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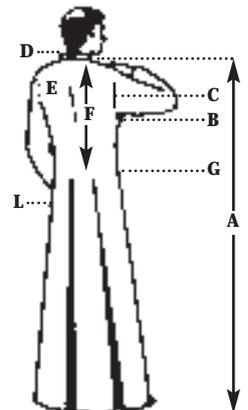
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THE R E A D E R

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Cover Photograph 'The Crucified Tree Form'
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Spring 2001 Volume 98 No. 1

THE READER

This issue contains:-

APOCALYPSE NOW!
– Chris Rowland.....2

I SHALL PRAISE YOU LORD OF GLORY
– Kathleen Kinder.....4

READERS AND THE PCC
– Gareth Morgan.....6

**FAMILY LIFE 8
AND THE CHURCH**



THINKING ABOUT THE FAMILY
– David Gamble.....8

SAPLINGS OF FAITH
– Sue Doggett.....10



**11 FAITH AND
THE WORLD OF WORK**

FAITH AT WORK IN DAILY LIVING
– Hilary Ineson and Peter Middlemiss.....11

LAW AND GOSPEL
– Leslie Rees.....13

'NOW I DON'T HAVE TO SPELL IT!'
– Dot Hooker.....14

**THOUGHTS 15
ON THE HOLY CITY**



A REFLECTION FOR PASSIONTIDE
– Clare Amos.....15

FISHING IN THE NET.....16



**17 QUESTIONING
BBC RELIGIOUS OUTPUT
– BOOK REVIEWED**

REVIEWS.....17

GAZETTE.....21

GLEANINGS.....24

THE LAST WORD
– Pat Nappin.....25

This first issue of 2001 is graced by a wonderfully evocative painting on its cover. It is entitled *The Crucified Tree Form* and is part of the national Methodist Art Collection. The Art Collection is one of the best-kept secrets of the Methodist Church – it is an extensive collection of religious art, currently kept at Westminster College, Oxford. I particularly cherish this picture because of its ambiguity: are we looking at the crucified Jesus or are we seeing the tortured shape of a tree? Or does one somehow melt into the other? Whenever I see this picture my thoughts always turn to a poem by the Irish writer Joseph Mary Plunket. It is well known in Ireland, far less so in Britain. But it seems very appropriate to quote as we approach the season of Lent:

'I see his blood upon the rose
and in the stars the glory of his eyes,
his body gleams amid eternal snows,
his tears fall from the skies.
I see his face in every flower;
the thunder and the singing of the birds
are but his voice – and, carved by his power
rocks are his hidden words.
All pathways by his feet are worn,
his strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,
his crown of thorns is twined in every thorn,
his cross is every tree.'

(Joseph Mary Plunket, 1887-1916).

In turn Plunket's words link us to the theme of this issue of *The Reader*. Borrowing from George Herbert's famous poem 'Teach me my God and King' our strapline this time is 'In all things thee to see'. We are exploring how God can be seen in the whole of life and creation, not just the religious bits. He is with us in our family lives, in the worlds of children and older people, in our workday experience, in the rough edge of reality such as those in the police service are forced to contend with. God can even be found in PCC meetings! We explore all these concerns in this issue. The sense of God's presence in everything is also a particular insight of Celtic Spirituality, as Kathleen Kinder sets out for us. As Plunket graphically puts it, 'His crown of thorns is twined in every thorn'.

You will probably be receiving your copy of *The Reader* shortly before George Herbert's Day, which falls on 27 February. He is one of my favourite Anglican saints! Another verse from Herbert's poem reads 'The man that looks on glass, on it may stay his eye, or if he pleases through it pass, and then the heavens espy.' That verse sprang to mind when I first came across a beautiful prayer about Reader ministry written by Debbie Gill, a Reader in Durham diocese. I quote it here:

Almighty God, whose Spirit stirs and calls us into service,
We give you thanks for all the different areas of ministry,
For the testing of vocations, both lay and ordained.
On this day we praise your name because, in the gifting of your people you have called out men and women to serve as Readers.
Equip them, we pray, for this particular ministry worked out in the life of everyday.
Give them wisdom in preaching, compassion and humility in their daily living,
And make them transparent as glass,
through which may be discovered the vision of your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ,
Who with you and the Holy Spirit
be worshipped and adored now and for evermore. Amen

'Make them transparent as glass, through which may be discovered the vision of your Son.' What an aweinspiring challenge to live up to this Lent for all who engage in Reader ministry!
Clare Amos, Editor



Apocalypse now!

In the weeks immediately after Easter this year the Book of Revelation features as one of the readings in the Revised Common Lectionary.

Professor Chris Rowland, the Oriel Professor of Biblical Interpretation at the University of Oxford, has contributed this reflection to help us prepare to use this very different book in our worship and our preaching. Professor Rowland is an Anglican priest with a particular expertise in the field of apocalyptic. He is deeply committed to drawing links between the biblical tradition and the challenge to live more justly in our world.

For centuries preachers in the Church of England were not forced to wrestle with the book of Revelation. Apart from the occasional echo of its evocations of the future on Saints' days and festivals it was hardly read in churches. That is not to say that people were not interested in it for a variety of other reasons. Learned scholars pored over its symbolism in the hope of understanding the secrets of human history. It is worth remembering that the apocalyptic books of the Bible exercised as much fascination for Isaac Newton as the mysteries of the universe. In times of upheaval, for example in the turmoil after the execution of Charles I, the Beast of monarchy and state power seemed to have been tamed and a new Jerusalem was not far off, when sorrow and sighing would flee away. Radical interpreters like Gerrard Winstanley (and in a similar tradition) John Bunyan used the images of the Apocalypse¹ to speak of their struggle and hope for a better world under God. For most of us, however, the part that Revelation and its kindred scriptures have played in the apocalyptic scenarios of right-wing politics and fundamentalist religion instinctively make us shy away from it. That move is a dangerous one and risks losing a book which inspired Blake and the mystics as well as many others and leaving it to narrow-minded interpreters. In the 1930s Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: 'the church must be a community, which hears the Apocalypse and testifies to its alien nature and resists the false principle of inner worldliness'. The problem is that most of us rarely do hear and when we do we are put off it. Yet, as Bonhoeffer realised, as the storm clouds of repression and persecution gathered, a church which ignores the resource of the Apocalypse in its struggle with the principalities and powers of this age risks missing the means of carrying out a central part of its prophetic mission. What I hope to do in this brief sketch

is outline some of the ways the book has been interpreted and sketch some means by which it may help rather than hinder preaching the good news of Jesus Christ.

There have been several ways of interpreting Revelation. Firstly, the book has been treated as a relatively straightforward account of the end of the world. It is then usually linked with other prophetic and eschatological texts like Daniel, Ezekiel and 1 Thessalonians 4.16ff to produce an elaborate eschatological scenario. Secondly, the visions are related to their ancient, first century context. Thirdly, the images are regarded as an account of the struggles facing the individual in the life of faith. Fourthly, the book is used as an interpretative lens with which to view contemporary history. Revelation becomes a gateway to a greater understanding of God and the world. The main contours of apocalyptic interpretation were already set within the earliest period of Christianity. The book of Revelation points the way in various respects, some of which are paralleled elsewhere in the New Testament. There is a visionary appropriation of scripture in which the words offer the opportunity to 'see again' what had appeared to prophets and seers in the past or become a means of prompting new visions whereby there can be a discernment of higher spiritual realities. Revelation, although it only occasionally prompts that quest for the meaning of the mysteries, (*eg Revelation 17.9 compare 1.20 and 4.3*), has prompted scores of ingenious attempts to unlock its mysteries. This kind of detailed deciphering is very popular among conservative Christians today, particularly in North America.

In my view, to 'decode' Revelation and so make it into a thinly disguised route-map to the way history ends, fails to take seriously the apocalyptic medium. Apocalyptic startles, questions, even disorientates before pointing to a fresh view of reality by its extraordinary imagery. Of course, throughout the history of interpretation it has proved impossible to resist the temptation to decode, whether in the imaginative reconstruction of Revelation's past situation or in the distillation of its symbols into a historical programme, past, present or future. Apocalyptic imagery beckons us to see things from another, unusual, point of view and being open to the possibility that difference of perspective will enrich our view and lead to difference of insight.

An infinite vision

One of the reasons that Revelation is such a difficult book to read is that its panorama is too big for most of us to cope with. However hard we try we cannot tame its message and the scope of its concern. It compels us to recognise the vastness of God's concerns and the scope of God's justice. We would prefer a spirituality which concentrates on us as individuals. We may focus on the letters to the seven churches which fall more easily within our grasp or the hymn of praise to the lamb that was slain, but thereby we scratch the surface of the Apocalypse. It is the threat of overwhelming passion that refuses to be tied down which is a poignant reminder of the chaotic passions within ourselves and our world. Revelation refuses to allow us to narrow our vision. It rubs our noses in

It startles, questions, even disorientates before pointing to a fresh view of reality by its extraordinary imagery.

all of that. The striking imagery demands that we see the prosaic and ordinary as in fact extraordinarily threatening to God's way.

Harmless words and actions are shown as of ultimate significance. Revelation's symbolism refuses to allow us to remain indifferent to the consequences of ignoring human responsibility for the denial of God's justice. There may be a variety of ways of doing that. The beasts symbolizing the powers of evil and the defenceless, gentle Lamb are evocative ways of bringing to the surface the horror of personal and corporate feelings of destructive power and the way to their transcendence.

Unless we can recognise the sub-human urges which have led to so much destruction, then we shall continue to disinfect the instruments and language of destruction with the deceitful words and phrases that we have used to cover up our preparations for human annihilation. We constantly need to be reminded of the reality of our discourse and realise that notions which may seem to be constructive and relatively harmless in fact reflect an attitude which is sub-human.

A mirror of the soul

The church has long recognised the importance of owning the whole spectrum of our feelings within the context of the liturgy. Hence we read the psalms which embrace their celebration of God's tenderness and deliverance as well as the fierce outbursts of pain and the demand for vengeance. There are often going to be times when we need to own that sort of feeling in God's sight. To deny them and drive it underground is to risk it bursting out in a far more virulent form. To own our feelings and to talk about them is the start of healing; to deny them is the insidious process of heaping up a fire of resentment whose destructive capability knows no bounds. Revelation reminds us that the darker side is not to (indeed, cannot) be hidden from God, because God is in it. The message of Revelation 6ff, for example, holds up a mirror to our world. The word of the gospel of the Lamb contrasts with the violence, death and destruction which human selfishness and exploitation of the weak has brought about. Nothing could be more telling than those words which climax the list of Babylon's wealth in Revelation 18.12: 'human lives'. A theology 'after Auschwitz and Hiroshima' cannot escape wrestling with such injustice. A Christian theology which does not find itself stumbling again and again on the scandal of suffering has never taken seriously the scandal of the execution of Jesus, the Word made flesh.

A charter of hope

Not surprisingly, Revelation is an important text for the poor and marginalised. It portrays a God who remains faithful with oppressed people

even at the expense of the upheavals necessary to set the covenant between God and humanity right again. For God to leave things as they are in the hope that the oppressor may be turned is a denial of the character of God. Revelation's protracted account of upheavals leading to the vindication of the righteous in the millennium is a sign of God's pledge for justice and a demand upon those who identify with God to maintain the cause of right and the work of the Spirit who promotes this inside and outside the church. To identify with that kind of God means to be engaged in an upheaval both in oneself and in the world which will bring about change. That comes not by violence but 'washing one's robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb'. It will mean non-conformity and incurring the displeasure of those who promote injustice: 'no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is the name of the beast or the number of its name' (*Revelation 13.17*).



The Lord and the Lamb' from 'Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry'

The forms of non-conformity to the Beast and Babylon will be many and various. In an age when Christian influence is on the wane and the distinctiveness of an alternative vision of social order most necessary, the challenge of Revelation is needed more than ever. We shall go to it in vain for a blue-print. We shall, however, find in it a 'wake up' call to complacent and satisfied followers of the Lamb that was slain. Those who persist in their identification with the God of justice will not expect peace and quiet. They will not be left to get on with their own lives. They will be part of that process whereby the justice of God challenges and prompts repentance. They will bear the cost and look for vindication. In reading Revelation we celebrate the character of that covenant God and recite promises of hope and longing for the vindication of that better way.

¹ 'Apocalypse' (with a capital A) is an alternative name for what is more commonly called the 'Book of Revelation'. The word is drawn from the Greek and means 'the revealing of what is hidden'. It is the title preferred by many Roman Catholic writers.

