in our experience so that we may rejoice in what will be.

For such a time as this

It is for such times as these that we are faced with a challenge to become a *Mission-shaped Church*, and into which the report *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* (The Hind report) sets out its vision. A vision of a church committed to life-long learning – committed to both permitting it and to enabling it. And doing this for all its members, and for itself, as together we seek to share the gospel in ways that an ever more secular world can both hear and comprehend.

That the response to this report has been mixed should be no surprise, for it must come as something of a culture shock in a church where so many are content to say, 'I have a quiet faith' and hold no great desire to be able to talk about it. Or in a church that has appeared to be happy to entrust the holding of knowledge and understanding to its ministers, as though it was too precious to be placed in the hands of the community of faith, let alone in those of any individual among the people. And as for seeing the gospel through the eyes of the world, or hearing it amidst the

clamour of our multi-cultural societies, it makes one think of the description of parables. But such a task is what faces the church as it seeks to become 'mission-shaped' and tries out 'new expressions' of how to be itself, witnessing to the eternal gospel in our own time.

New horizons

As part of our response to this report we are encouraged to lift our eyes and see new horizons in our education in ministry – looking both ahead and behind us on our journey. As such this is nothing new, but we are being challenged to see in a new way. Looking back, building on prior learning and experience, has been used by many as a way of shortening training by exemption from part of a proposed course of study. But working on it as essential bedrock, or expecting most people to be able to look back and to recognise their own landscape of learning, that is new. As part of that landscape we can recognise time in Sunday School, a confirmation class, adult study groups in Lent or Advent. And in future we will also see time spent in Education for Discipleship.

Then, looking ahead, it will not be a matter of occasional or rare events but rather a landscape full of sign posts indicating significant moments and opportunities. Looking into a world in which we are provided with chances to develop our understanding and practices, both learning what is new and revisiting our most basic skills and knowledge bases – there is a brave new world indeed. And if we should be timid we can look to find ourselves with companions on the journey, helping us make decisions for the future as we review the past. Reviewing how we function and perform as ministers, yes. But also reviewing how and where the church may best use our gifts and experience, alongside those of the whole community of faith, as it serves the gospel in an ever-changing world.

However if, in this changing landscape, we limit the vision of new horizons to ministers alone – then we have a problem. For the ministry of which we are part is that of Christ and we have become part of it through our baptism. In The Hind Report, and in a *Mission-shaped Church*, we recognise the challenge to claim this new vision for all, not just for those who are ministers but also for those not yet aware of what their part may be, and even for those who are still outside the fellowship of faith. It calls for us to be visionary both within the church and outside its walls in society at large. It calls for knowledge, understanding and skill in ministry to be found in the pulpit and pew, in the factory and office, in the school and community centre, in the supermarket and in our homes.

Readers and this call of new vision

To answer such a call of new vision the church needs to be able to draw upon all its resources, and especially on the

many thousands who, Sunday by Sunday, wear the blue scarf. For as my predecessor Wendy Thorpe made clear in her quinquennial report *Equipping the Saints: The Moderation of Reader training 1999–2003* it is not just in the pulpit that the Reader is able to be part of the work of calling the world to faith. It is not just in the study group that people are enabled to understand the work of God being done for the salvation of the world. It is not just in the community of faith that people can experience the loving actions of God.

But to stop there is to be witness to a tragedy. For beyond the thousands of ministers, ordained or lay, we have a vast company who are the members of the body of Christ. To realise this potential in the ministry of Christ, in the church and in the world, offers a particular opportunity to the Reader. For the experiences and understandings gained, from study and life, through theological reflecting, all provide the ground from which to help others come to understand the gospel where they are, and to become its witnesses.

So as Readers, and ministers, we need to ask ourselves how much we are committed to being part of this learning church. To examine how our own thinking and practice declare this vision. Are we people who are always open to learn, open to find our teacher in surprising places, learning from the world as well as in the church; or has our expectation been put in a well marked box labelled 'take as required'? Are we people who can help others come to understanding and courage of action, whether that be at

'Key Stage 1' or at Stage 50? Are we people who can recognise what we have learnt from our past, reviewing it and building on it, setting our own challenges for future learning? Are we able to model for others life-long learning?

In making answer to these questions we may well need the input of others: ministers, congregations, friends and family. We will all value supporters if our review is to have any rigour to it. And to help give direction we could well use the recently published *National and Ecumenical Training Specification for Readers/Local Preachers*. Prepared as the centrepiece of the Reader task group report into the implementation of The Hind Report it sets out expectations for education in the Methodist and United Reformed Churches as well as for the Church of England (for more about this turn to the article by Geoff Budd on p.**). While it offers new guidance for Initial Ministry Education it also serves as a benchmark for provision of Continuing Ministry Education as it calls on the churches to respond to current understandings in ministry formation, scholarship, and concerns of the church. You will be able to find it on the Church of England website (10- check that this is the case).

And finally we have to ask whether we are people who can get tough, who will insist that we cannot stand alone, but that it is together, as the church, that we need to resource one another and become a Learning Church. To ask, 'A Vision or Reality?'



In her own write...

It felt important to include in this issue with its focus on training some input by a Reader who had recently experienced the reality of training, so I am very grateful to **Rosie Rushton** for this lively and very personal reflection. See the end of the article for more information about Rosie – a description written by herself with characteristic verve!

I thought I had it all sussed. Having been Youth Officer (which translates as 'she who runs two youth groups while trying very hard not to be too juvenile herself') at St Peter's Church for five years, it was time, I felt, to hand over to someone less advanced in years, preferably a person who, in addition to being a totally committed Christian, vibrant in their expression of faith, was able to operate an overhead projector at the first attempt and who could face the assault course at the outdoor centre used for residential without a desire to either scream or pass out.

Of course, I didn't want to sit back and do nothing. So I prayed about it – well, no – let's be honest here. I told God what was going to happen.

'I'll be a Pastoral Assistant,' I told him. 'I'd like that.'

God at that moment saw no need to dissuade me, and so, attired in the unladdered tights and an outfit of suitably modest appearance, I approached the Rector.

'I rather think I'd like to train as a PA,' I told him.

'No you don't,' he replied, with an enigmatic smile that is well known in the parish. 'I don't use PAs. I have my own system of Lay Pastors (which I knew, I'd been one). You should train to be a Reader.'

To cut a long story short, I spent half an hour telling him why not, he spent an equivalent amount of time telling me why, and we agreed that I would think about it. My thinking usually takes the form of asking God what on earth he thinks he is up to – all I will say at this point is that God does a very good belly laugh.

As usual, he got his own way.

My first evening at Common Ground, the course which all prospective Parish Evangelists, Pastoral Assistants, Readers and those exploring ordination attend, was exciting, terrifying and bewildering in equal measure. Exciting because being in the company of so many like minded folk was uplifting; terrifying because the subject matter and content of some of the modules made me realise the

shallowness of my theological knowledge and bewildering because everyone was – well, so normal. OK, I'll come clean: I had assumed that trainee Readers would be frightfully intense and very holy; but when on the first evening, someone said to me 'I'll have it out with God for getting me into this' I realised that we were all human – the one thing we had in common was that we did actually listen to God and realise that his way always worked out to be the best.

So what of that first year? Topics as varied as What is Worship? Anglicanism – the broad church; Pushing the boundaries; liturgical dance (don't ask – suffice to say my two left feet were in their element); oh yes – and Amos.

I loved Amos. In fact, Amos was the high point of the first term. The roaring lion appealed to me and I was able to produce a Youth Service based on his teaching – one which I will use again and again.

The reading seemed daunting and I confess that some of the recommended books were merely 'skim read'. Since my time in training, I understand the book list has been

...when God calls you to do something, he never says it'll be easy.

revised; this can only be good. Better to read fewer books in detail and absorb them, than groan over a tome the size of a small bungalow, written in language that would make my Granny sound hip, and chuck it under the bed after Chapter 3.

The highlight of the year was the Residential at Bishop Woodford House in Ely. The fellowship, the worship, the crazy revue on the Saturday night all reflected one God given truth: we were growing (albeit slowly and albeit fearfully) towards a place from which we could begin to articulate our faith in a clear and positive way. The joy we all took in watching one another overcome their difficulties – be it in preaching, drama, or merely voicing their truth, was a very emotional and empowering experience.

So what of Years Two and Three? Essays. You want more? In memory, there is no more. It seemed that no sooner had one finished dealing with 'Sacrifice Then and Now' than it was time to plan a Harvest Festival or prepare a Lenten Sermon Series entitled 'Lent with Dr Luke.' We had to choose a prophet (I chose Jeremiah) and interpret his message for modern Christians; write sermons for a difficult funeral; comment on the psalms.....But yes, of course, there was more. For one thing, the tutors.

They were stunning. In Year Two, my tutor was so learned and intellectual that I feared I would be completely at sea, but her gentle manner and her delight in explaining and re-explaining something which to her must have been obvious allowed me the privilege of expanding my knowledge and my understanding in a 'safe' environment. My tutor in the final year was the most spiritual person I have ever met – but zany, off the wall, a real boundary pusher and a delight to know. I had my parish placement with her in a neighbouring parish to St Peters – but one as far removed in social, economic and worship needs as could be. During my six week placement I worked in the coffee shop situated in a busy shopping centre and frequented not only by members of that church but by many who saw it as a warm place to drink a mug of soup and chat about

anything and everything with people who really cared; I attended services held in the plant church in a local school hall; a baptism that was more like a carnival than a church service but which captured the essence of the accessibility of God's love; and I led a discussion group on homosexuality in the church which was terrifying since the participants were all of one mind and it wasn't the same as mine!

I've written about the structure of the training but so much of what I learned took place outside the curriculum itself. The friendships formed, the tears shed ('Do you think we'll ever be good enough to do this? I can't write another essay – mother in law's dying, the children say I'm always busy... what's the right answer?'); the joy of corporate worship in which every participant brings something fresh to the moment – those elements defy description.

I have now been licensed for 18 months – and I'm loving every minute of it. Well, almost every minute – I still try to avoid preaching on Revelation and I'm terrified of sung versicles at BCP Evensong. My duties include preaching at a variety of services, taking Evensong at our local residential home for the elderly, running Emmaus Nurture groups, writing and taking Family Services and sharing in taking assembly at our local Church primary school. It is all such a privilege, and no matter what else goes wrong in one's life, the joy of leading people closer to God never fades.

Just one last thing: when God calls you to do something, he never says it'll be easy. He never says that he'll write the essays for you. He never says that your incumbent won't listen to the sermon you spent three days and half a night preparing and tell you it's too wordy and you need to rethink.

What he does tell you is that if you turn to him, he'll send his Holy Spirit and inspire you. Try it. It worked for me for three years and it's still working. He really is very good at eleventh hour rescue strategies.