Revealing Revelation

You may find it useful to have a note of recent commentaries, books etc that are available, which will further illuminate the Book of Revelation. First there is Chris Rowland's own commentary, in the Epworth biblical series, *Revelation* (1994, ISBN 0716204932) in which Chris explores Revelation more extensively using a similar perspective to that suggested here. There is also a helpful *New Testament Guide* on Revelation by John Court (who contributed an article to the last issue of *The Reader*). This, an introduction to the critical issues surrounding the book, is in the series of Sheffield New Testament Guides (ISBN 1 850757054).

Also from Sheffield is a very recent commentary in the Sheffield 'Readings' series, by Jonathan Knight, which argues that the writer of this book is warning his readers about the dangers of social accommodation with their urban environment. (ISBN 185075 967 7). The Roman Catholic writer Jean-Pierre Prevost has written a book *How to Read the Apocalypse* in the popular SCM 'How to Read...' series (1993, ISBN 0334021014) explores the symbolism of the book particularly effectively. The President-elect of the Methodist Conference, Christina Le Moignan, has recently published *Following the Lamb: A Reading of Revelation for the New Millennium*, (Epworth) which explores the book from a pastoral dimension, asking about its relevance to our situation in the new millennium. (2000, ISBN 0716205378).

Having scrupulously not referred to *Partners in Learning*, the ecumenical worship and learning publication, while I was its editor, I feel freed to mention it now I have moved on! The April-August 2001 volume of *Partners in Learning* includes a five week theme on Revelation, which comes at the point when Revelation appears in the lectionary, and makes use of the lectionary readings. The theme encourages people to use this biblical book as a tool of worship and prayer, for both adults and older children. *Partners in Learning* is obtainable from Methodist Publishing House Tel. 01733 332202.

Finally there is a superb website devoted to music, art, writings etc linked to the Book of Revelation. Check it out at http://www.lmu.edu/faculty/fjust/Apocalyptic_Links.htm
Editor

'o ye sky, praise the
 name of the Lord,
 oh ye trees, praise
 the name of the
 LORD,
 praise the name
 of the LORD,

I shall praise you Lord of Glory

In the August 2000 issue of *The Reader* we reported how **Kathleen Kinder** had been awarded the Archbishops' Diploma with Distinction for her work in the area of Celtic Spirituality.

It is very appropriate to include an article from Kathleen in this issue, with its focus 'In all things thee to see', since the ability to realise that God is present in the whole of life is a treasure taught by the Celtic saints.



When I began my study of Celtic Spirituality for the Archbishops' Diploma for Readers in 1996, I saw the need to get back to original sources. 'Spirituality' I interpret to be how the Celts lived their lives in the light of Christ. The Celtic saints did not suffer from the dualism we often experience. For them the physical, material world was interwoven inextricably with the spiritual, a fact I had to accept if I was to get anywhere near understanding what they believed. Moreover, I've come to appreciate the value of that approach in my own life and work as a Reader.

Before my study, I had read and enjoyed many of the most popular books on the subject, but more often than not I was left with a suspicion that these presented Celtic Christianity in a romantic and nostalgic manner which pandered more to the needs and inadequacies of the present time than served the cause of historical accuracy. My task was to recapture and represent as accurately as possible the faith of communities

which lived from 1000-1500 years ago. I also had to recover and present what I saw was of value to my contemporaries and indeed to recognise how to apply my discoveries to my Reader ministry. I had two main sources: texts (extant from 500-1000 AD mostly) and iconography in the form of illuminated manuscripts and stone crosses of the period. A favourite holiday occupation of my husband and myself for several years now, has been to visit and study the Celtic carved crosses in Ireland, Northern England, Cornwall, Scotland and Wales. Celtic art and sculpture have largely been neglected in the search for what Celtic spirituality was all about. Only recently has it been recognised, for example, that inherent in the figures in the Book of Kells is a similar symbolism to that in Orthodox icons. There is a historical link here, of course.

Saints and symbolism

Although I read the best of the modern writers on Celtic Christianity, my primary sources were the small collections of 8-9th century poetry, histories (especially *Bede's History of the English Church and People*) and hagiographies of the Celtic saints. In many cases, the latter were written by friends or near contemporaries of the saints themselves, for example, Adomnan's *Life of St Columba*, Jonas's *Life of St Columban*, Sulpicius Severus' *Life of St Martin of Tours* and the anonymous contemporary who wrote the *Life of St Samson of Dol*.* Some modern critics pour scorn on the hagiographies. They point out quite rightly that these represent a genre of writing which we cannot accept as fully factual in the modern sense, because the lives of the saints were written to inspire faith in a credulous people. Stories of miracles occur in the Lives as often as do matter of fact happenings.

The more hagiographies I read the more engrossed I became and the more I realised that far from wallowing in a sea of fiction I was moving through a world of symbolism the truths of which I only began to grasp upon a second and third reading. Take the story of St Winefride (Gwenfrewi in Welsh). Winefride was a beautiful virgin who was pursued by Prince Caradog, who cut off her head when his advances were refused. Her head was stuck back on again by her relative, St Beuno (Caradog melted into

nothingness!) and she lived to become a saintly nun and head of a convent. I considered this story to be a bit of lurid fiction until I read further about the Celtic veneration for the head, believed to be the seat of the soul as well as of the brain. If Winefrie's head had been left separated from her body, Caradog would have had power over her in the next world as well as in this, but Winefrie was Christ's holy virgin and Beuno was called upon to see that Christ alone had the victory.

When Winefrie's head rolled to the ground, a spring of water appeared miraculously. Whenever I drive into North Wales on the A55, I take a break at Holywell and visit the bubbling waters of her well shrine, the only one in England and Wales to remain unscathed by the Reformation. Holywell is in the care of the Roman Catholic Church, but it draws people in their thousands from all churches and none.

The great cloud of witnesses

Since my study of Celtic spirituality, I have become more visually aware of the 'great crowd of witnesses'. The Christian Celts believed they were surrounded by saints past and present, who prayed with them and for them. In St Columba's Rule, the monks are urged to pray for each 'faithful dead as if he were a particular friend of thine.' Celtic communities were small and constantly felt threatened by evil forces. The 'armour of Christ' and an invisible wall of saints gave the Celts protection. Carved crosses served as boundary markers and spiritual sentinels as well as providing 'sermons in stone' for an illiterate people. Celtic Christianity has also a lot to teach us in our dialogue with New Age paganism. The gods and goddesses of the Earth were 'baptised unto Christ'; they were not dismissed as superstition.

I realised early in my study that Celtic Christianity was based on nothing less than a strict monastic form which had its origins in the deserts of North Africa and which was part of an early western catholicism. In response, I try to observe a regular daily Rule based on Celebrating Common Prayer and know the benefit of it. Because the Celtic Christians were tribal-based and lived in primitive, barbarian lands with

few land communications, much of their Christian witness took place locally by drawing others in. Those near the coast became great sea



Statue on Holy Island of St Aidan, missionary to northern England

travellers. Some hagiographies tell of men and women who were solitary and who set off to find their 'place of resurrection' where they could live out their Rule until death took them to their Lord. As with the Desert Fathers, the hermits often drew others to visit them for healing and advice. St Columba set off with companions to found a

monastic community on arrival at his destination. St Columban who travelled around Europe, was one of the few who could be described as an itinerant evangelist but who also founded monastic communities wherever he went. Consider what power houses for the Gospel those communities became! Maybe, there is something there we can learn about being the Christian community for our locality. Do we draw others in, and then out again to serve the world?

The most serious misconception about Celtic Christianity is that its beliefs about Creation and the environment were similar to those held by many modern environmentalists.

Praise the Lord, all creatures

The most serious misconception about Celtic Christianity is that its beliefs about Creation and the environment were similar to those held by many modern environmentalists. The canticle that was most commonly sung in Celtic monasteries was the Benedicite in which every living thing is called upon and animated to give praise to the Lord. Human beings are no higher or no lower than any other part of God's Creation. All are called upon equally to give God the praise due to Him. You will not find in Christian Celtic writings the other biblical view that human beings as a little lower than the angels, are higher than other parts of God's Creation and are therefore custodians or stewards. That view came into prominence after the Renaissance with its emphasis on human individuality. I have been looking again at the poetry of George Herbert and even he, that humblest of Anglican poets, cannot get beyond

human beings having a superior role.

In his poem Providence, Herbert describes Man as 'the world's high priest: he doth present the sacrifice for all.' No Celtic poet could have written that. In an early Welsh poem 'Hail to you, glorious Lord!', the anonymous poet calls upon every creature in his surroundings to praise the Lord and lastly: 'And I too shall praise you, Lord of glory,/ Hail to you glorious Lord.' One remarkable feature of Celtic religious poetry is that often the whole Trinity is addressed. The Celts had a very powerful Trinitarian faith. Notice just how many triquetrae (all-in-one tri-knots) are carved on Celtic crosses.

Whatever else we recover from our Celtic Christian heritage, we need to place the praise attitude inherent in the Benedicite in central place alongside our stewardship role of the environment. Try saying the Benedicite looking at the objects around you. 'O ye sky, praise the name of the Lord.... Oh ye trees, praise the name of the Lord,... Oh ye chairs..' and so on. If you do this often enough, you may notice as I do that the objects really do become animated. A modern Welsh

poet, Waldo Williams, says of the work of praise that 'it creates an unblemished world'. In an unblemished world, all kinds of marvel-

lous things can happen. Oliver Davies in his book *Celtic Christianity in Early Medieval Wales* (University of Wales Press) points out that 'the Welsh Lives, like others of the insular tradition, suggest that nature herself actively co-operates with the reality of grace in the Christian saint.' Understand that and the hagiographies will begin to make sense. What is more, you will get as close as you can get in this twenty-first century, to the heart of Celtic spirituality!

*Most of the hagiographies I bought as reprints from Llanerch Enterprises, Felinfach, Lampeter, Dyfed SA48 8PJ

NB We hope over the next couple of years to include other contributions by those who have recently obtained the Archbishops' Diploma.



Readers And The PCC: Issues In Church Strategy

Dr Gareth Morgan is a Reader in the Diocese of York, but he has also served elsewhere in the country, and he has experience of Reader ministry in a range of parishes. Professionally, he is involved in training and consultancy work with a range of charitable organisations and he is part-time Director of the Voluntary Sector Research Group at Sheffield Hallam University.

Amongst all the advice that is given on the duties and ministry of Readers, the emphasis is usually on the teaching and preaching role, sometimes on other aspects or worship, and sometimes on pastoral ministry, but it is very rare to see any mention of the Reader's role in relation to the Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) of the parishes where they serve.

Yet it is clear that many – if not most – Readers serve as PCC members, and some are appointed to the higher level synods of the church. In these roles, Readers are clearly sharing in the strategic decisions that the church needs to face. But to what extent is this part of the ministry of Readers? When a Reader serves on a PCC, is there any difference between his or her role in the Church Council and that of other PCC members?

The aim of this article is to explore this issue, and hopefully to offer a contribution that will help Readers to assess this part of their ministry.

The Legal Position

The Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry indicate that the interests of Readers should be represented on the PCC, but this does not mean that all Readers are automatically members of their PCC. The Regulations allow, for example, that in a parish with more than one Reader it may not be necessary for them all to serve as PCC members.

The appointment of Readers to the PCC is normally a matter for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) – under the Church Representation Rules the APCM can decide which (if any) of the Readers licensed to a parish should serve as PCC members.

If Readers are not appointed to the PCC specifically as Readers they can stand for election as normal PCC members elected as representatives of the laity or as representatives to the deanery synod (and there are also some cases where a Reader also holds another

post such as churchwarden and is thus an ex officio PCC member in a different role).

Finally, if the APCM neither appoints a Reader directly to the PCC, nor elects him or her as a lay representative, the PCC itself may co-opt a Reader on to the PCC.

So, excluding the cases of those holding other roles in addition to that of Reader, there are four possible statuses that a Reader might have in relation to his or her PCC:

1. **Not on the PCC at all; or**
2. **Appointed by APCM as a Reader;**
3. **Elected by APCM as a lay representative;**
4. **Co-opted.**

We must also note that all PCC members are charity trustees, and no one excluded from being a trustee under the Charities Act 1993 should serve as a PCC member. (This includes those who have unspent convictions for theft, undischarged bankrupts, and people who have been removed as charity trustees or company directors under statutory powers). Any Reader in this position must, of course, decline to serve on his or her PCC.

Implications

Each of the different statuses can imply quite different models of the Reader's role within the PCC.

1. Reader not on PCC

In parishes with several Readers it clearly makes sense for different Readers to focus on different parts of church life, so not every Reader will necessarily want to serve on the PCC. But where there is just one Reader, if he or she is not on the PCC it raises questions as to whether the Reader is seen in a 'fringe' role in relation to church decision making.