Rosie Rushton is an author of more than 30 books for teenagers – a market she chose largely because she has never really grown up. Despite this, she was Licensed as Reader in the Diocese of Peterborough, having been youth officer in her local parish for five years. She marvels on a daily basis at God's sense of humour in supposing that she can combine her career, her passion for her ministry, her commitment to her role of Governor at Unity College, the new C of E secondary school in Northampton and still find time to build Geomag and play fairy princesses with her grandchildren. She loves to lead Family Worship, goes to great lengths to bribe her incumbent to get her out of ruining the sung versicles at Evensong and thanks God daily for the fun he sends her way in the parish of Weston Favell.



Reader training – how was it for you?

John Young is a Canon Emeritus of York Minster. He served on General Synod from 1992-2005 and worked under two Archbishops of York as Diocesan Evangelist. He has written 20 books/booklets, including *The Case against Christ* and *Teach Yourself Christianity* (Hodder). Here he offers some incisive thoughts about Readers – and their training.

For many years I was involved in Reader training. As I reflect on that experience in the light of today's church, I'm not at all sure that we set about it the right way, even now. So I am grateful to Clare, your Editor, for allowing me this opportunity for thinking aloud.

My ideas on this are 'work in progress' but I am clear about certain important points, set out below:

1. *Readers are key players in today's church.* This is not playing to the gallery. When I was ordained forty years ago, Readers were bit-part players. Many churches had curates and a Reader's ministry was often limited to preaching the occasional sermon. Today, there are more Readers than paid clergy and you exercise a vital and wide-ranging ministry. Without you, many churches would grind to a halt.
2. *Readers are busy people – and this includes Readers-in-training.* I wouldn't ask Readers-in-training to write a single essay. Rather, I'd get them to do some listening and a *lot of talking* – in groups, to their tutors, and in public. It is the *spoken* word – not the written word – which is the stock-in-trade of most Readers, so let's concentrate on *that*.
3. *Many Readers are full members of the leadership team.* So you need the tools required for collaborative working, and for thinking strategically about the way the church on your turf should exercise its mission and ministry.
4. *Readers must have a sense of God's calling.* I don't mean a blinding light – or being thrown from your horse! I do mean a growing sense that yours is a ministry which is needed in your parish(es) and a humble assurance that you have some God-given talents to enable you to tackle it.

5. *Readers must have a deep understanding of the Gospel – the good news of Jesus Christ.* To test for an understanding of the Gospel as truly Good News, I would simply ask those considering Reader ministry to discuss (with spoken words, not on paper!) the following quotation from Desmond Tutu: 'What a tremendous relief ...to discover that we don't need to prove ourselves to God. That is what Jesus came to say, and for that he got killed ... The Good News is that God loves me long before I could have done anything to deserve it. He is like the father of the prodigal son, waiting anxiously for the return of his wayward son... That is tremendous stuff – that is the Good News. Whilst we were yet sinners, says St Paul, Christ died for us. God did not wait until we were die-able for, for He could have waited until the cows came home.' If they think like this, selection panels should accept them for training. If not, they aren't yet ready. If this seems a rather odd litmus test – so be it. Perhaps I have sat under too many moralistic sermons – and not only from Readers! Readers – like all ministers of the Gospel – must have a strong sense of the grace and mercy of God. This must inform every sermon. Yes, there's plenty of room for duty and discipline in the Christian life. But these are always set in the framework of liberation from the tyranny of law keeping and a joyful sense of our freedom in Christ. As St Augustine put it: 'Love God and do what you like'!
6. *New Readers bring many skills to their ministry.* It would be depressing if we thought that a short training course had to equip

Readers for their crucial ministry. It doesn't! All Readers bring experience and a blend of skills to their ministry. And every minister of the Gospel – lay or ordained – learns new things every day by doing the job.

7. *Readers don't just preach.* You need a range of skills. These certainly include the ability to interview others about their faith. It also includes insight into effective leadership of small groups (much harder than preaching, in my view). With Lent approaching, this skill will be in great demand and your editor has kindly allowed me to end this short article by mentioning one option on offer.

Ten years ago, my colleague Canon Simon Stanley and I decided to write a Lent Course for groups. He was a BBC Producer and parish priest and I was an author. So we hit on the idea of providing a course with a booklet and CD.

Aware that people are busy and that leading groups is difficult, we wanted the material to be interesting and – above all – user friendly. From long experience of church life we knew, too, that many people who sit in the pews are not confident about their intellectual grasp of the faith. So we decided to work the other way round – from personal experience of life (which everyone can offer) to a deeper understanding of the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

The formula seems to work. Some 40,000 people gather around the material during Lent – and at other times. We were thrilled when the *Church Times* reviewer wrote, 'the format works brilliantly'. We were even more delighted when Dr David Hope – then Archbishop of York – said, 'I think that these courses are some of the best things that the Church of England has produced over the years'.

Our course for Lent 2006, *Where is God ...?* includes the Archbishop of Canterbury, Patricia Routledge ('Hyacinth's brother was a Canon at St Paul's Cathedral. She knows her stuff!') and Joel Edwards of the Evangelical Alliance. Further details from:

www.yorkcourses.co.uk 01904-481677 York Courses Box, PO Box 343, York YO19 5YB

Young on Younger Readers

Andrew Young works as an insurance Claims Manager in Sidcup and is the Reader at Christ Church, Sidcup, in the Diocese of Rochester. He is married to Helen who is a local GP, and they have two children, Timothy, 10, and Sarah, 8. Andrew is Chair of the Planning Group for the National Younger Readers Conference which will be taking place in June this year.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young'.
(1 Timothy 4.12)

These well known words are ascribed to the apostle Paul when he was encouraging Timothy towards his 'noble task' within the church. But despite an endorsement from an apostle it appears that in the first century Timothy faced certain difficulties within his own church simply because of his age.

As the church now moves well into the twenty-first century it appears that the young may still face certain difficulties in positions of leadership simply due to their age. Yet clearly the church needs younger people to be

try to avoid further despair by reassuring such younger people that attempts are being made to address this issue.

Here and now – in June and beyond

In particular a Conference is booked for 'Younger Readers' (defined as those under 45 years old) at London Colney, near St Albans, Friday 9 – Sunday 11 June 2006.

The Conference has been planned with the aim that each diocese sponsors about two candidates and those attending will have plenty of opportunity to voice their own concerns and hopefully to be encouraged in their various ministries. We intend therefore in particular to



support network for younger Readers in each diocese that could address specific issues and concerns and help to introduce younger Readers to the national structures of Reader ministry.

It is also the intention that following the Conference a report will be issued which will try to help to address the increasing need for Younger Readers (and perhaps also the obvious need for younger people) in the Anglican Church!

There are about 90 places available at our Conference most of which we hope will be filled by the time you read this article.

The process of 'selection' has taken place through diocesan wardens of Readers as each diocese has been asked to pay the costs of those they chose to send. But places may still be available to others if you can be classified as 'younger'. If you can't come or there isn't a spare place you might like to know that we will be reporting further in future issues of *The Reader* and we would value knowing about all the younger Readers who would like to see some form of forum focusing particularly on their ministries. Please therefore feel free to contact me by email at:

andrewandhelen.young@ntlworld.com

If you are already aware of this Conference please note that further details / registration forms will be sent to you shortly.

Even if you do not belong to our "catchment area" please pray for this initiative to benefit our local and national church.

Andrew Young
(Chair of the organising committee).

It is also the intention that following the Conference a report will be issued which will try to help to address the increasing need for younger Readers...

involved in leadership to help attract other younger people into the pews and to avoid exclusively catering for the 'Saga generation'.

I am but a youth?

Previous editions of *The Reader* magazine have drawn attention to the acknowledged problems attracting 'Younger Readers' and even when they can be found it is often thought that their voice is rarely heard outside their own parishes. Perhaps they are perceived as too young to be involved in anything beyond their home church?

There are also many specific concerns for those within the younger age bracket, which do not affect a large majority of Readers, namely the pressures to balance the demands of our families (most with young children), our paid employment as well as our own churches. We are all aware of many reasons why younger people do not feel led towards the current role of Reader. My task is not to add or just reinforce such perceptions but to

allow sufficient time in small groups, perhaps regionally based, to share one another's stories/experiences/passions /dreams to help encourage our varied ministries.

The Conference is entitled *Glory to God in the here and now* with the hope that we can learn and encourage one another within the wide variety of activities / commitments of those attending, whether working in a rural, urban or inner city parish. Our keynote speaker will be Bishop Carl Cooper from St. Davids Diocese in the Church in Wales who intends to 'fire up' those attending with the need to love the word of God truly so as to be able to preach God's word. He should be able to share the experience of the Welsh churches which have recently reviewed/re-explored Reader ministry.

Further aims of the Conference are for us all to worship God and to be inspired to seek new ways that God is calling to us through our Reader Ministry.

We also hope to examine the possibility of establishing a loose

Readers – learning to help others to learn



Joanna Cox is national adult education adviser for the Church of England. In this article she invites Readers to consider how to prepare themselves for their key role as educators in our Church.

An Indian folk-tale tells of six wise **A**men who wanted to find out what an elephant was like, though all were blind. Having been taken to find one, each eagerly reached out to feel part of the animal. One man touched the trunk, and pronounced that elephants were like snakes. Another, after feeling a leg, decided that an elephant was similar to a tree. The man who came on the tusk said it was like a spear, the ear was compared to a fan, and so on. A poem relating the saga describes the resulting argument, which was

“...loud and long,

Each in his own opinion,
exceeding stiff and strong

Though each was partly in the right
And all were in the wrong”

Education and the Church

All too often the style of education we offer in the church seems to invite people to experience only part of an elephant! Leaving on one side thorny issues of appropriate content, different educational approaches are sometimes embraced without consideration or awareness of possible alternatives. The approach advocated may be that of lecture courses, Alpha or Emmaus, Sunday School, sermons, participative groups, or apprenticeship training. People are often enthusiastic about practices that they have themselves found helpful and formative. Someone for whom an Alpha course has been an eye-opener may want to replicate that approach to education – someone who has always experienced theological learning as a recipient of sermons or lectures may only recognise the potential of that approach, and so on.

In addition to selecting educational approaches based on our prior experience, methodology can be selected on the basis of what it is aimed to achieve. Given its long history, it is not surprising that Christianity has information it wants each generation to inherit, and didactic processes have traditionally

been used to share this. However the transmission of information should be only one part of the educational elephant. Kenneth Stokes writes ‘To say, as we usually do “I have faith”, makes that faith totally passive... a thing to HAVE. It lacks the full quality of movement, creativity, and sense of development that is the goal of human life. “Faith is a verb” suggests new dimensions with tremendous potential for all of us.’ We need to help people learn and develop faith, not simply transfer facts about faith. Few would argue against this, but frequently methods used to encourage faith development either impart information or exhort listeners to act in particular ways. Being told that something is desirable does not necessarily help people to engage with learning. Leading people into situations that are formative and transformative needs processes rooted in educational principles.

A role for educators?

There is educational work waiting to be done. As national adult education adviser for the Church of England, I frequently hear diocesan colleagues bemoan the shortage of people with skills needed to facilitate all the education that dioceses want to offer. Surely Readers might be ideally placed to offer assistance with such education within the church? The Canons of the Church of England lay down that, along with activities related to ‘divine service’, a Reader is also ‘...generally to undertake such pastoral and educational work and to give assistance to any ministry as the bishop may direct.’ (*Canon E 4*).