Equally, there are Readers who are themselves unenthusiastic about PCC membership, which they see as 'only concerned with buildings and money' while they wish to exercise a more spiritual role. But this, too, is surely

undesirable. Should not the Reader be working with other PCC members to overcome this perception: after all, even decisions about money and buildings are ultimately questions about priorities of ministry and the worship environment?

2. Reader appointed directly to PCC by APCM

In general it seems right that parishes should recognise the office of Reader by affording the Reader a position on the PCC as Reader, rather than requiring the Reader to stand for election in some other role. The only risk with this is that Readers may see their PCC role as automatic, and may take for granted their PCC responsibilities.

3. Reader elected as lay representatives

Readers are, of course, laity, and for a Reader to stand for election to the PCC as a lay representative helps to emphasise this.

Readers are on the electoral roll, whereas clergy are not, and by standing for election as lay representatives it stresses this.

However, whilst this is fine in a parish where most of those nominated for the PCC are normally elected, it can cause problems in those parishes where the size of the PCC is restricted and PCC places are traditionally contested.

In general it is good to have contested elections for PCCs, because those elected have a stronger sense that they have actually been chosen to represent the wider laity of the parish. But if this means that a Reader has to stand for election against other lay people to whom he or she is ministering it can cause great problems. It may be that one year, when the Reader has been friendly to certain individuals, he or she is elected to the PCC; another year when the Reader has been preaching some uncomfortable sermons, he or she is excluded from the PCC, purely on issues of personal popularity.

4. Readers as co-opted members

There is certainly a case for co-opting



a new Reader to join the PCC until the next APCM, but for Readers to be dependent long term on co-opted

places on the PCC seems undesirable. Appointing Readers to the PCC at the APCM must surely be the normal approach: this stresses that the Reader is a minister to the whole parish – not just a helper to the incumbent.

Patterns of Involvement

Once on the PCC, it seems that Readers take a variety of roles. Some are quiet and only speak occasionally; their role on the PCC may be one of quiet prayerful support with just occasional contributions to decision making. Some contribute only on certain issues that they see as directly related to their Reader role: for example on issues of worship.

But in many PCCs, Readers can be seen making a major contribution to parish decision making: raising agenda items for consideration, presenting papers for discussion, proposing possible ways forward when difficulties arise, arguing the case for effective outreach and relevant worship, representing the views of those in the parish who would find it hard to articulate their own position, contributing theological insights from their training and study, sharing knowledge of the wider church, and much more.

In some cases they may be doing this purely as PCC members, without thinking of their role in the PCC specifically in relation to their Reader ministry. But for many Readers, it is clear that participation in the PCC is a significant part of their Reader ministry. For those who feel that their calling is concerned, at least in part, with the overall vision of the local church, and for those who feel called to any kind of prophetic ministry, it is quite inadequate to confine those insights to the pulpit. If the parish is to put into effect the commands to preach the gospel to all nations, and to care for the sick and hungry, practical decisions in the PCC will necessarily have to be made.

Alliances and Conflicts

However, whenever Readers have strong beliefs and wish to persuade PCCs to pursue or avoid certain courses of action, there is a natural risk of

If Readers are excluded from their PCCs or fail to take their PCC membership seriously, the parish is missing a very important contribution.

controversy. Many incumbents know the pressures of trying to convince reluctant PCCs to follow a course which they believe

to be right, and Readers can find themselves in the same position.

When major decisions have to be reached in a PCC, and there is a difference of view, where does a Reader stand? Should the Readers and clergy meet privately before the PCC, and agree an official stance to be presented by the licensed ministers in a parish, like the Cabinet before bringing proposals to Parliament? Or does this mean that Readers will be sucked into the clergy stance on every issue, and will cease to function effectively as laity?

On the other hand, are Readers free to argue in PCC for what they believe to be right, even if this is directly opposed to the views of the incumbent? There is a certain honesty in this, where views are clearly presented rather than sorted out privately outside the meeting – but it can only work if there is a real willingness by all parties to accept the outcome of PCC decisions, even when they go against an individual's personal wishes.

It can be even harder if a Reader believes that a PCC is considering something illegal – does he or she ultimately have a duty to go over the head of the incumbent and raise the matter with the bishop or archdeacon? Undoubtedly this can lead to

personal unpopularity (especially if exercised on trivial issues) but there may be occasions when the Reader is the only lay person in the parish with knowledge of the wider implications, and one of the vows made by Readers in the service of

Admission is to 'observe the discipline and order of the Church of England'. Yet this must be carefully balanced with the vow to 'work with the incumbent and congregation in the spirit of Christian fellowship'.

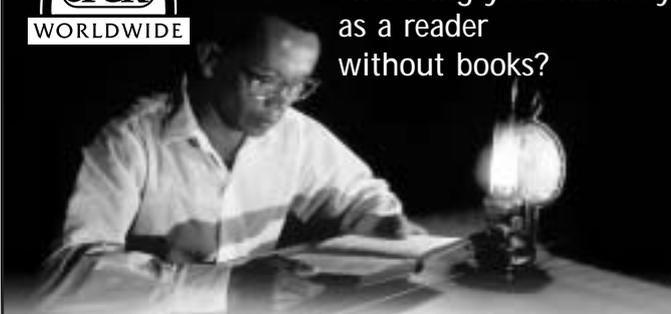
Conclusion

Obviously there cannot be right or wrong answers on most of the points covered in this article: different Readers will take on different roles and patterns of behaviour within their PCCs.

But it is clear that the role of Readers within the PCC is often a very significant part of their ministry, which deserves much more attention in Reader training. If Readers are excluded from their PCCs or fail to take their PCC membership seriously, the parish is missing a very important contribution. Where Readers serve on their PCCs but fail to exercise this ministry sensitively and positively, they can end up holding a parish back and even finding themselves as a focus for conflict. But if they get it right, their ministry from the pulpit can be amplified enormously in enabling a parish to move forward in its practical outworking of the church's mission.



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Thinking about 'the Family'



The **Revd David Gamble** is Secretary for Family and Personal Relationships for the Methodist Church. Until recently he was also Chair of Barnados, and still works closely with this organisation. David has had an important role in helping to formulate recent Methodist and ecumenical policy relating to 'family issues' and has been instrumental in developing parenting courses.

In a year which is likely to see a General Election, one theme high on the political agenda is 'the family'. The list of issues is long: What do we mean by 'family'? Is the traditional 'family' as we know it in terminal decline? Will marriage survive this century, or will it fade out to be replaced by long-term cohabitation or serial relationships? Has divorce become too easy or too readily available? How 'family-friendly' is our society? And those are just for starters. The list goes on and on. Lone parenthood; domestic violence and abuse; working mothers; parental leave; parents' responsibility for their children's misdemeanours...

Of course, when family issues are being debated the Church often does (or is expected to) speak out. And we have a great deal to contribute to this debate. But before we are too hasty in telling the rest of society what to do, I wonder whether there are things we need to think about and act upon as Christians and in our churches to put our own house in order? I can only begin to scratch the surface of what are some very complex and intractable issues. Where better to start than by looking at the relationship between the Church and families? Are churches 'family-friendly'? Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is good news and bad. Please excuse me if I start with the bad.

An impossible dream?

Why do so many Christians feel guilty if their family life isn't perfect? You occasionally see 'ideal' Christian families smiling at you from magazine covers, but for most of us reality is rather different. Family life can be hard. What look like smiles in family photographs may in fact be gritted teeth. And here's where the Bible can be quite comforting. Because while there's all kinds of teaching (particularly in the Old



Testament and the Epistles) about relationships between people and families and children and parents, the actual stories of family life in the teaching of Jesus and throughout the Bible show it as it really is.

Brothers falling out. Parents having favourites. It's all there. Right from the story of Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve's lads. As a model for family life, on a scale of 0 – 10, it scores pretty low – about minus 3, as in one verse of the Bible Cain wipes out 25% of the world's population! Today we'd call it a disturbing case of sibling rivalry and write scripts about it for *EastEnders* or *Neighbours*. Families have always found life tough. Even the best of families. Even Christian families. And no one is helped when family life is portrayed idealistically in ways that can only make people feel guilty.

Families have also always come in all shapes and sizes. There is no one universal, correct model. A 'family' is much easier to describe than to define. There will be quite a variety of homes and families represented in most congregations. Single people. Married couples and people living in other partnerships. Parents with children (by birth, fostering, adoption, stepchildren...) Children with no parent; others with one or two; others who relate to three, four or more parent figures. Adults who have no children – either by choice or despite trying unsuccessfully for years. People who have their children and their parents living with them. Others who live on their own, separated from other family members by time, space or circumstance.

I believe Christians do better to encourage and support people trying their best in all



the wide variety of families, rather than set up an unachievable ideal and criticise people for failing to meet it. We need to affirm the good rather than always point to the bad. I see this as a particular issue when it comes to children.



Children do not need to be made to feel 'different' or stigmatised as a result of how their parents live their lives. If a child's parents have separated and now live in different homes that child may spend alternate weekends with each parent. This can be a real nuisance if you are responsible for rehearsing the annual nativity play, and a child who is only there every second week is very unlikely to star as Mary, Joseph or the Innkeeper. They are much more likely to end up as fourth wise man, if they are there on the day. But what sort of message does that give?

'Family-friendly' churches

Why do we so often split families up in church on a Sunday? Of course there are some good reasons. Certain things can probably best be done in age groups. Parents appreciate a rest. Maybe so do children. So it is good to do some things separately. But why is there so little time for us to do things together in church?

And what about our buildings? Of course, there are many excellent ones. Lots of money is spent improving church premises every year. But many churches are still inaccessible to pushchairs or wheelchairs; many have no toilets, badly kept ones or ones that have no paper; lots provide coat hooks and other fittings only at adult height.

And what about our pattern of church life? Why are we more likely to see Christian commitment in terms of going to church and doing church jobs than in terms of the quality of our family life? When a person of under 45 walks through the church door for the first time, almost before they have sat down they will have been invited to play the organ, lead the young church, become a member of the PCC, join a house group, deliver the church newsletter... all honourable things. And obviously I'm exaggerating, but I sometimes wonder whether we have taken Psalm 23.6 too literally – 'I shall



dwelling in the house of the Lord for ever.' A lot of families with committed churchgoing parents are under too much pressure. In the end, children need parents, even more than they need PCC members. It is interesting to reflect that among the few times we ask people to make promises in church are services of baptism and marriage. So before we ask someone with family commitments to do a church job which means coming out again during the week – are we certain that our job is more important than their family?

On the other hand...

Of course, I have painted too bleak a picture. There are many good things to say as well. I think of toddlers' clubs which many churches provide. Sometimes all the church offers is a room and facilities for tea-making. But if you're a parent looking after a young child 24 hours a day, a couple of hours spent with other adults in a relaxed atmosphere is very important. And

this is true for people of all ages. Many people – young, old and in between – find warmth, friendship and support on church premises every week.

In many a church community, individuals and families find they are valued and cared for. Within that community they share their good times and bad. Together they rejoice at marriages or births; together they mourn a death. They do it through their worship; they do it through their pastoral care. When it works well, people and families find immense support through the Christian community.

And churches have a lot to offer to the wider community in which they are placed. Let us not sell ourselves short. We have 'branches' everywhere. When the government calls for better marriage preparation, the fact is that churches are the main suppliers. When public interest is shown in parenting courses, it transpires that the most commonly used are those produced by the Family Caring Trust – mainly offered through churches.

Faith and families

Families are important and important things happen in them. It is within our family that most of us start to handle experiences like loss and bereavement and ask serious

questions. I have certainly been asked some more difficult theological questions as a father than as a minister, starting with 'Where do rabbits go when they die? (let it not be the same heaven as ours!!) It is in our family that we probably first experience acceptance, trust, love, forgiveness – all the experiences that later help us form and understand the language of faith. And if this is not our experience, then the language of faith is hard to comprehend. It is often within our family that we start to discover who we are and what is our story. This is where we experience heaven and maybe hell, as our closest relationships bring our greatest joys and our deepest pains.

I firmly believe we need to do more to help strengthen links between church and family life. At times the life and worship of the Church seems very remote from the business of

normal everyday living. If a person is unemployed; if their marriage is breaking down; if they

are being abused by their parents; if they are scared stiff about the tests they have just had done at the hospital; if their life seems to be crumbling around them... how relevant is our worship? How do we enable people to bring their broken and hurting (or fulfilled and joyful) lives and find healing, comfort, affirmation and all the other gospel experiences we proclaim?

This is a major challenge. But we could make a start by not making too easy comments and too quick judgements on the subject of family life today. Let us take people's experience seriously – good, bad and in between, and whatever form it takes. I am sure God does!

David Gamble helped to inaugurate a recent series of books with the overall title 'Faith in the Family', which look at various aspects of family life in the twenty-first century. He himself was

one of the writers of the *Godparenting* book in the series. Details of this, and some of the other 'Faith in the Family' titles are given in the next column. They are obtainable from National Christian Education Council, 1020 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LB Tel. 0121 472 4242.

When it works well, people and families find immense support through the Christian community.



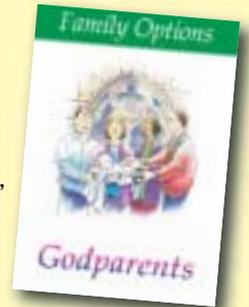
Family and all that stuff

Edited by Joan King
Features true stories of family life by over twenty well-known Christians. Their fascinating human-interest stories illustrate some impressive emotional, mental and faith journeys, including some that involve considerable risk-taking.



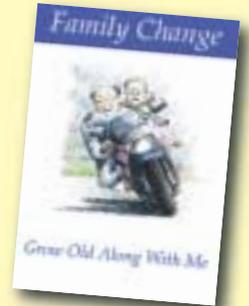
Godparents

By John Bradford, David Gamble and Joan King
A book for parents, godparents, churches, families and godchildren. Written by respected authorities on the family, it examines all the aspects of the important role that godparents have in supporting their godchildren and sharing life and faith issues with them.



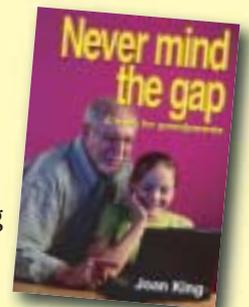
Grow old along with me

By Albert Jewell
A book about ageing, retirement and related issues. Covers topics from retirement and ageism to grandparenting, the spirituality of ageing, and dementia in old age. Offers advice, support and information, backed up with case studies and anecdotes, in a readable and approachable way.



Never mind the gap

By Joan King
Looks at the challenge and adventure of being a grandparent in today's society. Includes activities, reflections and ideas to help you make the most of this significant relationship.





Saplings of faith!

Sue Doggett, Commissioning Editor, Barnabas, and Head of Children's Ministry for Bible Reading Fellowship, is also a Licensed Lay Minister (Reader) in the Diocese of Oxford and part of the children's team in her local church.



I have a slice of wood sitting on my dresser at home. It has never caught the attention of anyone outside our immediate family. Neither the casual caller nor the family friend has ever



commented on it. Close relatives seem unaware of its presence; its significance passes them by. Yet for me it represents part of our journey

as a family. For this unimposing sliver is all that is left of the huge laburnum tree which used to grace the centre of our garden. Its gentle fronds dripped sunshine from its bowed branches when we first saw the house.

Thereafter, year by year without fail, it spun its gilded splendour into our garden. A trustworthy herald of spring and the summer to come.

In the autumn of 1987 I witnessed that tree succumb to hurricane force winds. It was one of those days when you remember exactly where you were and what you were doing. Rescuing my children from their respective schools was a frightening and indelible mission, rammed home by the news that a tree had crashed through the roof of my husband's car outside his place of work. Perhaps you, too, have memories of that day.

My sliver of wood has some twenty rings radiating from its centre. Each builds on the growth of the last. Each represents a year in the life of that beautiful tree. Its catastrophic demise is etched on my mind with photographic clarity.

Quiet growth

Not every significant event in my life has, of course, been catastrophic. But each one has contributed to the way my life has been built on growth. With each passing year that growth builds on the experiences that went before, radiating out from the centre like the rings in a slice of wood. And at the heart is the sapling of faith which sprang into being when I became a Christian in my mid-teens.

When I was licensed as a Lay

Minister (Reader) in October 1999 a new ring was added to my tree, built on the growth of all that had gone before. Historically, I had always considered that licensed lay ministry – the role of a Reader – was very much adult-oriented and, as someone who has always embraced and celebrated the joy of childhood, I found this very alien. To be called to the service of Licensed Lay Ministry was the furthest thing from my mind. But God had other plans.

Just over seven years ago, he called me to serve him as Commissioning Editor at BRF. My role quickly developed to focus fully on building a range of books for children and within a year the Barnabas imprint had been born. My church life at that time revolved mainly around



the children's work. Prior to joining BRF I had also been Tawny Owl for our local Brownie Pack and deeply involved in my local school, helping out in the classroom and joining in with writing, producing and performing in the school pantomimes which were run each year by the PTA.

Life as Commissioning Editor for Christian publishers involves a lot of Bible study. One of my favourite occupations! To be able to study the Bible as part of my job was pure bliss and God began to nudge. I sensed I was being asked to take my love of the Bible to a deeper level. My prayer life became very focused. It was at this time that a close friend confided to me that she was considering the role of Reader ministry for her own life. As I listened and chatted with her I suddenly became aware of a great light flooding my mind. Was this what God was

asking of me? I have always loved practical, hands-on work – one of the reasons I was so happy working with children. Did God want me to serve him in the main body of the church in this practical way, too?

I chatted with my minister. I was recommended for selection by my PCC. Spade in hand, I went along to the selection day and dug myself lots of holes to fall into. I waited, I prayed.

I was selected. Oxford Diocese provided an excellent training programme. It challenged me, stretched me and deepened my faith. In fact, I took an extra year with my training in order to digest all that was happening – and to give my family time to catch up!

Eighteen months on, my role as a Licensed Lay Minister is integrated with my role as part of our children's team. It is an enormous privilege to be able to serve God as part of our Morning Worship team *and* to teach in Sunday school. Although coordinating the rotas is always a challenge!

Meanwhile, my role in BRF has developed to include activity days for children and training events and quiet days for those who work with them in church or primary education, as well as publishing books to resource people in their work.

The sapling of faith grows quietly, building ring upon ring each year. At times, like trees in a storm, we may feel unable to stand against hurricane force winds. But, rooted in the soil of God's love, we find him able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. What a privilege to find another ring added to our tree!

You can read more about Sue's work and the books she is responsible for, by looking at the BRF website. www.brf.org.uk



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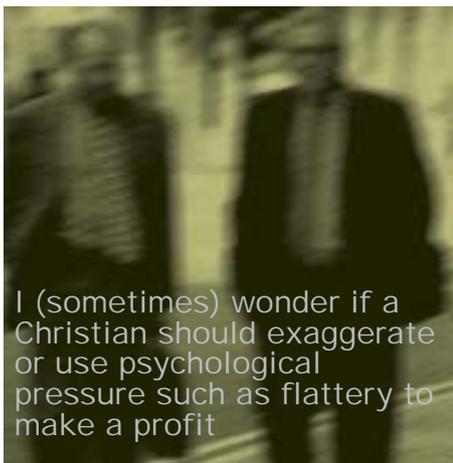
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Called To New Life: Faith at Work in Daily Living

Hilary Ineson, Adviser in Adult Education and Training for the Church of England and **Peter Middlemiss**, Warden, Holland House, Reader in Worcester Diocese and Chair of the Working Group which produced *Called to New Life*, ask Readers some searching questions.



I (sometimes) wonder if a Christian should exaggerate or use psychological pressure such as flattery to make a profit

In this short article we want to introduce you to some of the themes in the publication *Called to New Life* and to raise your consciousness about the importance of Reader ministry in helping other lay people to make links between their faith and their everyday lives. We want to ask questions about how people can be helped and encouraged to think or reflect theologically. In other words, how can lay people learn to think about and reflect on where God's story and their story meet?

Called to New Life was published in 1999 as part of a series encouraging the Church to move towards being a learning church for a learning age. Its aim is to:

- Raise consciousness about the need to take lay discipleship (as distinct from lay ministry) seriously
- Share good practice
- Highlight problems and difficulties
- Ask how we can develop learning in this area so that, as we enter the third millennium, articulate and educated lay people are able to take their full role on the frontline of Christian living and mission.

It encourages lay people to take seriously their everyday discipleship in the world and asks the church to affirm

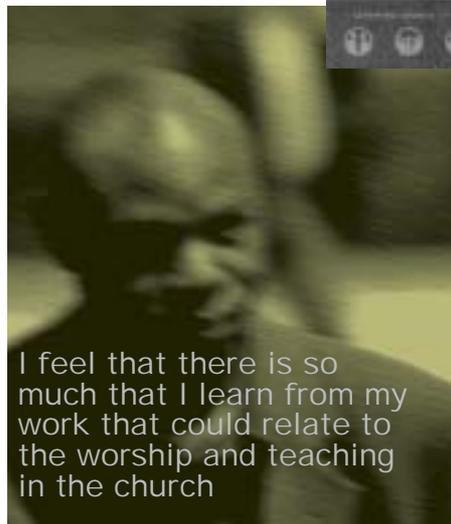
this ministry and to help its development. It reviews what has happened in the last 15 years since the publication of *All Are Called* and *Called to be Adult Disciples*.

From research undertaken for the book in the Diocese of Peterborough six scenarios emerged which are illustrated by the stories of six specific lay people. The scenarios are:

1. People who feel that the Church does not, and could not, understand the issues they face from Monday to Saturday. *'I work in a café in a small market town... almost all (customers) want to talk about their lives. I love to listen to their stories... the church seems to focus on the "important" jobs such as being a teacher or a doctor... I came to realise that I cannot expect people to understand what I do in my work and that the church is not the place to help me in that aspect of my life.'* (Margaret's story)

2. People who want to escape from their Monday to Saturday lives and want the Church to be a haven for Sunday that does not remind them of the pressures and difficulties they face during the week. *'I work as a senior salesman in a reputable car showroom... I (sometimes) wonder if a Christian should exaggerate or use psychological pressure such as flattery to make a profit... As far as church is concerned I find that I am too embarrassed to discuss these things... In any case I don't really want to talk about work when I am off duty, especially on Sundays.'* (Jeremy's story)

3. People who see the Church as their real work and paid employment as the means by which they can afford to do it. *'When I was asked to tell my story*



I feel that there is so much that I learn from my work that could relate to the worship and teaching in the church

about how my faith and my work related I was puzzled. I believe that my main calling is to serve God and that means that I should make sure that I organise my life in such a way that I can give him the most and the best... I have to be a "tent maker" in order to build a "Temple".' (Steve's story)

4. People who long for support and help in identifying a Christian perspective on issues that arise in their lives. *'I work as a receptionist in a medical centre. People ask me really deep questions about faith and life and although I have been going to church for about 35 years, I am often at a loss to answer them.'* (Ruth's story)

5. People who lack the confidence to be adult disciples because the Church seems to tell them that they have to be accredited before they may speak of their faith or raise questions that may lead to moral and ethical debate. *'I am in my thirties and work in a paper distribution company... I feel that there is so much that I learn from my work that could relate to the worship and teaching in the church... It seems a pity that we can't share our experience with fellow Christians without having a licence from the Bishop to do so.'* (Simon's story)

6. People who feel that the Church has much to say about what is perceived as the 'softer places of work', eg service industries, work at home... as opposed to the 'tougher world' of business, commerce, manufacturing industry. *'I don't need them to help me be an accountant; I need someone to help me think about the biblical/theological perspectives on a life which is bound up with the law and the management of other people's resources.'* (Pam's story)



The theology section of the book, called 'the Fruits of the Cross' describes lay responsibility in the following ways:

'The laity have certain responsibilities and duties, given to them by God as revealed by Jesus Christ. The focus of lay life is in the world.' (p. 42). The basis of the theology underlying the book is that *'as lay disciples we have been called to new life through Christ's redemptive sacrifice. It follows, therefore, that what we are trying to clarify is what it is to live in the world in the light of Jesus' death and resurrection.'* (p. 41). If we believe that **all** are called – that ➤



God's call is for everyone and that it is through our baptism that we are called to live out the good news of the Kingdom, then why is it that so many lay people could agree with this quote about a young mother in a northern diocese? 'In a conversation with a congregation member she apologised for not being a 'proper' Christian. When asked what she meant her response was – *'Well I don't do anything in the local church. I don't really have time.'* She was secretary to the local MP, ran Neighbourhood Watch for her immediate area, was a school governor, mother and wife – yet she felt that she was not serving God or the local church through any of these activities. The church at which she worshipped had somehow given her the message that she was not a 'proper' Christian.