I have asked questions about perceived reasons for this staff shortage, and responses follow a repeated pattern. This describes lack of necessary skills rather than lack of people. I have been told ‘We can only get people who want to tell people things, not those who can help them

explore’, ‘Here I can’t get facilitators, only instructors’, and ‘It’s no good having trumpet players if what is needed is violinists’. Widespread experience within the church suggests that preaching and ‘telling’ are the dominant educational approach, and that many have overlooked the need to train facilitators who can use processes that encourage others to engage actively with learning.

Meeting the need

A model of education based predominantly on ‘transmission’ remains surprisingly resilient not only in the church, but also in the minds of many educationalists! Although many embrace the concept of participatory and transformative learning, the culture of much of our education has been one of academic learning, involving the transfer of knowledge or expertise from teachers to pupils. The problem is not a new one. As long as a century ago, educationalist John Dewey said, ‘that education is not an affair of “telling” and being told, but an active and constructive process, is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory.’

But transformation happens when learners learn, not just because teachers teach. There is a need for more potential trainers in the church to adopt the approach of Albert Einstein who famously said, ‘I do not teach my pupils. I provide conditions in which they can learn.’

Learning to act as an educator who can facilitate learning involves developing a range of skills and attitudes unfamiliar even to some experienced teachers. It requires the ability to carefully design and structure process that will lead students into situations where they not only have to hear (or read), but also engage with material in a variety of ways – so they can ‘mark, learn and inwardly digest’! A range of practical skills is needed for this. Educators working in this way

need to be able to plan a range of participative processes for small and large groups, carefully structure questions, and develop case studies and problem-based learning scenarios that enable learners to engage with issues. Another key is recognising the variety of ways in which adults learn and think – and therefore the need to plan differing educational activities that will enable all to participate. Other skills include developing ways to establish trust from the outset of learning sessions, and to consolidate and evaluate learning at the end. Such

hierarchical or paternalistic educational approach, towards one that sees the educator's involvement as a servant ministry. American educationalist Jane Vella says 'It takes humility even to entertain the notion that a set of learners, adults or children, men or women, professionals or community folk, come to classes, workshops or university courses with the capacity to learn as well as the capacity to listen.'

Successful facilitators also need to develop flexibility and be ready to relinquish control. This cannot be a

to scripture to remain with the church hierarchy makes clear Tyndale's belief that God speaks to all, and his response was 'If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou doest.'

Facilitation may at times seem risky for the educator, as students may learn things that the facilitator had not bargained on, possibly more than the educators themselves. In his seminal book *What prevents Christian Adults from Learning*, John Hull says, 'To be ready to learn is to be ready to admit that there is much one does not know, that one may not be entirely right.

There is even the risk that one may be proved wrong.' An American psychiatrist Thomas Szasz says, 'Every act of conscious learning requires the willingness to suffer an injury to one's self-esteem. That is why young children, before they are aware of their own self-importance, learn so easily; and why older persons, especially if vain or important, cannot learn at all.'

Learning to learn

All Readers have opted into ongoing learning as adults, and are hopefully committed to ongoing 'life-long learning'.

(continued on p.29)

...transformation happens when learners learn, not just because teachers teach.

facilitation skills can be developed, but as education expert Phil Race has pointed out, 'most teachers, educators and trainers are groomed in instruction rather than facilitation'.

A facilitator approaches the educational task with attitudes that differ from those of a preacher. To think in terms of learning rather than just of teaching makes (in grammatical terms) the learner the subject, rather than the object. This is a reminder of the importance of moving away from a

situation where, as in the proverbial sermon, the teacher is in the pulpit 'six feet above contradiction'. Facilitators' active involvement in the learning process involves stepping back from a controlling role in order to enable others to explore. It is not always easy to relinquish control: there are parallels with tales of Reformation battles over the need to make the Bible available to non-experts in the mother tongue. William Tyndale's reported altercation with a clergyman who wanted access

Treasure, mystery and play...

Rev'd Terrie Robinson is an NSM in Oxford Diocese. She works in the Anglican Communion Office, London, in the Department of Ecumenical Affairs. We hope that Terrie's description of her parish's 'Trail of Treasure' may give you ideas which could be adapted in your own church context.

When the Bishop of Reading, the Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell gathered together teams from his parishes and challenged them to plan and undertake a mission weekend, the Benefice of the Cookhams took an holistic approach, bringing the five senses into play as a means of encouraging people to engage with the treasure and mystery which flow through the Christian story.

It all started with the planning group wanting to engage particularly

with families on the fringe of the church and also to emphasise the place of the church building as a centre of hospitality and spiritual discovery at the heart of the community. The question was, how could the planning group formulate something which would make best use of its resources; appeal to people for whom the churches of the Benefice were a familiar sight rather than known places of special significance, and offer parents and children the luxury of

some time and space to find out new things together.

The result of the group's deliberations was a weekend of activities with a Sunday afternoon Trail of Treasure as its main focus. The Trail involved opening up Cookham's Holy Trinity Church, the larger and older of the two Anglican churches in the benefice, and inviting parents and children to journey through every part of the church – even those not normally accessible such as the tower's ancient spiral stone staircase and the ringing chamber below the bells – pausing along the way at a number of 'stations'. Each station offered an activity relating to one of the senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting, and aimed to articulate some aspect of the Christian faith in a way which might appeal to adults and children together.

The constant stream of people arriving during the afternoon was met by the smell of baking bread rising up from the 'Taste' station at the chancel altar (thanks to the Vicar's bread-making machine), and the fragrance of perfumed oils and candles drifting through the church from the 'Smell' station. New arrivals were welcomed and handed a printed guide to the Trail and its stations which included text-boxes of thoughts and nuggets of information about the Christian faith. Children were given a bag to collect prayer cards and pieces of 'treasure' as they journeyed along – a freshly baked bread roll from the 'Taste' station, their brass rubbing from the 'Seeing' station, an incense stick from the 'Smell' station, and so on – small reminders of the Trail to take away and talk about at home.

All corners of the building were soon alive with adults and children engaged in various activities and absorbing the special atmosphere of the place in a relaxed and happy way.

Come and see...

At the 'Sight' station, children were provided with special crayons and paper to rub over brass images set into the stone floor. With parents' assistance they were encouraged to work gently and look carefully to see what would be revealed...

Listen!

A pre-prepared recording of local voices interspersed with various styles of music, from children singing to chanting monks, meant that treasure seekers moving around the church were aware of some of the sounds which naturally found a home in the building...

A fragrant place...

A station in the sanctuary was set aside as a place to think about signs, symbols and prayer. Parents and children sniffed at cotton wool in jars, soaked with various 'fragrant' commodities from lavender oil to vinegar and tried to 'guess the smell'. They signed each

session of different types of bread, grape juice and wine and a chat about Jesus' last supper with his disciples and why people still gather together and share in the mystery of the Eucharist.

Other activities surrounded the stations. A quiz sheet kept older children busy hunting for clues in the church while waiting for grown-ups who were taking advantage of the temporary Café under the Tower. A 'community cross' inspired by the Maria Christina Gomez cross from El Salvador which depicts her faith and the everyday life of her community was assembled during the afternoon. Visitors had their photos taken, printed on the spot, and added

to a large wooden cross along with other images of the Cookhams and the life of its churches.

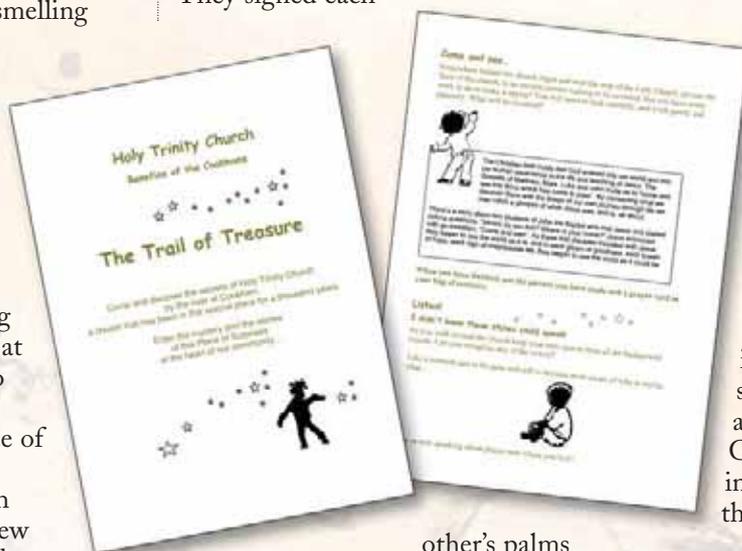
Where is God's treasure?

As treasure seekers left the church with their bags of treasure, they were handed an information pack about the churches' life, worship and activities. They were also invited to peer into the old stone baptismal font at the door and see if they could glimpse God's own treasure. A mirror set into the base of the font helped them to see what that might be!

The Trail of Treasure proved

to be an excellent way of opening up the church, making it warm, welcoming and accessible but still charged with the atmosphere of faith. As a form of mission, it's difficult to evaluate any difference that it may have made, though it was clear that adults and children were happy to take their time, engage with the activities offered and talk about God with each other. Hopefully, the Trail will have opened up some fresh thinking about the Christian faith and made a small but significant contribution to the spiritual journeys of all involved. Certainly those who organised it and took part in its running had a wonderful time and learned so much from their conversations and interaction with those who came looking for treasure.

Note: The complete text and illustrations of the booklet which was given to people as they travelled round the church on the Trail of Treasure can be found on the Readers' website www.readers.cofe.anglican.org



other's palms with perfumed oil as a way of saying 'I love you' – an unusual thing to do, but the children loved it! Perfumed candles bringing light into the darkness of the sanctuary was a good lead into talking about prayer bringing light into the dark and difficult places of the world, and visitors to the station left prayers of their own in a special book which would be drawn into the worship of the church in the weeks following. The children blew bubbles up into the air, sending their prayers to God.

Getting in touch with the story!

A rather oblique approach to the sense of touch meant that 'Godly play' was used to good effect at the 'Touch' station. During each session of storytelling, both adults and children watched and listened intently as a parable unfolded before them.

A taste of goodness

The bread basket-shaped chancel altar was the ideal setting for a tasting

**Still waiting for even
one book of the Bible –
more than half the
world's languages**

WAKE UP

IT'S
8:32

SET THE TRUTH FREE

**JOHN 8:32... THEN YOU WILL KNOW THE TRUTH,
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■ Languages with some of the Bible (2,377)
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- Someone goes blind every 5 seconds – but the Bible in Braille exists in only 30 languages. 

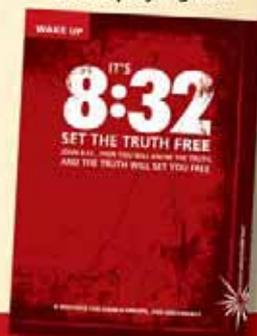
■ Languages with the Bible in Braille (30)
□ Languages with no Braille Bible (6,882)
- Many of the world's poorest are Christians, but they can't afford to buy the Bible they long for.