People ask me really deep questions about faith and life

A recent issue of papers from an organisation *Christians in Public Life* focussed on the shape of the church in the new millennium. Two writers stressed the importance of lay discipleship for the future church. David Deeks who is the Methodist Church's Co-ordinating Secretary for Church and Society wrote: *'The task (of the church) is to help self understanding and to develop everyone's primary Christian role – i.e. to live well wherever we find ourselves in contemporary society (in politics, business, public service or the not-for-profit sector, and in every imaginable informal group, not least the family). The second is to make the church the servant of Christian discipleship in the world.'* Michael Doe, the Bishop of Swindon wrote: *'Another result of increasing privatisation will be that parish churches will be less and less able to touch whole areas of life. We therefore need to be discovering where, outside the residential neighbourhood people are finding their sense of meaning and belonging... In practice, this must mean laity taking back their primary role in the mission of the church, making the daily link between faith and economy, the spiritual and the secular, and seeing the liturgy of Sunday as the offering up and receiving of that responsibility.'*

So what does this mean for Readers and their ministry? In the first place we think it requires an ability to reflect on what the links are between faith and life for you. As lay people you are

then able to model the articulate and educated lay person who is so necessary for frontline Christian mission in the new millennium. As the major thrust of your ministry is teaching and preaching, it means preaching sermons which are relevant to daily life, and encouraging other lay people to share their experience of the daily struggle to be Christian disciples at work, home and in leisure.

Clearly, it is not easy for us as lay people. The challenges of secular life and the Gospel often conflict. The Church believes that we are all called, but somehow its resources and encouragement go to those who take up a specific and recognised ministry, through ordination, becoming a Reader or a lay minister in the local church. The vast majority of Christians are not called to such specific ministries. With this in mind it is good to read the following affirmation which was made at the Lambeth Conference 1998:

'This Conference:

- *affirms our trust in the power of God's Spirit to ensure that all persons are made full disciples and equally members of the Body of Christ and the people or laos of God by their baptism*
- *While recognising the necessity of ordained ministry and special responsibilities which are given to various members of the Body, also recognises that all the baptised share in the common priesthood of the churches that the life, practice, polity and liturgy of churches everywhere should exemplify this understanding of our community and common life and;*
- *Affirms that in baptism we are called to personal commitment to Jesus Christ and should be given education and opportunity for ministries which include worship, witness, service and acts of forgiveness and reconciliation in the setting of their daily life and work.'*

We are called to follow Christ in our everyday living – to become salt for the world. Because some are called to a more specific form of ministry, those with the primary call are ignored and often forgotten. 'It was interesting that only last weekend I was speaking to a minister who admitted that the watershed in his ministry occurred one Sunday when in the pulpit he viewed the congregation. For the first time he saw them, not as the steward, the

church secretary, the choir master etc., but as John the accountant, Jill the housewife, Bob the busman etc. It seems to me that the change in affirming people "where they are" in their daily life begins at the local church.' *(Quoted in Called to New Life p38)* Those in Reader ministry have a particular responsibility to encourage and value their fellow lay people by taking their lay lives seriously in sermons and teaching and by sharing their own experience and reflecting theologically on it. The role of those with specific ministries is to encourage and enable those whose primary role is the mission of the church through their daily living. As lay people who are theologically educated and skilled at teaching and preaching, you have a special calling to reflect theologically on the links between faith and life and also to help other lay people to discover how to do this for themselves.

Called to New Life is available from Christian bookshops price £4.95. Church House Bookshop can be contacted by telephone 020 7898 1304 or email: bookshop@c-of-e.org.uk

THE READER MISSIONARY STUDENTSHIP ASSOCIATION

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Law and Gospel

Leslie Rees is a police sergeant in the Greater Manchester police force. Here he reflects on the connections between his Christian faith and his work at the sharp end of life.



For many years I had read about the force of evil in society and it is graphically displayed in TV and film footage. On joining the police service in November 1977 the reality of an evil force within our society became quite apparent. How else could a father propel his tiny son through a window, causing the most awful neck wound? How else could the driver of a car run over a small child, leaving him by the roadside with horrible injuries? My early days in the police service caused me to see the claim of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, that we struggle against 'satanic beings and great princes of darkness who rule this world' (*Ephesians 6.12*). As months and years went by in my career, society's need for a set of God-given rules and the real urgency for us to have a concept of ultimate justice became more and more apparent to me. My conviction was that those needs would be fully articulated in my life by my becoming a Reader.

I joined the police service as an older person in 1977, having graduated from the University of Leeds in 1972 with a degree in English Law – and then having taken Articles of Clerkship and worked in industry. My study of Jurisprudence and Constitutional Law had caused me to

consider why laws were made and by whose authority they were upheld. Having left Law College I converted to Christianity in a real and dramatic way – and soon learned from my reading of scripture that all authority is ultimately vested in God. Colossians 1.15-20 told me that, 'by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers, all things were created by him and for him.' This invaluable principle gave me a mandate to police society, a society which was subjected to laws which were ultimately God's laws, a society which itself belongs to him. God's direction, power and divine guidance provided my 'raison d'être' so far as law enforcement was concerned.

Opportunities for ministry

Most police work is entirely routine, but all police work provides opportunity for ministry. Meeting bereft family in their home before the arrival of the undertaker or even doctor, changing car wheels by the roadside, visiting the elderly who need to chat during the night, and arresting a burglar – all situations provide opportunities for ministry in a quiet or overt fashion. My experience of life in many varied situations and sharing extremes of joy and sadness confirmed my belief that the message of the gospel provided real help and guidance for everyday life situations.

With that deep conviction I felt a calling to be a Reader in the church, sensing in particular a 'call to preach'. I was licensed in 1990. As I started to preach after licensing I soon discovered that my work experience provided 'windows' within sermon delivery, enabling me to blend scriptural truth with everyday life experience. Additionally I felt that my role as a police officer provided a certain authority which I could utilise in delivering the gospel message. In short, my position as a police officer could become a 'vehicle' for effective Christian ministry, and both areas of my life were closely related. Parish visiting became an extension of my work, and entering a person's house to discuss and address their problems came naturally, as it does in some other professions.

Healing of body and soul

My experience of the stresses and

strains of people's lives caused me to read widely into the subject of Christian healing and become involved in that aspect of ministry. Apart from the healing which people received from sacramental observance and from their belonging to God's church, my own church began to hold services which were specifically directed at healing – which was always centred around the Lord's Supper. Aware of how much society can suffer and having suffered myself (particularly during the illness of my first wife and in bereavement) I recognised that the presence of God is something which everyone can claim for themselves, and provides a panacea for personal problems. As an operational police officer the presence of God has always been a great support – and I felt that I have often been guided through particularly difficult times. The most amazing example of God's intervention and guidance in my life as a police officer occurred in the early 1980s. I had a particularly complex case at court which was giving me a large measure of concern. Praying about the matter the night before the hearing I received a telephone call from the force secretary of the Christian Police Association – who had called me about a separate, unrelated matter. During that telephone call he was able to give me reassurance and guidance about the court case. I felt that he had called me as a result of prayer. He had never called before that date, and never afterwards. God's presence has been a constant guide during my whole service.

Police officers need encouragement and prayerful support.

Police officers need encouragement and prayerful support. I have received this from people close to me, including my wife, two sons and members of the church. In the wider church this has come from the Gideons International (of which both my wife and I are members) and those who belong to the Christian Police Association. At 12.30pm each Wednesday members of the Christian Police Association meet in prayer fellowship at headquarters in Manchester, where they share each others' concerns and problems. Only with the consent of the public can police officers police our democratic society as we do at present.

'Now I don't have to spell it!'

Dot Hooker is a Reader and Diocesan Older Person's Officer in Rochester Diocese. She lives in Yalding, Kent, and her reflections below draw on both her diocesan role, and her recent experiences.

When telephoning the outside world and asked for my address, the village name always had to be spelt in the past. I used to say, 'Yalding – that's Y-A-L-D-I-N-G'. Since mid-October, the person the other end of the line now simply asks sympathetically 'Were you affected by the floods?' to which thankfully I can reply that we live well above the floodline. The village community became a byword overnight. The plight of people whose homes and livelihoods had been invaded by several feet of dirty brown, foul smelling and in some cases rushing water, was conveyed across the country by the media. Local reporters alongside those from ITV, Sky TV, Meridian and the BBC jostled for information whilst vans and back-up teams vied for parking space amongst the numerous fire engines, police 4 x 4s, ambulances, RNLI and army vehicles, commandeered local transport buses and cars belonging to sightseers. And all the while, there was the constant hum of an Air-Sea rescue helicopter together with a media helicopter passing overhead. We even had three lorry loads of Gurkha soldiers from the barracks in Maidstone on standby to help out wherever needed. However, it later transpired that they themselves became victims of the sodden conditions when one of their lorries slowly slid into a not seen deep ditch filled with flood water and had to be hauled out at a later date, courtesy of a local cesspit emptying contractor!

Looking at an OS map of the area, one can understand why Yalding's nickname is the 'sink hole of Kent' although we haven't experienced such high levels of flooding since Christmas 1979 and the building of the River Medway barrier upstream of Tonbridge at Leigh. For those who have lived in the village for over 25 years the rising waters came as no surprise given the amount of rain that has fallen over the past year and especially in what we now know was the wettest autumn

since records began. They prepared for the worst by moving their cars up into the village, utilised what they could to lift heavy furniture as high as possible and either decamped upstairs with other precious items including the family pets or took the offer of accommodation with friends and relatives hoping they would have a home to return to when the waters receded. For many others this was a whole new ghastly, experience and in some cases, one they had been assured would not happen. 'Oh no madam. This property has not been known to flood!' One must ask just what records that statement was based on!

Common sense says when you have excessive, prolonged rain combined with very high tides and already sodden land, flooding is bound to result. However, what had not been predicted was the speed with which the water rose overnight; a factor which caught out even those with a long lifetime of flood experience. The blue, sun-filled skies of Friday 13 October belied the mayhem the encroaching flood waters were reeking as you chatted to those who lived the other side of the village and whose homes had either been wrecked or were under imminent threat. Old timers were philosophical about it whilst newcomers were dazed and numb and, I suppose, found it hard to believe.

However, as with the Big Storm in October '87, everyone rallied round and helped their neighbours out in whatever way they could. It is at times such as these that people discover that strange phenomenon called 'community spirit' is still alive and kicking – thank goodness.

The Aftermath – and Looking to the Future

In November, the Parish Council held an Open Meeting in the parish church at which the community voiced its praise and constructive criticisms of the various authorities and agencies involved. Preventative proposals are to be forwarded in the endeavour to mitigate effects of future flooding on the local villages as well as praise where felt due. Included are several, which might be seen as backward, steps, such as ... 'Consult with older maps and reinstate ditches that have been filled in. Remove and replace pipes and culverts

that are of insufficient size for good water flow'.

The severest criticism arose because good local knowledge and experience had not been utilised and the level of communication from the relevant agencies left a lot to be desired. Some decisions were made which seemed to those affected to be downright ludicrous. *eg* people living in the top half of the village were denied access to their homes by car on the evening of Thursday 12 October. Sandbags should have been available earlier and a load that was supplied was not allowed through when the flood was at a low level. The new computerised system of flood warning was said to be annoying, ineffective and did not provide sufficient data.

Running through the report of that Open Meeting is the conviction that local life experience was neither sought nor listened to at the time of the flood emergency.

The Wisdom of Years

In many traditional societies, older people have always been accepted as a source of wisdom and experience but in recent years the western world has been more attuned to the idea that youth is all important. Indeed, in some circumstances, the needs and aspirations of the young have been promoted to the exclusion of all other age groups who are also an integral part of society. However, the demographics conclude that in 20 years time, 25% of our population will be of pensionable age ie we now live in an ageing society. As Tom Kirkwood in his book *Time of our lives* says:

'The elderly have a significant role to play in the life of society. They represent life, history, experience, the importance of the past in the present. They can be rocks of assurance amidst the quicksands of rapid change'.

What a wealth of wisdom and experience older people have to offer! What an untapped source of counsel and knowledge! Our nation and church would be wise to consult our older people more often. They have the experience of living through and adapting to the rapid change of the last few decades. In our high-tech society we should perhaps take on board that in many of life's circumstances:

There is no substitute for experience!



The things that make for peace: a reflection for Passiontide

The Sunday before Easter, when we commemorate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, is traditionally called Palm Sunday. But this year, the lectionary year of Luke, perhaps we ought to give it another name. Take a careful look at how the story is retold in Luke 19.28-40. There are no palms mentioned, nor any other other kind of greenery. In fact Luke's account of Jesus arrival in the city is far less triumphalist than that of any of the other writers. Although Jesus is proclaimed as a king (19.38) it is clear that he is a very different sort of king from that of people's expectations. In the next line 'peace' is mentioned, as Jesus' disciples call out 'Peace in heaven.' Interestingly, that word 'peace' is not used at all in the story as it told by Matthew, Mark or John. Yet it is a motif that is woven deeply into the fabric of Luke's understanding of these events.

Surely it is not accidental that it is Luke who emphasises more than the other gospel writers that this is happening on the Mount of Olives (19.29,37), since the olive is an ancient symbol for peace? It is also significant that Luke prefaces this episode with his retelling of the Parable of the Talents (19.11-27). In Luke's version we hear of a vicious king who travels to a foreign land to have himself appointed king (19.12). We also read of the citizens who did not want him as their king – because of his brutality – and sent a counter delegation after him (19.14). These are allusions to events that had taken place twenty five years before the time of Jesus' ministry. Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, had travelled to Rome after his father's death to demand the kingship of Judaea. The Pharisees, knowing his savage reputation, had also travelled there to plead with Augustus not to appoint him. But Archelaus returned as king in triumph from Rome – and took revenge on these opponents (see 19.27). Yet he was not to last long: after less than ten years of suffering his viciousness, the people rose up and



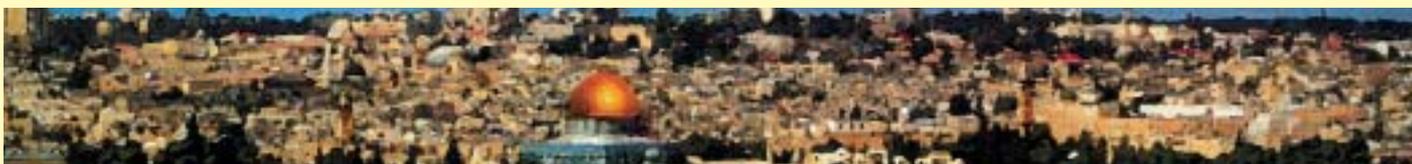
finally succeeded in having him exiled. It is extraordinary that Jesus recounted this story just as he left Jericho. For it was there that Archelaus had built himself an extravagant winter-palace, whose luxury can be perceived in its ruins to this day. It must have symbolised the oppressiveness of Archelaus' regime. And as Luke subtly reminds us, Jesus told this parable 'because he was close to Jerusalem and they thought the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.' (19.11) It is as though Jesus is telling his disciples, and us, 'You think I am a king. But my kingship is not like Archelaus' kingship, reflected in this palace of his. It is a kingdom of peace, rather than brutality, that I am seeking to inaugurate.'

Did those who celebrated Jesus' entry into Jerusalem that day realise that they were welcoming a prince of peace? At first sight it looks as though they did, with their song of celebration, 'Peace in heaven.' Yet look carefully: for the song is an ironic counterpoint to that sung by the angels at Jesus' birth. The angelic choir chanted 'Peace on earth', while the disciples now sing 'Peace in heaven.' Surely we should be on the side of the angels: it is peace on God's earth we need and are called to struggle for! 'Peace in heaven' can become all too easily an escapist diversion. Peace-making has to happen on earth, and it is an activity that can be very costly indeed to those who are brave enough to engage in it.

Luke goes on explicitly to remind us (19.41-44) of the tragic consequences of the lack of peace. It is a strange but telling omission that this short passage in which Jesus weeps over the fate of Jerusalem is not included in the verses chosen for the lectionary. It ought to be, for it needs to be read to understand properly what Luke has been seeking to make clear from the moment that Jesus has set out on the ascent to Jerusalem. Jesus' lament emphasises the tragic consequences of the lack of peace. Today is a moment of decision not simply for Jesus, but also for Jerusalem, and the shadow of the cross is already cast firmly across his path. Instead of green foliage, Jesus' path in this gospel is quite literally strewn with rocks and stones. Jerusalem's very name seems to incorporate the Hebrew word for peace – Shalom. Yet there is a clash – head on – between what Jerusalem was called to be – a vision of peace, and the way this city instead has so often been a theatre of war. Its stones may sing of Jesus, but those same stones will be dashed to the ground over and over again, throughout the history of human hatred.

The city of Jerusalem is a parable and a sacrament of the human condition. It symbolises our longing, our highest and best desires, our love of beauty and our desire to worship God. But it is also a powerful reminder of how this best can go so tragically wrong – precisely because we find it so difficult to love without also seeking to possess. We want God on our own terms, housed in our own building, from which we will exclude all those who do not see things quite as we do. We all want our own Jerusalem, and our fractured world is the result. Jerusalem is the place where God is crucified by the desires and aspirations and passionately held beliefs of men and women. Yet this same cross, painful result of humanity's peacelessness, can and must become 'the way that leads to peace.'

Clare Amos





Fishing in the Net

I am sorry that we did not manage to go on an Internet Fishing expedition in the previous issue of *The Reader*. However it means that there is a very rich selection to share this time round. Most of the following suggestions have been sent in by you, our readership.

First a few sites that are actually run by Readers. Mike Cranston, whose article on Reader ministry appeared in the August 2000 issue, has a personal site in which he explores in detail the history of Reader ministry. It can be found at

<http://hometown.aol.com/crismyk/Historyindex.html>

Derek Jay, a Reader at Bristol University Chaplaincy Church is the webmaster for the *Affirming Catholicism* UK site. This can be found at



<http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk> The site contains an excellent range of recent theological articles which would be of interest to a wide spread of Readers – whatever their particular churchmanship may be.



A rather different site is that run by Anne Coomes, a Reader in Chester Diocese. It is called *Parish Pump* and its web address is <http://www.parish-pump.co.uk> The site is a semi-commercial operation which Anne runs together with Taffy Davies (whose illustrations will be well known

to some of you). You need to register to make full use of the site, but for an annual subscription of £25 you can make full use of its extensive resources of articles, pictures, ideas etc which are designed with parish magazine editors in mind. The material is of a high quality, and those Readers who have the responsibility of editing their parish magazine would find it a useful mine to quarry – and it could even provide some good sermon illustrations.

Other sites that you have helped to draw to my attention include the Anglican Cyber Hymnal. This I discovered via John Green, a Reader in the Episcopal Church of Scotland. Its address is



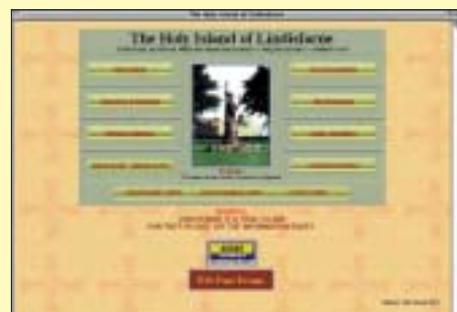
<http://www.episcopalnet.org/Music/ACH> There is an good range of hymns (approximately 700) which have been set out with the Anglican Church Year in mind. Words and music are both displayed and the site invites you to download a plug-in (called 'Sibelius Scorch!') so that you can actually hear the music played. I had limited success when I tried that – though this might be due to the settings of my own computer. I did come off better in the audio department with the even more extensive interdenominational CyberHymnal which carries about 2300 hymns. This is found at



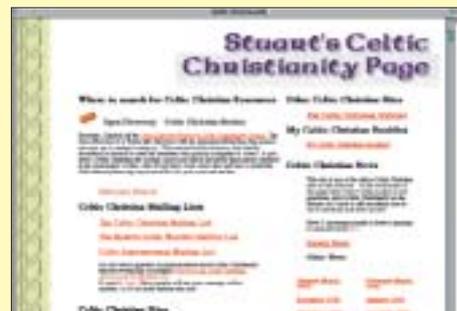
<http://cyberhymnal.org/> (be careful *not* to include the letters www in this Internet address!) It is important to realise that the limitations of copyright mean that by and large both sites can

only include older material that is out of copyright, but even so there is a wealth available – much of which will be fresh to each individual.

In view of the article on Celtic Spirituality in this issue, I thought that you might be interested to hear of some sites that would allow you to follow the world of Celtic Christianity. I am indebted to Kathleen Kinder herself for some of these suggestions. First a feast for the eyes. You can find exquisite pictures of the Lindisfarne Gospels at the British Library site, <http://bl.uk/diglib/treasures/lindisfarne.html> and of the Book of Kells at <http://www.dubois.ws/people/paul/kells>



Information about the island of Lindisfarne (Holy Island) itself is on <http://www.lindisfarne.org.uk> – this includes the salutary reminder that access to Holy Island depends on the tides! If you want to explore the history and saints of Celtic Christianity a good place to start is



<http://www2.gol.com/users/stuart/celtihs.html>

Any general search engine (eg google.com) will turn up a large number of sites on Celtic Christianity, but search engines do not tend to distinguish between the good and the eccentric – so you must be prepared to use your own powers of discrimination.

The next 'Fishing' expedition will be focusing on academic theological sites – suggestions welcome before the deadline of 7 March.

The Editor



For your bookshelf

B T

Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters

Ed Donald K McKim

IVP £25 hbk

0 65111 752 x

This is a major reference book by any standards. I hope libraries will lend it to borrowers and students not simply keep it on the shelf for reference. It is tightly packed and therefore can seem dull with its lists of names and books. However, its basic theme in six introductory articles is the important question of 'What are we doing when we claim that our faith is based on the Scriptures?' (*ie* hermeneutics – methods of interpretation.) Nearly two thirds of the book is about the period from 1700 to today, *ie* from the rise of critical biblical scholarship. After the introductory article, each part has entries on individuals – many new to me – Marpeck, Zanchi, Tholuck. The editor admits that people will challenge his selection of names – 'Women interpreters are unrepresented, as are those who are not Western, white males'. He is less open about the fact that the modern lists are of Protestant scholars (except Raymond F Brown); Lagrange and Loisy, Catholic modernists, are not even in the index nor are Jewish scholars (*eg* Montefiore). Similarly, scholars from the Orthodox Churches do not appear. In the Reformation period no Catholics are given articles except those who joined the Reformers' cause. The writers of the articles also are nearly all from the Reformed Churches (though Robert Morgan, Oxford, writes on Bornkamm and Strauss); they are also mainly working in North America. This reflects the current centre of gravity of biblical scholarship. I was surprised how many British scholars have moved to the USA since 1945.

Is this 'brain-drain' perhaps accelerated by the restriction, until recently, of many senior posts in England to Anglican scholars? Since Readers are Anglican themselves we can notice that Caird & Barr (Reformed) get their own articles but Nineham and Moule (Anglican) are not even in the index.

The actual content is good as far as I am qualified to judge. The context, the biography of the interpreters and the influences upon them make them come alive. In spite of the restrictions

mentioned earlier the articles remain objective in the assessment of the more radical and liberal scholars – *eg* the significance of Bultmann is accepted even if the debate has moved on. The specific point of a scholar's contribution is sometimes difficult to follow because of brevity (*eg* Kasemann on 'righteousness'). Most would agree with the writers that CH Dodd and CK Barrett are the 'leading', 'outstanding' recent British scholars.

The book itself may seem daunting to those starting biblical studies. However, perseverance is rewarded if only to help us appreciate how rare a simplistic literalism has been in the thinking church down through the centuries. The alternative to the Handbook is the *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (ed RJ Coggins & JL Houlden, 1990, SCM Press) which has a different format and a wider perspective. However it is encouraging that a major evangelical publisher can produce a reference book of careful, non-doctrinaire scholarship. The final general article concludes that people will divide between those who enthuse and those who lament about the state of interpretation today. That reflects the centuries old conundrum.

HUMPHREY PRIDEAUX

S J P

Losing faith in the BBC

Nigel Holmes

Paternoster £5.99 pbk

1842270397

In February 2000 the General Synod debated, and passed unanimously, a private member's motion regretting the reduction and rescheduling of religious programmes by the BBC on both television and radio. The motion was initiated by Nigel Holmes who, as well as being a former BBC radio producer, is Chairman of the Editorial Committee of *The Reader*. This book is an expanded version of the paper he prepared for General Synod which led to the debate. His research, he tells us, began with a hunch that there had been a substantial reduction since the 1980s in religious broadcasts. His hunch was amply confirmed by research drawn from the BBC's own publications. He provides in an appendix to this volume a summary of the proportion of time and the percentage of total output devoted to religious programmes since 1950. Since the 1980s and more dramatically in the late 1990s, whilst output in



general has increased, religious programmes have been dropped, reduced in length or frequency or relegated to less favourable time-slots. The evidence is unequivocal and can only be the result of deliberate policy despite disclaimers and rationalisations. The General Synod decided that it was likely to be more effective to encourage rather than castigate and hence the eventual motion was emollient. This tract for the times contains a vast amount of corroborative detail. There are appendices which summarise the General Synod debate, provide extracts from newspaper coverage of it and what the author describes as 'A chronicle of Christian broadcast coverage', drawn from BBC publications from 1928 onwards. Not surprisingly the first printing of Nigel Holmes' book has sold out and a reprint is now available!