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Alternative lay ministries

Jan Payne is a Reader at St Andrew's Chesterton, in the Diocese of Ely. Her article reminds us of the important role Readers can play in the training of other lay people for a variety of ministries.

17 September 2005 proved to be a significant date in the history of the Diocese of Ely with the launch of the new Authorised Lay Ministry training programme. This year-long training will equip lay ministers for service in parish ministry teams, working alongside ordained and licensed colleagues. The training programme grew out of a working party which reviewed the whole nature of mission and collaborative ministry in the Diocese and the wider involvement of laity. This resulted in a published report *All Good Gifts* which may be read on the Ely Diocese website http://www.ely.anglican.org/mission_ministry/all_good_gifts/

Working under the supervision of the Director of Ministerial and Adult Learning and his team, trainees are required to undertake three terms of study. Core modules are taken by all trainees, with full-day training on the topics of Mission Communities, Developing Discipleship, Listening Skills, the Christian tradition and Local Ministry Teams. In addition, every participant engages in a further 40 hours of training in their chosen specialism which, at present, may be one of Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Worship Leading, Evangelism, Pastoral Care, Administration or Music Ministry.

Each specialism has a co-ordinator who oversees the training programme and is responsible for delivering the required course material either personally, or by the use of invited guest speakers etc. All trainees keep a personal journal and most will be required to undertake some kind of formal project in the course of the whole year. There is no written examination at the end and the emphasis is definitely on the practical aspects of ministry rather than elaborate academic study but key to all is the growth in knowledge and spiritual understanding of the trainees.

Each participant will serve in their local ministry team. For this reason,

incumbents and other members of the team join the trainees for two of the core modules and also act as supervisors throughout the programme, in conjunction with the specialist coordinator and members of the Diocesan Adult Learning team. Each candidate is reviewed through the year and authorisation at the end of the year by the Bishop is not automatic. Successful candidates in 2005/06 will be authorised by the Bishop of Huntingdon in a special service in Ely Cathedral in October 2006.

An example – music ministry

Jan is acting as Coordinator for the Music Ministry specialism. She writes as follows about this new programme: 'I am very excited by the way lay members of the Diocese have taken this programme to heart and clergy are supporting it too. We had hoped in our wildest dreams that maybe 40 people would come forward for training in this inaugural year. In reality we have over 100 now starting out on the programme with all the specialist modules well-supported.

From my perspective as a coordinator, I am finding my trainees eager and keen to learn, hungry for as much information as we can give them. These are already mature Christians who have sensed a calling on their life but have not previously been able to exercise it when only ordained or licensed ministry was on offer. Now the doors have opened and ministry in all its forms is being recognised, they have seized the chance with enthusiasm and zeal to get involved.

Personally, I believe that welcoming these new Authorised Lay Ministers to local ministry teams can only enhance the strength of a church's outreach to its community. This is not to say, of course, that all those busy serving in their churches without more formal training are in anyway inferior in their work. Far from it, but as we work increasingly towards encouraging a real sense of "mission" amongst our parish



communities, the presence of trained, authorised ministers is critical.

This Diocese is one of real contrasts between the City of Cambridge, with its rich academic tradition, and the rural fenlands with a distinguished history of farming etc. In more remote areas, the church is being kept alive at local level by lay members working under the authority of a shared priest. The more training we can give to such people the better news it is for the parish and the Diocese as a whole.

I am hugely enjoying the rich privilege of putting both my musical training and Reader training together to lead my group of Music Ministry trainees. It's time I give voluntarily but I am pleased to do so because I am learning as much from the trainees as I hope I am giving to them. The group has already become a tight-knit support team for each other and I value the friendship and enthusiasm that is evident in all our training sessions. We work together, worship together, pray together, eat together... so far we have not stayed away together as a group but who knows what the year may yet hold?

I cannot endorse this programme strongly enough – it's long overdue and, God willing, I believe it will continue to play a significant part in the development of ministry in the Diocese of Ely for many years to come.'

Theological Education for the Anglican Communion

Robert Paterson reminds us that the wider Anglican Communion is asking similar questions about ordained and lay ministry as are being asked about Reader ministry in the Church of England. He also points out with some passion that theology is not just an exercise for academics!

You're in the pulpit and have just begun your sermon in St Slumber's -over-the-Hill when a not uncommon sensation creeps over you. You wonder whether there's some kind of invisible double-glazing between the pulpit and the congregation. They're there, sitting in the pews, but totally unresponsive to you or anything you're saying.

There are likely to be several reasons for this reception, but one of them is probably serious theological illiteracy and a low expectation of – indeed, an aversion to – anything related to 'theology' or 'education'. At a time when the indications are that many of the Christians who take seriously their God-talk belong to groupings which are growing and which are affecting for good the people and societies around them, others seem to regard theological ignorance as a badge of Anglican orthodoxy! If we are ever to be able to sort out our own internal Anglican issues and to be able to offer the love of God to a hurting world we will need to raise our standards of theological literacy at all levels from archbishops to the people of God 'in the pew' – if you will excuse the foolish hierarchical language.

The servant people of God

The mission of God has been committed to the servant people of God in Christ. It is the privilege and duty of Christian leaders to provide for the equipping of the Church for this task. Central to equipping Christians for God's mission is education in the Holy Scriptures, in the teaching of the Church and in practical application of that education.

In the face of the countless tragedies facing the world today, the Christian commitment to God and his purposes for humanity is vital to being a reflective disciple. Theology is not simply an exercise for academics but the attempt by all Christian people to

make sense of all God has given and revealed to us, in other people, in the world, in our place and time, in the Bible and, supremely, in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the attempt to make connections between our daily life and the Christian experience of God, faith and life in the Spirit. It is the attempt to understand why trust in the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier makes a difference, and, in that knowledge, to be willing and eager to share God's love with others.

In many places, existing, new and renewed ventures in theological education are bearing fruit, and these examples, together with the principles on which they are based, deserve to be made more widely known.

Problems and possibilities

However, there are identifiable but not insurmountable difficulties facing the Anglican Communion in the area of theological education. The degree to which each may or may not be a problem varies from place to place. The difficulties may simply be defined as:

- a general lack of theological literacy – a challenge to spiritual life and mission in increasingly secular societies and a serious hindrance to Christians in telling the gospel story and making connections between faith and life;
- inadequate engagement with contemporary thinking, culture and society – a challenge of selecting and preparing a new generation to share Christ in a world of apparently competing faiths, secularism and post-modernism;
- some confusion about the particular callings of those involved in the Church's public ministry – a challenge in particular of practising diakonia in a range of ministries;
- inadequately or inappropriately trained priests – a challenge of relating theological and biblical

understandings to practical situations in preaching, pastoral care, evangelism and ethics, and of refreshing theology and practice;

- inappropriate practice of the particular ministry of a bishop in changing contexts – a challenge of understanding the functions of apostle-missioner, teacher, encourager, team-leader, manager, pastor, disciplinarian, public figure, example and colleague; and
- a weak or selective commitment to Christians (even to Anglicans) of other traditions and perspectives – a challenge of appreciating the positive ethos of Anglicanism and what it can contribute to and learn from others in the Christian way.

The task of TEAC

It is into that context that the Primates of the Anglican Communion set up a working group on theological education, *Theological Education for the Anglican Communion (TEAC)* which is a body of about 40 people with a good track record in the subject – for the most part, not so much theorists as practitioners – and drawn from across the churches of the Communion.

Bishop Gregory Venables, the Presiding Bishop of the Province of the Southern Cone, chairs the full meetings, your esteemed editor, Clare Amos, is Secretary and I, Robert Paterson from the Church in Wales, am Vice Chair. We have divided our work into five 'target groups':

- for Bishops;
- for Priests (making no distinction between stipendiary, non-stipendiary and local);
- for vocational/permanent Deacons and Catechists; and for the whole people of God, the Laity.

In considering theological education for the laity, we are directing our energies primarily at churchgoing Christians 'in the pew' and not at the

myriad of lay ministries found in each national church or province across the Communion. Nevertheless Licensed Readers are not forgotten! It was noted that the Deacons' Target Group was dealing with issues related to vocational deacons and catechists whose ministries are by no means identical but are often in practice related to one another: should and could this be extended further to include Readers? But, thinking worldwide, where would it stop? Since we recognise a particular need for theological education for deacons and catechists, would we lose this focus by including Readers? However, it was agreed that the Deacons and Catechists Target Group would include such lay ministries which require a bishop's licence, and that, of course, includes licensed Readers.

Across these four categories, it was agreed that there needed to be greater theological commitment to the Anglican 'way' of being a Christian and of doing theology; this led to the setting up of a fifth group, given the title, 'the Anglican Way'. Under the guidance of Archbishop Rowan Williams, this fifth group was able to start its work several months ahead of the others.

The aim of TEAC is:

- to deliver a well-focused challenge to be a Communion of Christians who read the Bible together in the fullest awareness of who, when and where we are;
- to strengthen the sense of why we are Anglicans and what sort of Church we want to be;
- to make clear suggestions as to how theological education can be delivered with appropriate professionalism and ecumenical alertness;
- to create a culture of teaching and learning in the faith community; because all Anglican Christians need some kind of theological education.

As the Apostle Paul put it:

'... to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ... speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is

equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.' (*Ephesians 4. 12-14, 16*)

A few of the many questions being asked in the Deacons, Catechists and Licensed Lay Ministers Target Group are:

- In what ways is the biblical call to servanthood specifically focused in these ministries?
- What distinct contribution do the lay ministries have by virtue of their being lay?
- What theological education programmes currently exist in the Communion for these ministries?
- To what extent should training and education for these ministries include the involvement of those engaged in such ministries?

Currently, TEAC is working on a set of grids and on developing a Resources Group. In each grid, a row across the top of each grid gives stages of preparation, training and continuing development of each ministry, and the left column provides key areas which need to be considered. So, for example, the top row may refer to 'selection', 'licensing', 'after 3 years', etc.; and the left column to 'vocation', 'spirituality', 'leadership', etc. The Resources Group will take the enormous amount of work which has been and is being done – the 'What?' – and ask, 'How?'

The Primates have affirmed their commitment to this process.

'It is our conviction that all Anglican Christians should be theologically alert and sensitive to the call of God. We should all be thoughtful and prayerful in reading and hearing the Holy Scriptures, both in the light of the past and with an awareness of present and future needs.

... We recognise that there is a distinctive Anglican approach to theological study. This is reflected not only in the way our worship and liturgical life express our belief, and in our attention to Scripture read in the light of tradition, but also in our respect for exploration and experiment. Theological education in the Anglican Communion honours each local context and, at the same time, calls us together into communion and mutual accountability. Therefore, though we wish to develop common standards of theological education worldwide,

we value the uniqueness of the work of the Holy Spirit in each place. Supportive of the Archbishop of Canterbury and, with him, convinced of this need, we affirm and encourage the work of the Anglican Communion Task Group on Theological Education.' (It is this group that was renamed as Theological Education for the Anglican Communion – TEAC)

The Archbishop of Canterbury added: 'I am convinced that we cannot be committed to the well-being of our common life and witness in the Anglican Communion without being committed to theological education and its appropriate delivery at all levels. It has become increasingly clear to me that theological education within the Anglican Communion is not as well resourced or rooted as it needs to be and that a communion-wide initiative such as this is urgently required. One of my main priorities at this stage of my ministry as Archbishop of Canterbury is the reinvigoration of theological education and I greatly welcome the decision we took as Primates to set up this working group. I shall be taking a keen interest in the progress of TEAC and offer my prayers and support to those who will be carrying out its work.'

Therefore, called by TEAC, the Communion is being asked to commit itself to the following fundamental principles:

Within our common life and worship

- we will encourage a culture of teaching and learning across the Anglican Communion to support the life of all the baptized;
- we will strengthen awareness of Anglican identity and promote an understanding of the Anglican way;
- we will be a communion of Word and Sacrament, Christians who read and study the Bible together; and
- we will strive to deliver theological education with professionalism and ecumenical awareness appropriate to context.

Will you join us and let's see if St Slumber's-over-the-Hill can be better equipped in God's mission to change the world?

Canon Robert Paterson is Adviser to the Bishops of the Church in Wales, and Vice-Chair of TEAC.



For your bookshelf

B H

Four gospels, one Jesus

Richard A Burridge
SPCK £9.99 pbk.
0 281 05678 1



Written by the Dean of King's College, London, this book examines the four portraits of Jesus in the gospels, basing them on the four creatures of Ezekiel chapter one and Revelation chapter four – a lion, an ox, an eagle and a human face. The author treats the gospels as biography and uses the techniques of literary criticism – analysis of the text, story development, plot, structure, style, characterisation, and the history of their influence. The outcome of these investigations is a mass of detail, which reveals the similarities and differences in the portraits of Jesus produced by each of the gospel writers. Dr Burridge makes many fresh and novel connections, which go well beyond the familiar and limited interests of each writer. This book will be particularly useful in a group learning session as well as providing a resource for the preacher. [Note that this is a new edition of a previously published book.]

HOWARD SAINSBURY

B

A new perspective on Jesus

James DG Dunn
SPCK £10.99 pbk.
0 281 05742 7

Subtitled *What the quest for the historical Jesus missed*, the book is based on Albert Schweitzer's famous book written almost a century ago. James Dunn believes that, 'Schweitzer simply failed to take account of the substantial debate between Jewish and Christian scholarship on the theme of

Jesus the Jew.' The book is well written and adequately indexed but I cannot recommend it for the attention of Readers who lack substantial theological background. For example the final chapter on *The characteristic Jesus* is subtitled *From atomistic exegesis to consistent emphases*. The paperback was originally published in USA and hence contains American spellings, which may irritate a British audience.

COLIN NICHOLLS

T J

Gays and the future of Anglicanism

edited Andrew Linzey and Richard Kirker
Winchester UK £17.99 pbk.
1 905047 38 x



It seems to be assumed by many Anglicans that the Windsor Report and the subsequent meeting of primates of the Communion held in Ireland has charted a way out of the crisis caused by the consecration of Gene Robinson, an openly gay priest, as Bishop of New Hampshire and the authorisation by the diocese of New Westminster in the church of Canada of a service of blessing of gay partnerships. The contributors to this symposium disagree: the Windsor report is described variously as 'wrong-headed', 'a massive blunder', and 'radically off course'. The 22 essays are written by leading academics mostly working in England though a sprinkling come from the USA. They are widely respected scholars, including the present and former Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford and the current Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity as well as the Dean of Christ Church and the principal of Cuddesdon theological college.

The Windsor Report itself [reviewed in *The Reader*

Volume 102 No.2 page 19] is mainly concerned with recommending structures, which would strengthen the bonds, which bind the Anglican Communion together so that constituent churches would need to seek endorsement for any innovation they proposed to introduce.

The contributors to this volume believe that two other matters which receive only peripheral attention in the Windsor Report need to be tackled – the nature of homosexual orientation and practice and the nature of biblical authority. The essays overlap with one another but are none the worse for that. They are scholarly, eloquent and forthright in their criticisms of Windsor but written with great love for the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

The problem goes back in the view of some writers at least as far as *Issues in Human Sexuality* published by the bishops in 1992 which fudged the issue by introducing an entirely indefensible distinction between laity and priests in homosexual relations. Gareth Jones believes that the church must confront the 'visceral and abiding hatred of homosexuals' on the part of some Anglicans not least in Africa and Asia. He regrets that this book is least likely to be read by those who most need to hear what it says. He accuses the church of moral cowardice for its failure over the years to face the truth for fear of offending the biblical fundamentalists and splitting the church.

Every contribution to this symposium is worth reading but it should be read and pondered in particular by those with responsibility for guiding the future direction of Anglican thought worldwide.

PETER WATKINS

B T P

The Jesus creed

Scot McKnight
Continuum £8.99 pbk.
0567 0403 3x

The central theme of this book is the dual commandment to love God and to love others – the latter being Jesus' additional emphasis to the traditional prayer of Israel. The author deals with the concept of invitation to, and inclusion in, God's table. He recounts the important relationship to Jesus of John the Baptist, Joseph, Mary, Peter and John and he writes of the Kingdom as a goal. There is sensitive thought about forgiveness and insight into the significance of Jesus' baptism, temptations and transfiguration. Finally we are led to the last supper, the crucifixion and resurrection. The writing is lively and a Reader would find help in sermon preparation though the book is overloaded with quotations and occasionally lapses into American slang.

GEORGE MACKNELLY

T J S

Tomorrow's Christian

Adrian B Smith
O books £9.99 pbk.
1 903816 97 1



Many Christians struggle to reconcile their inheritance of faith with their experience of the world they live in. Some retreat into fundamentalisms, others move from intellectual to emotional religion. The author of this book, an American Roman Catholic priest who has worked in Africa, looks at those who continue the struggle and in 36 short chapters he examines the likely characteristics of such a person in the future. Each chapter concludes with several questions. The book would be ideal as a basis for group discussion. It is provocatively radical yet firmly based in the church's often forgotten



teaching. Many chapters could also provide material for preaching as well as group work. It is written in a style which presents profound thinking in an accessible way.

IAN YEARSLEY

J S

Into the Promised Land

Jeanette Howard
Monarch £7.99 pbk.

1 85424 676 3



This is a brave book. It is honest, punchy and written with conviction. It tells the story of Jeanette Howard's struggle with lesbian feelings from the standpoint of someone who does not believe it is compatible with her Christian faith to express these feelings in a sexual relationship. She reflects honestly on her previous book *Out of Egypt* which told the story of her journey to Christian faith. Since then her faith and life have had their struggles including a period of depression but she is confident of God's continuing love for her and in this knowledge she moves forward. Most of the book is based on the biblical journey of the Israelites in the wilderness. Here she finds a rich resource for her own journey. Her exegesis is personal not scholarly. It is a weakness that we rarely meet the Jesus of the gospels in these pages. While not all will agree with the author's conclusions the book provides a useful insight for Readers who are involved in counselling people with homosexual orientation.

JANICE PRICE

T J

Science and religion

Jean Dorricott
SCM £14.99 pbk.

0 334 02975 9



This is described as an undergraduate Level One textbook. The author describes the universe, conscious life

and ethical attitudes as seen by scientists. Religion features as a constraint on the historical development of science, and as a possible basis for ethics. Scientific developments which currently cause concern are described but little is said about the contribution which religion may make when considering them. Each chapter concludes with questions and a book list. These provide an understanding of the subject, which is more positive towards religion than the text.

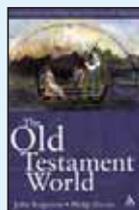
JOHN TAYLOR

B

The Old Testament World

John Rogerson and Philip Davies

T & T Clark
£14.99 pbk
0 5670 8488 4



This is a completely revised edition for 2005 of the 1989 original. The authors draw on recent scholarship in archaeology and biblical study to enhance our understanding of what we call the Old Testament (Jewish Scriptures or Hebrew Bible). They explore chronological accuracy, political and theological interpretations given to various passages both within and beyond biblical times. As though X-raying an old master painting, the authors demonstrate that what at first sight appears to be the finished article has often been changed, perhaps by the original author or by later admirers and editors or even by people seeking prestigious support for their own agenda in different contexts. Even the so called historical books should be viewed as 'stories told for a purpose' rather than factually accurate accounts. Particularly interesting are chapters defining the varieties of 'prophet' in the ancient near east; the extra-

biblical myths of other cultures of the time; the fluid nature of political and social boundaries before the eighth century BC with nomadic people weaving in and out among petty principedoms; description of six different genres of wisdom around the fifth century bc and Jewish apocalyptic writing outside the Old Testament. Least satisfactory for Readers today is the first chapter on the 'Geography and Ecology of Ancient Palestine' because we have come to expect colour rather than black and white photographs and maps to accompany even the text. The final two chapters explore the varieties of 'Judaisms' that shaped the context of the world of Jesus and the early Christian church. This is an excellent book for Readers in training and, for the rest of us, a timely reminder that scholarship marches for ever onward.

DAVID SELICK

T S

Delighting in the Trinity

Tim Chester
Monarch £7.99 pbk.

1 85424 685 2



Dr Chester argues that the doctrine of the Trinity is not optional but central to the Christian faith and a tool for evangelism. The book is an intellectual roller coaster but a convincing case is made. The author's research covers theologians from Tom Wright to Kenneth Cragg, Anselm to Moltmann. The middle section of the book is a very useful history of how the doctrine of the Trinity evolved with potted biographies of key protagonists. The book could be more concise in places, the argument less laboured. Clearly an evangelical, Tim Chester says much of value to those outside his own tradition. A topic for all to wrestle with, and this book is not a bad place to begin.

SUSANNE MITCHELL

T H J

The right true end of love

Stephen R White
Columba £9.50 pbk
1 85607 484 6

The title of this book comes from John Donne's *Elegies* but the author's theme is better described by his sub-title *Sexuality and the contemporary church*. Its central thesis is that an adequate theology and life-giving ethics are vital to a valid approach to sexuality. Dr White who is Dean of Killaloe and Clonfort in the Church of Ireland uses St Augustine's model of the Trinity – God the Lover, the Beloved and the love which flows between them – to argue that we should be at home with our bodies and that sexuality, for long suspected in the Christian tradition, is intrinsically good. The book was written before the publication of the Windsor Report but Dr White devotes an epilogue to identifying what he sees as its flaws. Above all it puts ecclesiology before theology. There can, he suggests, be no justification for the fudge by which a homosexual lifestyle is accepted, though grudgingly, for laity but is unacceptable for priests and bishops. This is a profound and important study of a range of crucial issues facing the Anglican Communion discussed in brief compass. It should be read by all concerned not just about sexuality but about the future of the Communion.