PETER WATKINS

Note: Any Readers who wish to submit comments on religious broadcasting to the consultation group for the Government's Communications White Paper before the end of February can write to: Communications White Paper Consultation, c/o DTI, 151 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1 W9SS or email: consultation@communicationswhitepaper.gov.uk

T

The Anglican Understanding of the Church

Paul Avis

SPCK £6.99 pbk

0 281 05282 4

It is perhaps a pity that the extract from Paul Avis's book which appeared in *The Reader (Volume 97 No.3 page 13)* begins with paragraphs which use those off-putting words 'ecclesiology' and 'soteriology' frequently. This is not typical of the book as a whole. It is a useful and clearly argued survey of what the Anglican church stands for, in what ways it is distinct from other churches and what it holds in common with them. It is important to study and understand these things because, as Dr Avis writes, 'We cannot be Christians at all without the church, 'the blessed company of all faithful people'. Therefore we need to be able to say what the church of Christ is and how the particular branch of the church to which we belong is related to the whole.' If you agree about this, here is a book to read and keep by you.

AUDREY BAYLEY



T H

The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought

Ed Adrian Hastings with Alistair Mason & Hugh Pyper
OUP £40 hbk
0 19 060024 0

Incarcerated on the proverbial desert island I have never doubted what book I should take with me in addition to the Bible and Shakespeare – *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church 3rd edition*. Now however I shall have to ask permission to take a second – the vast and impressive *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*. It is scarcely surprising that this new reference book, intended for publication in the year 2000, was conceived as long ago as 1992. Its 600 articles are written by 260 contributors from twenty countries and include ‘all the main [Christian] traditions, both sexes, lay and clerical, veteran emeriti and young post-graduates, nuns and archbishops, journalists, Jesuits and Quakers’. It covers 2000 years of Christian history but the emphasis is on the present rather than the past with fuller treatment of the twentieth century than the first. It includes matters of Christian behaviour as well as Christian belief, politics as well as philosophy, the arts and sciences as well as ethics. The key people of the Christian tradition are represented whilst there is a central core of thematic articles on theological topics such as Resurrection, Eschatology, Grace and Trinity. A further feature is the summary articles; for example the superb Twentieth Century overview by Adrian Hastings himself. Each article is attributed to its author and is accompanied by a book list and is cross-referenced to other articles. This book must surely become the major source of reference in its field indispensable to any library and the first port of call for any Reader or Reader in training needing authoritative background for essay, sermon or lecture.

PETER WATKINS

H

Catholics in England 1950-2000

Ed MP Hornsby-Smith
Cassell £18.99 pbk
0 304 70527 6

Catholic here means Roman Catholic. This survey shows how much the Catholic church in England has changed in the half century under review. The gains: a coming together

with other Christians and the assumption of individual responsibility towards moral dilemmas. The losses: the old liturgy with its sense of the presence of God, the decline of that ‘sense of critical distance from the life around them’ which Catholics once had. One contributor, (the only reactionary) says ‘either Catholicism is distinctive or it is nothing’. That mark of Catholicism is fading for good or ill. An enlightening read if only for comparison with the Church of England in the same period.

LAWRIE CHORLEY

B S W P

Out of the Depths

Bernhard W Anderson & Steven Bishop
Westminster John Knox £14.99 pbk
0 664 25832 8

This is a completely revised edition of a study book on the Psalms, rewritten to take account of new developments in this field. There are chapters on form criticism – categories of Psalms defined according to literary form and liturgical function. There are also studies of stylistic and poetic features as well consideration of the relation of psalms to personal and communal events and emotions. This is a very useful book for detailed study of the Book of Psalms whether for theological or liturgical purposes and also a help for Readers who wish to use psalms for meditation and reflection on their own lives. For me it also raised questions about how we use the Psalms in our public worship.

WENDY AIRD

B S

The Story goes – the stories of Judges and Kings

Nico Ter Linden
SCM £14.95 pbk
0 334 02797 7

Disappointing. Old Testament scholars hold widely different estimates of the historical value of the Old Testament. Some try to discard it altogether; some have a high opinion of its value. I looked forward to this book but was soon disappointed. I found it difficult because the author discounts the text, which he regards as largely fiction. But more keenly I felt the author’s interpretation was in conflict with that of the biblical narrator. The introduction to this retelling of much of the story of Judges and Kings is at the end. The translator comments on the difficulty of conveying the Dutch

nuances of the original in English. Notes are at the end and references are mostly to Dutch sources. Much more valuable for Readers is *Men behaving badly*, John Goldingay’s new study of characters in the books of Samuel.

CLIFFORD BOOTH

B

The Historical Jesus Quest

Ed Gregory W Dawes
Westminster John Knox £14.99 pbk
0 664 22262 5

This book sets out to provide an anthology of the literature of the early history of the quest for the historical Jesus. It was compiled for a graduate level course in New Zealand to fill a gap in the existing literature. It features lengthy extracts from the works of such pioneers as DF Strauss, HS Reimarus and Albert Schweitzer, though his *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* is not used. The authors quoted extend to Ernest Kasemann’s opening of the New Quest in 1953. For me this book succeeds in what it sets out to do and I read it with interest. But this is a subject for which I am an enthusiast and in which I have some background. I’m not sure that this is a book for those beginning Historical Jesus or Quest reading. For them den Heyer’s *Jesus Matters* might be a better starting point.

BRIAN GARDNER

B

Speaking Parables

David Buttrick
Westminster John Knox £14.99 pbk
0 664 22191 2

David Buttrick believes that ‘as a Christian we should not only wish to preach about Jesus but to preach the preaching of Jesus Christ’. The three chapters of Part 1, *The parables of Jesus*, *The mysterious Kingdom of God* and *Preaching parables*, suggest ways of study and reflection which ‘change our lives and ways of living’ and lead us to preaching which is ‘an excitement we share with God’. Part 2 is also user-friendly. Thirty three parables are explored in some detail under the chapter headings *Mark; Matthew; Thomas, Q and Matthew and Luke; Luke*. Each chapter has a general introduction and a list of the parables studied in detail and their parallels in other gospels. When appropriate more than one text is included. Buttrick’s own translations have a contemporary ring which opens up new insights. ➤



Fourteen sermons preached between 1958 and 1998 are printed in full, warts and all. Each is followed by a discussion or critical review, section by section, with a reminder that 'sermons are not intended to be religious essays for all time'. The book's usefulness is further enriched by the final informative, time saving reference pages and bibliography. This is an essential book for Reader-tutors and for Readers with some experience.

RHODA HISCOX

W P T

What happens in Holy Communion?

Michael Welker

SPCK £12.99 pbk

0 281 05291 3

This is not an easy book to read but it contains a wealth of knowledge and experience to help the reader to understand a mystery that puzzles us all. Michael Welker is professor of systematic theology at the University of Heidelberg. This book springs from lectures delivered at Heidelberg and at Princeton, USA as well as from a personal quest to understand the eucharist. He first examines what takes place at the eucharist; each word of the gospel story of the institution of the Last Supper is examined meticulously. The related biblical references such as the Old Testament Passover and Paul's account are dissected. The author reviews the historical understandings, for example of the Real Presence, of all Christian denominations. Lastly he discusses the ecumenical endeavour related to communion. Welker's book is like an air accident investigation; every scrap of evidence is meticulously examined with an open mind and he then draws his own conclusions.

LYNN FERRABY

W S P

A World of Blessings

Compiled by Geoffrey Duncan

Canterbury £12.99 pbk

1 85311 332 8

If you've never bought a goldmine buy this one! The compiler, a member of the United Reformed church in Hertfordshire, has gathered 350 pages of blessings from around the world for use by lay and ordained ministers. They come from countries as far apart as the Philippines, the Ukraine, Canada and New Zealand. Jewish, Baha'i and Coptic Orthodox blessings are amongst a rich variety of subjects. Personal, local, national and global

topics mix with those on justice, festivals, the seasons, relationships, technology, health and healing and the arts. Their diversity is wonderful; blessings for someone with learning difficulties, people with Alzheimer's and AIDS, blessings for a shopping centre, a person sitting opposite on the train, beehives and chickens – even an ear piercing ceremony from the Cook Islands. There is a freshness which will delight and stimulate any congregation, worship or prayer group.

DAVID FARRANT

S W T

Festive Icons for the Christian Year

John Baggeley

Mowbray £16.99 pbk

0 264 67488 x

This is an interesting book though its appeal may be limited. It provides an introduction to the use and importance of icons in the Orthodox churches. We are given an icon for each important festival. There is a good description of each icon and a commentary on the meaning of each festival with a list of appropriate Bible readings. The colour plates enhance the book and there is a glossary of terms. To quote from the introduction: 'To some western Christians the language of this devotion may seem excessive and even misplaced'. But by giving icons prayerful attention and in particular gazing at them in silence we can begin to see them as an opening to God. This is a useful introduction to a subject which may be unfamiliar to many Readers.

CHRIS GREGORY

W P

Liturgies for the Journey of Life

Dorothy McRea-McMahon

SPCK £9.99 pbk

0 281 05277 8

Do you often have a chance to use innovative liturgy? If yes, then this book might help you. Written by a minister of the Uniting Church of Australia, its 130 pages range widely. There are morning, evening and Communion services, services related to peace, justice, the family, creation, mission, community, hard times, healing, and even a funeral service. It has liturgies for Advent, Christmas, Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost. The language is modern and often vivid. A frequent feature is the inclusion of a small symbolic action by the people to mark the theme of the service. Whilst

clearly Christian some will find its images too far from tradition or Bible. A brief test drive of one of the services in a suburban parish brought the response that it was 'a bit too high falutin'.

JOHN MUNNS

W S P T

Beholding the Glory

Ed J Begbie

DLT £12.95 pbk

0 232 52362 2

This excellent book explores the incarnation through various art forms: literature, poetry, dance, icons, sculpture, popular music and music in general. All the contributors subscribe to the theory that through art the incarnation is revealed in fresh and sometimes powerful ways, ways which can touch us deeply. I particularly appreciated the sculptor Lynn Aldrich's chapter and her likening the sculptor's struggle with her material with our struggles with ultimate questions concerning God – but all the essays have much to offer. Art enables us to link directly with the incarnation and here is a welcome guide to help us to enter more deeply into the incarnation experience.

ANDREW-BEDE ALLSOP

S P T

Both Alike to Thee

Melvin Matthews

SPCK £9.99 pbk

1 281 05030 9

Canon Matthews will be known to some as the author of *Rediscovering Holiness*, and this book follows in the same tradition. He aims to restate the 'mystical way', a phrase he prefers to mysticism, for today's Christian. His aims are pastoral and theological, linking both to post-modernism, a restatement he sees as vital for the Christian in a world of moral and spiritual disintegration. Readers may observe that his use of the term 'mystical way' is closer to contemplation or meditation. He explores both the hiddenness and the revelation of God, the dark and the light, hence the title. There is particular emphasis on the speech of God, which will encourage all proclaimers of the word. Although the supreme purpose of the way is to glorify God he also confronts the issue of the emptiness of the self where 'the true mystical life acknowledges that we are separated from our true identity'. The reader may be uncomfortable with some ideas for example 'enchantment' and 'erotic love', and find his random exchange of the >



male and female pronouns for God jarring. This is however an eminently worthwhile book for Readers and for mature Christians, bringing a deeper perspective to bear upon both their pastoral work and their personal, inner life in relation to God.

DOUGLAS McMURTRIE

S T P

God and the Creative Imagination

Paul Avis

Routledge £15.99 pbk

0 415 21503 x

This book whose bibliography reads like a Who's Who, is a fascinating academic overview of theology and philosophy, exploring topics such as empiricism and today's postmodern deconstructivism which rejects any notion of an ultimate ground of meaning that is God. Paul Avis's thesis is that Christianity lives supremely in the imagination and that belief is a form of aesthetic perception and imaginative assent. He argues that the important affirmations of Christian faith are expressed in mythic form and crucially that metaphor, symbol and myth are significant and offer a genuine insight into reality. As Readers we have to deal with sacred texts full of metaphor, symbol and myth and endeavour to bridge Barth's 'gap between podium and pulpit'. This book has introduced me to some modern writers, made me look afresh at demythologising and given me a sense of confidence in saying the creed. I recommend it as material for CME.

GLORIA HELSON

T P

Varieties of Unbelief

John Habgood

DLT £8.95 pbk

0 232 52320 7

As fellow Readers will know that which is proclaimed in preaching frequently loses its bite when read as an essay, and conversely good tutorial pieces seldom translate to the pulpit. As I read and re-read this book I found myself wishing I had been able to attend the Bampton lectures for, despite the thorough research and elegant language, I found difficulty in connecting with Dr Habgood's message. Using William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* as a framework the author examines a range of unbeliefs from passive indifference to passionate moral intensity, analysing specific cases from the arts,

science and philosophy. Like James he acknowledges that 'beliefs flourish and die' and that there is scope for 're-interpretation, changes of emphasis, and a process of winnowing in the light of experience'. John Habgood poses the question 'Can one be a passionate but critical believer?' and clearly believes one can. His book contributes to a better understanding of the problem, though the relevance of his conclusion to Reader ministry is limited.