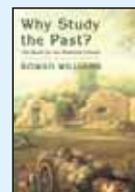
PAUL WILLIAMS

H T

Why study the past?

The quest for the historical church
Rowan Williams
DLT £8.95 pbk.

0 232 52549 8



Sub-titled *The quest for the historical church*, Archbishop Rowan's expanded Sarum lectures will repay detailed study. The eleven pages of



references alone offer a treasure house of further reading. In the first chapter the Archbishop asks what we expect from the past, starting with the statement that 'when people set out to prove that nothing has changed, you can normally be sure that something quite serious *has*.' The second and third chapters look at early church history and the reformation era, before we are brought up to date in the final section with discussions of authority in the church, and inter-faith dialogue. Whilst seeing that there are always gifts to be received from the past, he suggests that 'good historical writing...constructs that sense of who we are by a real engagement with the strangeness of the past'. This deceptively slim volume provides an introduction to a deep and interesting subject, making the case for a greater understanding of our spiritual history in order to inform our current mission.

RICHARD NEWNHAM

H T

Doctrine and practice in the early church

Stuart G Hall
SPCK £18.99 pbk.
0 281 05509 2

This is the second edition of a book first published in 1991. It is a scholarly, well written book covering the period from the early spread of the gospel to the fifth century. It is divided into 22 well-balanced chapters and provides a thought provoking account of the development of the early church, an area which Readers in training do not often study. It helps us to see where the liturgy we regularly use has its origins. The author was professor of ecclesiastical history at King's College, London from 1978 to 1990 and this book evolved from his years of teaching and research. It would be of value particularly to Readers in training studying early church history and would be a welcome addition to the diocesan Readers' library.

HUGH MORLEY

W E

A guide to preaching

edited Roger Bowen
SPCK pbk. £9.99
0 281 05726 5

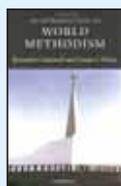
As part of the International Study Guide series this comparatively short book (166 pages) touches on a number of topics related to preparing and delivering sermons and a few indirect means of preaching such as drama or poetry. It opens by briskly describing a method for preparing what would probably turn out to be a memorable sermon. It is written by Roger Bowen very much with Africa, as well as England, in mind. He has also assembled six short contributions from David L Edwards as well as African voices such as Esther Mombo, and David Gitari. The sermon is seen as being very different from the lecture. With so much in so short a space some topics could do with more depth. Having said that, this could be a very helpful book to any new Reader, or even old hands who want to review their approach.

JOHN MUNNS

E H

An introduction to world Methodism

Kenneth Cracknell and Susan J White
CUP £45 hbk. £16.99 pbk.
0 521 81849 4 hbk.
0 521 52170 x pbk.



Methodism, like Roman Catholicism and the Anglican Communion, is a worldwide movement claiming some 75 million members and adherents (compared with about 78 million claimed by the Anglican Communion). The Methodist Church world-wide however represents two distinct traditions: both originate in the British Isles with the preaching of John Wesley but even before his death in 1791 a separation into British and American strands had taken place. Each spread throughout the world in

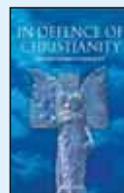
the course of the next two centuries. The authors of this study are an American Methodist who has lived for many years in Britain and a British Methodist who has lived in the USA. Both at present hold academic posts in the United States. The book starts with four chapters which describe the development of both strands historically. There follow six chapters on topics such as Methodist theology, spirituality, worship and social ethics. The final chapter is concerned with Methodism's ecumenical and interfaith commitments. The treatment is authoritative but readily accessible. Readers involved in the recently signed Covenant between the Methodist Church and the Church of England would find this book a valuable resource.

PETER WATKINS

T

In defence of Christianity

Brian Hebblethwaite
OUP £16.99 hbk.
0 19 927679 x



Brian Hebblethwaite, formerly university lecturer in divinity at Cambridge, sets out a clear case for the truths of Christianity. The evidence is not intended to provide proofs but to offer a firm buttress to support already accepted faith. The author believes that if there is a God it is reasonable to expect him to reveal himself. No one piece of evidence is crucial but a cumulative case can be made which is the best explanation for the world as it is. He includes natural religion, the history of religions, incarnation, resurrection, Christ and the church, Trinitarian belief and moral consciousness. The final chapter provides an excellent survey of the way Christianity has impacted on the world as it is. The book is well argued and contains over 300 references to quoted authors. It is not

however an easy read, rather a valuable student primer in apologetics.

DEREK WOOD

H

The Evolution of the Church

Marshall D Johnson
Continuum £16.99 pbk.
0 8264 1642 X

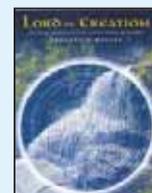
This book provides a helpfully brief overview of Christian history, subtitled *Twelve crises that shaped the church*. Each of the twelve sections has a conclusion summarising the author's analysis. This is an original approach and is thought-provoking. The layout is very clear and the index, footnotes and suggestions for further reading make it a helpful study tool. The treatment of the various crises does, however, vary greatly in length, diminishing towards the present. Admittedly it is difficult to take a bird's-eye view of the recent past but I found the latter part of the book frustratingly brief and some of its analysis obscure. Furthermore the conclusions seldom directly answer the questions posed at the beginning of each chapter. This is not necessarily surprising, given the nature of the questions, but I found that this detracted from the value of the chosen structure.

LESLEY MICHELL

S J

Lord of Creation

Brendan O' Malley
Canterbury Press £17.99
1 85311 619 X



This book, subtitled *A resource for creative Celtic spirituality*, offers a holistic approach to the spiritual life. For as the author contends, whilst society has 'largely lost touch with the environment', it is seeking some kind of spirituality, and is attempting to 'bring about an embodied spirituality'. He does this by suggesting the use of dance and other physical awareness



exercises. The book is large and contains more than enough to satisfy those looking for innovative ways to explore Celtic worship. These include relaxation techniques and meditations, and the imaginative use of the breath. The result is often reminiscent of the New Age movement, though this is not the author's intention. However some of this material will require a great deal of courage to introduce to more conservative or cautious Christians. Accompanying the exercises is a large section of Celtic prayers, which should prove useful in preparing services. This book will provide resources for those leading quiet days or for anyone seeking new ways of refreshing worship.

MARIE PATERSON

S T E

The new SCM dictionary of Christian spirituality

edited Philip Sheldrake
SCM £50 hbk. £25 pbk.
0 334 02984 8 hbk.
0 334 02955 4 pbk.

This Dictionary is warmly welcomed and commended. Of a hundred and eighty contributors nearly a hundred are from North America and fifty from the United Kingdom. There are none from South America, Asia, Africa or the Middle East. In the index of names Thomas Merton appears twenty-three times and Michael Ramsey once; Teresa of Avila forty-six times and Lancelot Andrewes twice. The general user will find many stimulating and informative accounts of new thought. Most articles have excellent and up to date reading lists although determination will be needed to locate some papers published in distant universities. In what follows please assume that each subject mentioned is discussed in relation to Christian spirituality.

Nearly six hundred pages of entries are introduced by

thirteen substantial essays covering, among other subjects, definitions of spirituality, followed by its relationships with mysticism, culture, history, psychology, science and theology. The Editor's contributions, standing out for their interest, include an informative and clear account of postmodernity, an essay on history and a timely examination of cyberspace. Among subjects by other contributors that caught the attention of this reviewer are a penetrating analysis of ageing by Peter Coleman, a disappointing skip over the surface of music by Don Saliers and a masterly digest of resurrection by Bishop Tom Wright.

Preachers will find much material to inform sermons. Conventional subjects are well dealt with and perhaps less expectedly sport, leisure, business and disability. There is an exemplary entry on Islam and Christianity. Accounts of sexuality take a liberal view that will not go unchallenged. The hardback at £50 is likely to be found in libraries but the paperback is good value for individual purchase.

NORMAN CHATFIELD

S P

Casting off

Ruth Scott
SPCK £7.99 pbk.
0 281 05696

The title of this book suggests that life is thought of as setting out to sea and the headings of the seven chapters underline this as does the sub-title *Finding faith for change*, which the author argues is the essence of the religious life. She illustrates this from her own varied experiences. She trained as a nurse, was ordained as an NSM, becoming a peripatetic priest (her own description), taught at home and abroad, broadcast, specialising in a ministry of humour and literally, clowning. The style of the book mirrors the variety of her experience and some

readers might find its choppy nature a little bewildering but it does give a sense of the change which we all have to face on our Christian journey and which the author has faced with humour and courage. She quotes Cardinal Newman: 'Here below, to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often'. This book provides an invitation to cast off before we become too attached to the familiar shore.

MARGARET CLARKE

T S P

The Holy Spirit

Mateen Elass
Geneva Press
£8.99 pbk
0664501370



This book is compulsive, but not comfortable, reading. A preamble on language sets the tone for a succinct, full consideration of the nature of the Holy Spirit and of spirituality. I appreciated its excellent definitions and each chapter contains statements which caused me to question my own attitudes. The idea of using 'comfortless gruel' at a funeral service might shock some into reappraising their own attitudes too! Each chapter begins with a divergent but apt analogy, leading to an affirming explanation of attributes of the Spirit. The author is unequivocal in stating that the Spirit is a person and that we must be properly tuned in to him.

People of the Spirit are discussed with seven insights and four realities, with scriptural references to support each. A chapter on styles of worship states that Spirit-filled worship should convey a sense of expectancy. Another chapter deals with spiritual gifts and warns against assuming they may be deserved, owned or categorized. The idea of a 'good virus' permeating the church prevents the measurement of spiritual depth according to attendance. I cannot recommend this short challenging volume too highly.

It will be invaluable for personal or group use and definitely for Reader candidates.

CYNTHIA WHITTLE

B

The Old Testament

John Holdsworth
SCM £14.99 pbk
0 334 02985 6



We have all had experience of books advertised as an 'introduction' or in this case a 'study guide' which are pitched at a level which is far from introductory or just too simplistic to be of much use. But John Holdsworth's study guide to the Old Testament admirably fulfils its role. He writes in a deliberately informal style (too much so on occasions) so that his chat through the complex scholarly debates is not only accessible but positively intriguing. Dr Holdsworth's advice to the student is to read each chapter consecutively so that the appropriate scholarly ideas can be compared and contrasted as each new area of the Old Testament is studied. The preliminary chapters deal with historical criticism, source criticism and the more recent developments in literary, canonical and contextual approaches. Although the Guide does not advocate a particular method, there is no doubt that Dr Holdsworth feels that the present literary approach has liberated the text from the often stifling obsession with historicism of the last century.

The first half of the book gives an excellent survey of the literature associated with the JEDP traditions. I especially enjoyed the discussion comparing and contrasting D's and P's theological responses to the exile. This was then developed in the second half of the book surveying prophecy and prophets and the alternative wisdom tradition. Every chapter clearly sets out what its aims are, what should have



been learnt by the end of the chapter, and the most up to date and accessible reading appropriate for the topics covered. I shall definitely be recommending it to Readers in training in my diocese but it is a book I shall want to refer to frequently when I need a reliable guide to distinguish the trees from the forest of Old Testament scholarship.

MICHAEL WILCOCKSON

T E

Kissing Cousins

Bill Musk

Monarch Books, £10.99 pbk 1 85424 675 5

In this book sub-titled *Christians and Muslims face to face* Bill Musk uses the analogy of an extended family to explore the question of Christian-Muslim relations. The book begins by exploring those things which we have in common (prophethood, scripture and the doctrine of God), it then turns to an examination of how the two religions developed and how each understands the concepts of sacred and secular before turning to the question of understanding Christ in Christian/Muslim relations. This book is a fascinating read and answers many questions that Christians might have about our Muslim 'cousins', as Bill Musk chooses to call them. There is plenty here to challenge, to inform and probably also to disagree with but it is an excellent place to start for anyone who wants to become better informed about Islam and the beliefs that unite and divide us.

PAULA GOODER

And finally ...

Here first of all are four books for Holy Week and Easter. John Pritchard, Bishop of Jarrow, has written *Living Easter through the year*, which

is sub-titled *Making the most of the Resurrection* (SPCK £9.99 pbk. 0 281 05709 5). *This is the night* by James W. Farwell is subtitled *Suffering, salvation and the liturgies of Holy week* (T. & T Clark £19.99 pbk. 0 567 02760 0). *The scriptures, the cross and the power of God* is by Tom Wright, Bishop of Durham (SPCK £7.99 pbk. 0 281 05770 2). It provides nine sessions covering the Passion narratives from Palm Sunday to Easter in a pocket-size book. *Leaning towards Easter* (Chris Leonard SPCK £7.99 pbk. 0 281 05612 9) provides daily readings exploring the major themes surrounding the period from Ash Wednesday to Easter Monday.

Moving on in a mission shaped church (Church House £5 for a pack of five copies, 0 7151 4078 7) offers advice on how churches can respond to the report *Mission-shaped church* which was published in 2004. This new publication provides background and discussion questions and lists some of the changes being introduced nationally to help churches develop fresh expressions.

Robert Atwell, Vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill, has compiled three books each containing 100 readings – they are: in celebration of marriage and love, in celebration of birth and parenthood and for those in grief and bereavement. They are entitled respectively *Love*, *Gift* and *Remember* (Canterbury Press each £9.99 pbk 1 85311 600 9, 640 8 and 641 6).

Diana Witts served for 25 years with the Church Mission Society becoming in 1994 its first woman General Secretary. She has written an autobiography entitled *Springs of hope* (The Memoir Club £8.99 pbk. 1 84104 133 5)

Citizenship, community and the Church of England (Matthew Grimley Clarendon press £25 hbk. 0 19 927089 9) is subtitled *Liberal Anglican*

theories of the state between the wars and is a study of the various attitudes taken by the Church of England to the General Strike of 1926, the Prayer Book crises of 1927 and 1928 and the approach to, the conduct of and the aftermath of the Second World War. Its central character is William Temple.

Dr Stephen Tomkins, a journalist and church historian has written *A short history of Christianity* (Lion £8.99 pbk. 0 7459 5144 9) It covers 2000 years in 250 pages in a racy and journalistic style.

John Gunstone's *A touching place* subtitled *The healing ministry in the local church: a practical handbook*, is a brief guide in 85 pages likely to be useful for anybody wanting an introduction to the topic. (Canterbury press £7.99 pbk. 1 85311 631 9)

John Madeley is a Reader

who specialises in Third World issues. He has produced *100 ways to make poverty history* subtitled *An action pack to change your world* (Canterbury press £5.99 pbk. 1 85311 683 1).

Recent Grove Books likely to be of interest to Readers include Ev.71 *Towards the conversion of England* (Geoff Pearson 1 85174 599 8) P102 *The soul in leadership* (Roland Riem 1 85174 594 7) S 93 *Henri Nouwen, wounded healer* (William Ruddle 1 85174 593 9) S 94 *Creative learning in the local church* (Meg Orr 1 85174 600 5) W 184 *How to use symbol and action in worship* (John Leach 1 85174 598 x) and W185 *Mothering Sunday* (Em Coley 1 85174 603 x). Each costs £2.95 including postage and packing, from Grove Books, Ridley Hall Road, Cambridge CB3 9HU.

Readers – learning to help others to learn

(continued from p.18)

Happily, Readers training courses often now use a wider variety of educational methods in their own teaching than was the case in the past, which results in those recently licensed being increasingly aware of more dimensions of the educational elephant than their predecessors. Currently Readers' courses are also being asked to look at how they prepare people to be adult educators, and some basic work on this is being included in more of the preparation offered to Readers.

But there is also a need within the church for more Readers to develop as educators who can use facilitation methods. Christine Hogan, an educator, facilitator and consultant, likens facilitators' skills to a toolkit, which 'continues to grow and expand with use. The more you put into it, the more you get out...The deeper you reach into it, the more you realize there is to learn...Experienced facilitators have literally hundreds of tools in their toolkits, and are selective in choosing when and how to use them, because if your only tool is a hammer, all your problems will look like nails'. Or, like with the elephant, you may not realise there are alternative approaches to education.

References

Christine Hogan, *Practical Facilitation* (2003), John Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning* (1985), Kenneth Stokes *Faith is a Verb* (1989), Jane Vella *Taking Learning to Task* (2001),



Gazette of newly admitted and licensed Readers

CHESTER

15 OCTOBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Linda Buckley, St Matthew, Stretton
 Linda Clarke, St Michael and All Angels, Crewe Green
 Antony Doust, St Martin, Low Marple
 Barry Edge, St Paul, Stalybridge
 Valerie Erskine, Emmanuel Conventional District
 Janice Gilbert, Christ Church, Birkenhead
 Val Gilchrist, St Thomas, Norbury
 Veronica Johnston, Christ Church, Chester
 Rob Morsley, St Oswald, Bidston
 Robin Mosley, St Mary, Doddleston
 John Pemberton, St John, Dukinfield
 Ella Sharples, St Mary Magdalene, Sale
 Jennifer South, Christ Church, Tintwistle
 Debbi Stott, St Andrew, Bebington
 Gerri Tetzlaff, St Mark, Lache-cum-Saltney
 Sam Upham, Christ Church, Moreton
 Christopher Viney, St John, Dukinfield
 Alan Ward, St Anne, Sale
 Rita Waters, Stockport South West Team

EXETER

22 OCTOBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Valerie Atkinson, Haldon Team Ministry
 David Cain, Little Dart Team Ministry
 Joyce Cappello, Paignton
 Yvonne Childs, Little Dart Team Ministry
 Elizabeth Corner, Archdeaconry of Exeter
 Michael Davison, Littleham-cum-Exmouth Team Ministry
 Audrey Hill, Culm Valley Team Ministry
 Emma Laughton, Colyton, Musbury, Southleigh and Branscombe
 David Rushworth, Barnstaple Team Ministry
 Patricia Stuckey, Haldon Team Ministry
 Martin Turner, Culm Valley Team Ministry

Licensed

Anne Casson, Moretonhampstead, Manaton, North Bovey and Lustleigh
 Robin Jarvis, Barnstaple Team Ministry
 Susan Robinson, South Molton Team Ministry
 Eileen Saunders, Brixham Team Ministry

GUILDFORD

19 JULY 2005

Admitted and licensed

Alan Ferrier, Parish of Cove
 Nick Hardy, Christ Church, Virginia Water
 Michael Hodson, Christ Church, Guildford with

St Martha-on-the-Hill

Ursula Johnston, St John the Baptist, Busbridge
 John Kellagher, Heatherside LEP Church, Camberley
 Simon Loveless, St John the Evangelist, Stoke-next-Guildford.

HEREFORD

21 AUGUST 2005

Admitted and licensed

Alwyn Bulbeck, Birch Group

18 SEPTEMBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Len Dixon, Kington and Titley

20 NOVEMBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Hilary Underwood, Ledbury Team

LONDON

14 SEPTEMBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Stephen Fletcher, St Stephen, East Twickenham

John Goold, St Stephen, Hounslow

Jennifer Mullaly, Christ Church, Turnham Green

Alexandra Proctor, Holy Trinity with St Paul, Hounslow

Matthew Taylor, All Saints, Laleham

24 SEPTEMBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Olayinka Ademiluyi, All Saints, Friern Barnet

Iyabode Agbelusi, Christ Church, Hornsey

Cindy Kent-Winsley, All Saints, Friern Barnet

Sally Reeve, Christ Church Trent Park, Cockfosters

24 SEPTEMBER 2005

Admitted and permission to officiate

Barbara Ross, St Anne, Brookfield

28 SEPTEMBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Edward Bunting, United Benefice of St Vedast, Foster Lane

Glenys Duppa-Whyte, St Benet, Paul's Wharf

Roger Shaljean, St Martin-in-the-Fields

Robin Thomas, St Mary, Abchurch

16 OCTOBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Ann Fuller, St John the Baptist, Pinner

5 DECEMBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Joan Elvin, Holy Trinity with All Saints, Dalston

Helen James, St John the Baptist, Hoxton

Michael Keyte, All Saints, Poplar Team Ministry

John Martin, St Mary, Bow Road,

Ian Mylam, St Mary Islington

Heather Wood, St Augustine, Highbury New Park

MANCHESTER

25 SEPTEMBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Michael Burton, Emmanuel, Holcombe
Eunice Coates, Horwich and Rivington Team
Ann Eckersley, St Chad, Tonge Fold
Margaret Hill, St Michael, Flixton
Debra Johnstone, Christ Church, Harwood
Pauline Jones, Langley and Parkfield Team
Alicia Kerr, Christ Church, West Didsbury
Sheila O'Flaherty, St Anne, Haughton
Elizabeth Pass, Christ Church, Walshaw
Richard Petrie, St John, Thornham
David Thomson, Christ Church, Harwood
Robert Williams, Holy Trinity, Bardsley

NEWCASTLE

8 AUGUST 2005

Admitted and licensed

Gloria Cadman, St Francis, High Heaton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Josephine Kulke, St Cuthbert, Blyth
Ann Nugent, St Cuthbert, Brunswick, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
John Oscroft, St Mary, Fawdon, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Fiona Sample, Bolam with Whalton and Hartburn

WAKEFIELD

2 OCTOBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Sheila Christie, St Jude, Halifax
Alan Dunlop, Upper Holme Valley Team
Susan Hulme, The Resurrection, Kinsley
Suzanne Kettle, St Matthew, Lightcliffe
Colin Painten, St Matthew, Lightcliffe
Cindy Sheard, St Mary, Gomersal
Licensed
Jean Hannam, St Matthew, Rastrick

SALISBURY

8 OCTOBER 2005

Admitted and licensed

Gerald Allum, Bradford Peverell, Stratton, Frampton and St Nicholas, Sydling
John Bentall, Canford Magna
Cynthia Buttimer, Clarendon Team
Bernard Groves, St James, Trowbridge
Elaine Marsh, Loders, Aserswell and Powerstock
Gillian Morgan, Clarendon Team
Enid Powell, Calne and Blackland
Eric Stevens, Lytchett Minster
Osbert Tun Pe, Blandford
Licensed
Anthony Eyles, Whitton Team
Penny Jackson, Dorchester Team
Richard Jackson, Dorchester Team
Jennie Rake, Blandford and Langton Long



In Memoriam

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

Birmingham

John Hibbs

Carlisle

Desmond Kitchin
Ealcy Smith

Chester

David Webb

Coventry

PA Aston
Roy Tankard

Durham

JJW Fryer
John Reynolds
OJ Bjorkeroth

Hereford

Shelagh Daniel
Arthur Morris
Hugh Sandford

London

Frank Downing

Monmouth

Christopher Bloomfield

Oxford

Roger Hancox

Southwell

HA Derry

Wakefield

K Wilson

Winchester

Nigel Devereux
Elizabeth Harris
Sheila Hay
Peter Ruffle
Margot Townsend

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

Gleanings

Rock or Sand?

Giving voice to the Word in an age of uncertainty.

This is the title of the conference being organized by the College of Preachers 5 – 8 June 2006, at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. The organizers describe the conference as follows: 'The age we live in has moments and aspects of great exhilaration for the human race...but is also an unsettled age of danger, fear and uncertainty. Christians are not immune from this atmosphere, and Christian preachers, called to speak the Word of a faithful God, need to understand the times in which we live. We shall be exploring some of the burning questions around today for all preachers alert to what is going on around them.'

- Is there a difference between 'faith' and 'certainty'? If so, what is it?
- How does a preacher deal with his or her own doubts and fears, and nurture a mature faith which can be shared?
- In a society of many different 'faiths', how do we share our Christian 'faith' with both conviction and grace?
- What part does the Bible play in our faith and preaching?
- How can preaching take account of advances in science and help people to understand them in a framework of faith?

The main speakers at the conference are: Gregory Heille OP, Professor of Homiletics at Aquinas Institute of Theology, St Louis; Michael Iprgrave, Archdeacon of Southwark, previously Adviser on Interfaith Relations for the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England; David Wilkinson Lecturer in Theology, University of Durham and Methodist minister; Stephen Wright Director, College of Preachers.

The programme will also feature well known preachers, and an interesting selection of workshops. The cost is £275 in single accommodation and £260 in shared (both en-suite). For more details about the conference, or for more information about the College of Preachers, contact:

The College of Preachers
Spurgeons' College
189 South Norwood Hill
London
SE25 6DJ

Telephone: 020 8653 0850 or 020 8768 0878

Website: www.collegeofpreachers.org.uk

Gospel in Context

Fulcrum are holding a day conference with this title at St Mary Islington, Upper Street, London N1 2TX, on Friday 28 April 2006, 10:00am to 4:00pm. Key speakers will be Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York speaking on 'Among Many Churches' and Professor David Ford of Cambridge University speaking on 'Among Many Faiths'. Cost £15. To book visit the Fulcrum website at www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk or write to Revd Simon Cawdell, The Vicarage, Lodge Park, Claverley, Wolverhampton, WV5 7DP

Reader debate in General Synod

There is time for no more than five private members' motions at the General Synod each year, so I've had rather more than my fair share, two in the past six years. Indeed I think I'm unique in having moved more than one. The first,

in February 2000, was on the decline of religious broadcasting and it attracted a large amount of national media coverage and led to my writing a book *Losing Faith in the BBC*. This time the subject was more church orientated but no less timely.

Last November, at the first meeting of the new Synod, I tabled a motion prompted by many expressions of concern that Readers were being underused as a result of the development of new categories of lay and ordained voluntary ministry. When I offered for Reader ministry almost a quarter of a century ago, in my diocese there were only Readers and stipendiary male clergy. Then I was regularly used outside my own parish; now I lead worship more often in Methodist than in other Anglican churches.

It's useful to be able to back anecdote with statistic if you want to persuade other members of the Synod to sign in support of a motion. In November I was able to show that the number of Readers-in-training had fallen by 18% within the four years to 2004. Since then I have discovered that the reduction has been no less than a third in the 8 years to 2004. The other significant statistics come from *The Ministerial Review Survey* of the Diocese of Lincoln (2005). Almost half their Readers led public worship less frequently than once a month and a similar proportion was involved pastorally less often than once a month.

We have Readers who are better trained and more thoroughly assessed than ever before, yet as a Church we are stewarding this huge resource rather badly. Others appeared to agree. Following coverage in the *Church Times* I've received a good number of letters and e-mails, one from a former diplomat and university vice-chancellor who has served as a Reader in five dioceses, including Europe! Some have strong views, most sense some malaise and all believe a fresh look at Reader ministry to be long overdue. The General Synod seemed to agree and passed the following motion, as amended by Peter Capon: 'That this Synod, aware that the work of the ten thousand Readers is crucial to the mission of the Church, requests the Archbishops' Council to consider how this nationally-accredited office should be developed, and Readers more fully and effectively deployed, in the light of the welcome recent introduction of a great variety of patterns of voluntary local ministry, both lay and ordained.'

The *Church Times* reporter pressed me to say what was my ultimate hope for the Reader movement, 140 years old in its present incarnation this year. I refused to be drawn on that. I simply said that I wanted a study of the way in which these new forms of ministry are impinging on Readers, for they have been introduced by the bishops with little or no consultation and in isolation. Watch out for the next new titles – ordained pioneer ministry and lay pioneer ministry. These follow *The Mission-shaped Church report* but they have been agreed by the House of Bishops without speaking either to the Central Readers' Council or to the Church Army which, to put it kindly, seems strange.

Nigel Holmes

We will carry a full report of the Reader Debate in the General Synod on 8 February in our next issue. Meanwhile you can read more about it on the Reader website

www.readers.cofe.anglican.org and you can also send your views to the site for publication or contact Nigel at

nigel@gcorby.plus.com

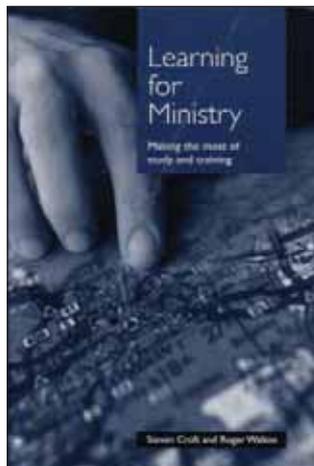


Books on St Paul

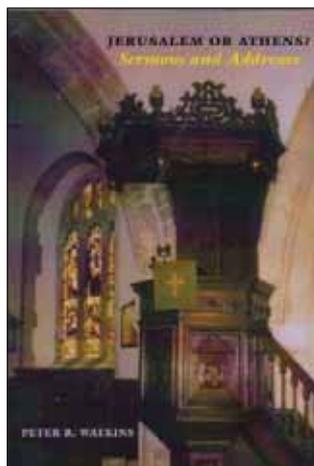
A couple of issues ago (August 2005) the magazine focused on St Paul – and among other features gave a run-down of useful books. Two that did not get a mention – but are certainly worth knowing about are Tom Wright: *What St Paul really said* (1997, Lion) and Walter Wangerin: *Paul: A Novel* (2000, Lion). Tom Wright's book is an example of the Bishop of Durham in popular mode – in the best sense of the word. His chapter on Justification makes very helpful sense of what is a very difficult to understand theologically. Walter Wangerin's book is a novel – one of a series that includes the famous 'Book of God' and more recently, 'Jesus'. It gives a vivid, even though in part fictional, insight into Paul's turbulent life. Thanks to our readers who drew these books to my attention.

New books

Two new books to draw to your attention – outside the 'normal run' of book reviews. Church House Publishing has recently produced *Learning for Ministry* written by Steven Croft and Roger Walton, priced at £12.99. With the focus on this issue of *The Reader* being on training concerns, this is well worth drawing to your attention. It is designed for people who are about to start training, and would provide an ideal handbook both for candidates for ordination and those training for Reader ministry. The key thrust of the book is to try and alleviate the 'fear factor' which many people experience as they start training for ministry. How do you write an essay – when you haven't produced one for years – if ever? What does theological reflection mean? Will studying the Bible as part of training challenge or weaken my faith? Both Roger and Steve are experienced theological trainers and the book is written in an accessible style.



The second book is very different. It is produced by a Reader, and is the fruit of his many years of experience in the pulpit. More specifically it is produced by Peter Watkins, the Reviews Editor of this journal, and without whose invaluable work this editor would not be able to function! It didn't seem quite right to place a comment about Peter's book in the section for which he is responsible. The book is entitled *Jerusalem or Athens? Sermons and Addresses*. The sermons it contains are of excellent quality – we will feature one of them in the coming (May) issue. It is obtainable from Swanmore Books, 7 Crofton Way, Swanmore, Southampton, SO32 2RF, priced at £10.00 + £2.50 p&p.



The Last Word

I am writing this to you on the Feast of the Epiphany. This once again gives you a sense of the timescale – irking but inevitable – under which this magazine is produced. So much can happen between the date by which material needs to be in the hands of the Editor, and the date on which the issue appears. And this time, something very important to the future of Readers and of lay ministry in general will have happened by the time you read this. At its meeting on 8 February, General Synod will have discussed a motion recognising the value of lay ministries of all kinds, asking the Church to examine ways in which our morale can be boosted where it is low and, more importantly, ways in which we can be more effective in our work for Christ.

Whatever the outcome, this debate will have been the first time for many years that lay ministry has specifically occupied the mind of Synod. Reading the debate verbatim might be a little dry (have you ever tried reading Hansard?) but all Readers should try to make themselves aware of what is happening, and to consider what sort of contribution they might make to any continuing discussion. If you are one of those Readers who feels isolated, undervalued and even demoralised, perhaps this is the chance to make suggestions as to how the situation might be improved. Wallowing in self-pity is counterproductive, of course, and complaining about specific situations may be little better, but the Synod motion has recognised a malaise, perhaps even a sense of helplessness amongst our ranks which we really must address. Ideas please! The most obvious route for contributions is to write initially to your Diocesan Warden of Readers asking him/her to bring a copy of your letter to the AGM at Newcastle University over the weekend of Passion Sunday.

As I write, the figures of the magi are being placed around the crib in the chapel of the convent where I do my 'other' job as administrator. They remind us that the thrilling message that God has become man in the Christ child, which we like them have accepted in faith, is one that it is imperative to spread to those who have not heard or believed. As theologians, preachers and teachers we have a special part to play in this mission. So please pray for and contribute to the debates about our future. We have a gospel to proclaim. We owe it to Jesus whom we serve to ensure that we carry out that proclamation as effectively as possible.

With every good wish,

Alan Wakely
Secretary, Central Readers Council.

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H E L D I N C A M B R I D G E

6 A U G U S T T O 1 1 A U G U S T 2 0 0 6

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- Revd Professor Michael Langford – ‘Liberal Theology, Origen to Westcott and Hort’
- Revd Dr James Lawson, Corpus Christi College – ‘St Augustine’

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