RICHARD NEWNHAM

J T

Politics, Prayers and Parliament

David Rogers

Continuum £12.99 pbk

0 8264 5156 x

This is an unusual book, only partly fulfilling the promise of its title. It is mainly about the inter-relationship of church and state. Rogers has long experience as a parliamentary advisor and his chapters on lobbying and campaigning are thorough, though hardly suggesting an integral relationship with 'public praying' with which the chapter headings link them. The two chapters on prayer itself do not get beyond varieties of the petitionary and uncritically accept the church's frequently naïve response to supposed social wrongs, as indeed Rogers himself appears to do with such currently fashionable ideas as ecumenism and women clerics. He concludes with some reassuring comments about the difficulties likely to stand in the way of disestablishment. Of lesser cavils I was amazed to read: 'The Reformation is still a stumbling block' (long may it remain so); and there is no mention of the Archbishops' Council (the Cabinet of the church).

ARTHUR POLLARD

P T J

Seeking the truth in love

Michael Doe

DLT £5.95 pbk

0 232 52399 1

'Permanent, faithful, stable'

Jeffrey John

DLT £3.50

0 232 52364 9

There is no issue facing the Church of England, apart from the ordination of women to the episcopate, more fraught than that of homosexuality. Most people come to any discussion of the topic not only with pre-conceived notions but with strongly entrenched

positions from which they are determined not to be shaken. Yet in secular society there has been a seismic shift of opinion in the last decade often leaving the church isolated and appearing reactionary and homophobic. Here are two short books, the first by a bishop and the second by the Canon Chancellor and Theologian of Southwark Cathedral which could scarcely be bettered for their calm, dispassionate survey of the evidence. Michael Doe, Bishop of Swindon, starts with the searing experience of the Lambeth conference of 1998. He writes 'to help the church to be more aware, more honest and more inclusive as it grapples with these difficult questions'. Chapters reflect the classic Anglican triad of scripture, reason and tradition with one added on 'Experience'. He usefully reprints as appendices both the Lambeth report on Human Sexuality and the much more divisive Lambeth Resolution. Jeffrey John believes that the church should endorse 'permanent, faithful and stable' same sex relationships but he does so only after asking three questions: Is it scriptural?, Is it moral? and Is it achievable?

PETER WATKINS

T P

Evil, Suffering and Religion

Brian Hebblethwaite

SPCK £9.99 pbk

0 281 05314 6

I found this book interesting in its approach to the problem which faces Christians as well as those of other faiths, that of evil and suffering. On many occasions in preaching and teaching it crops up and I find it very difficult to answer. The author surveys the problem from the point of view of the major world religions. He describes several explanations, in particular the free will concept and points out the two extremes represented by Buddhism which is more concerned with suffering than evil and the Judaeo-Christian position which sees the problem of evil requiring explanation. He sees the problem as particularly acute for theistic religions and outlines the approaches of dualism, rejection, the devil and the fall and divine punishment. He considers ways adopted to cope with suffering and evil. I recommend this book to anybody who wishes to explore the problem which suffering and evil present to religious belief.

GEORGE J SHARPE



Gazette of newly admitted and licensed Readers

BATH AND WELLS

7 OCTOBER 2000

Admitted and Licensed

Christabel Ager, St James, Taunton
Julie Birkett, Christ Church, WSM
Anna Caddy, North Newton and Thurloxton and Durston
Alan Calaminus, Milton
Jenny Cooper, Holy Trinity, Frome
Paul Gibbs, Porlock and Porlock Weir with Stoke Pero
Margaret Harrison, Nether Stowey with Over Stowey
Jane Haynes, Long Ashton
Brenda Joynes, South Petherton with the Seavingtons
Susan Latimer, Axbridge, Shipham and Rowberrow
Peter Mead, Stoke sub Hamdon
Francis Montagu, Wrington with Butcombe
Julia Norton, Wraxall with Failand
Ruth Rogers, Haselbury Plucknett, Misterton and North Perrett
Tony Roost, Berrow and Brean
Diana Rubery, Worle Team Ministry
Pamela Smith, Christ Church, WSM
Frank Tucker, Paulton and Farrington Gurney
Ivor Vernalls, St Saviour, Bath with Swainswick and Woolley
Sheila Watters, St Michael with St Paul, Bath
Andrew Webb, Bridgwater St Francis
Marion Willey, Langport Team Ministry
Bryan Williams, Odd Down Bath with Combe Hay
John Cullingford (to be admitted)

Licensed

Geoffrey Abery, South Petherton
Sarah Couchman, All Saints, Weston Bath
Rosemary Eggerton, Stoke sub Hamdon
Helen Hyatt, Netherstowey with Over Stowey
Rosemary Moody, Baltonsborough with Butleigh and West Bradley
Roy Moody, Baltonsborough with Butleigh and West Bradley
Alison Mothersdale, Carhampton
Michael Phillips, East Coker with Sutton Bingham and Closworth
Jane Sutton, Keynsham
Grace Turner, Combe Down with Monkton Combe and South Stoke Bath

BLACKBURN

4 NOVEMBER 2000

Admitted and Licensed

Ian Jackson, St Chad, Poulton-le-Fylde
Jess Rowe, All Saints, Anchorsholme

CARLISLE

9 SEPTEMBER 2000

Admitted and Licensed

Evelyn Alexander, Brampton
Beryl Bradshaw, Aspatria
Graham Cox, Torpenhow
Janice Eadington, Ulverston

Ashley Henderson, Holy Trinity, Kendal
Edward Hicks, Borrowdale
Maurice Jefferson, Silloth
Alan Maguire, Holme Eden
Frances Makin, Levens
Morag Potts, Castle Carrock
Pat Riven, Caldbeck

COVENTRY

23 SEPTEMBER 2000

Admitted and Licensed

Susan Berridge, St Matthew, Rugby
Sheila Bridge, St Matthew, Rugby
Shirley Holder, St Michael and all Angels, Great Wolford
Mary Lodge, St Michael, Budbrooke
Sue Minton, St Mark, Bilton
Susan Morton, St Mary, Walgrave-on-Sowe
Yvonne Pitt, St John the Baptist, Wolvey
Anne Richards, St James, Fletchamstead
Anthony Thistlewood, St Mary, Walsgrave-on-Sowe
Licensed
Christopher Mills, St John, Kenilworth

DURHAM

SEPTEMBER 2000

Admitted and Licensed

Susan Bruce, St Andrew, Haughton-le-Skerne
Dorothy Brumwell, United Benefice of Blackhall, Castle Eden and Monkhesleden
Joanne Fearn, St Mary, Easington
Deborah Gill, All Saints, Blackwell
Scott Lunn, St Cuthbert, Darlington
Hilary Metcalf, The Hetton Group Ministry
George Reed, Benefice of Kelloe and Coxhoe
George Rowden, St Lawrence, Middleton-St-George
Lesley Stegner, St Andrew, Haughton-le-Skerne
Christine Stephenson, St Paul, West Pelton
John Taylor, All Saints, Preston-on-Tees
June Wilson, St Stephen, Willington
Anne Wildsmith, All Saints, Preston-on-Tees
Thomas Worsley, Christ Church Felling
Pauline Young, St Andrew, Haughton-le-Skeane

GLOUCESTER

4 NOVEMBER 2000

Admitted and Licensed

Yvonne Brae, Cheltenham, St Silas
Peter Burke, Cheltenham, St Luke and St John
Elaine Frampton, Newent and Gorsley with Clifford's Mesne
Eric Jackson, Broadwell, Evenlode, Oddington, Adlestrop Westcote with Icomb and Bledington
Ingrid Lomas, Tewkesbury Abbey with Walton Cardiff and Twynning
Tony Lomas, Cirencester with Watermoor
Aileen Powell, Lydney
Melissa Webb, Leckhampton, St Peter
Roger Wookey, Gloucester, St James
Licensed
Mark Birchall, Daglingworth with the Duntisbournes, Winstone and Brimpsfield with Birdlip and Syde
Graham Kingshott, Hardwicke, Elmore, Longney
Philip Walters, South Cerney, Cerney Wick, Down Ampney
Richard Wrightson, South Cerney, Cerney Wick, Down Ampney

**GUILDFORD**

13 SEPTEMBER 2000

*Admitted and Licensed***Ruth Bennett**, Busbridge and Hambledon**Mary Bowman**, St Mary, Shalford**Colin Connolly**, Alford and Loxwood**James Cooke**, Wonersh with Blackheath**Anne Dollery**, St Peter with All Saints, Chertsey**John Metcalfe**, Wonersh with Blackheath**Robin Shattock**, Westborough Team Ministry, Guildford**Gertrud Sollars**, Busbridge and Hambledon**Michael Truman**, All Saints, Guildford**John Vinton**, St Bartholomew, Haslemere*Licensed***Timothy Cross**, St Paul, Camberley**Kevin Dodds**, Hale with Badshot Lea**Jill Fudge**, St Luke, Grayshott**LEICESTER**

23 SEPTEMBER 2000

*Admitted and Licensed***Marian Bennett**, Hathern, Long Whatton and Diseworth**Lorna Brabin-Smith**, Coalville and Bardon Hill**Glenys Bromley**, The Abbey, Leicester**Andrea Day**, Broughton Astley, Croft and Stony Stanton**Chris Freeman**, The Martyrs, Leicester**Jane Gibbs**, St Mary, Hinckley**David Harrison**, Packington with Normanton-le-Heath**Maxine Johnson**, The Langtons and Stonton Wyville**John Lane**, Broughton Astley, Croft and Stony Stanton**Janice Orchard**, St David, Broom Leys**MANCHESTER**

22 SEPTEMBER 2000

*Admitted and Licensed***Celia Dutton**, St Stephen, Elton**Mary Mulraney**, St Simon and St Jude, Bolton**Alan Phillips**, Christ Church, Pennington**Robert Smith**, St Paul, Withington**PETERBOROUGH**

14 MAY 2000

*Admitted and Licensed***Gary Alderson**, All Hallows, Wellingborough**Alison Barnes**, Abington**Jill Charman**, Spratton**Lulu Pelly**, Potterspurpy**Jo Saunders**, Essendine**Richard Southey**, St Luke, Duston**Vyvyan Wainwright**, Oakham**David Wilson**, Moulton*Licensed***Joyce Tompkins**, Oundle**RIPON AND LEEDS**

2 OCTOBER 2000

*Admitted and Licensed***John Lovett**, St Gregory, Bedale**Janet Newell**, All Saints Ripley with Burnt Yates**Sue Pearce**, Christ Church, High Harrogate**David Pearson**, St Barnabas, Alwoodley**Lois Plows**, All Hallows, Bardsey**Gill Rogers**, St Agatha, Gilling with Kirkby Ravensworth**Steven Scaife**, St Barnabas, Alwoodley*Licensed***Marion Allmark**, Leeds Mental Health Care Trust**Robin Whitworth**, Holy Trinity, Ripon**ST ALBANS**

16 SEPTEMBER 2000

*Admitted and Licensed***Bridget Adams**, Christ Church, Radlett**Elizabeth Andrews**, St Paul, Letchworth**Howell Davies**, St Ippolyts, Hitchin**Patricia Hamilton**, St George, Anstey**Margaret Rose Lloyd**, Christ the King, Digswell**Linda Sanders**, St Stephen, Barnet**Sara Smith**, St Mary, Kings Walden*Licensed***Lauryn Awbrey**, St John, Harpenden**SALISBURY**

7 OCTOBER 2000

*Admitted and Licensed***David Coates**, St Mark, Salisbury**Penny Elliott**, Hamworthy**Jane Gilbert**, Hilperton with Whaddon, Staverton with

Hilperton Marsh

Henry Head, Bourne Valley**Tessa Mann**, Bourne Valley**Ann Mulley**, The Iweres, Sutton Waldron and Fontmell

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attending for the first time.*To make a booking or seek further information contact:*

Tony Hawkins, 30 Flintway, Wath upon Dearne,

Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 7TR

*Licensed*

Daphne Goodwin, All Saints, Westbury
Jennifer Hunt, Wool and East Stoke
Terence Landsbert, Bincombe with Broadway, Upwey and Buckland Ripers
Alexandra Landsbert, Bincombe with Broadway, Upwey and Buckland Ripers
Mary Loyden, Shaston Team Ministry
Kathleen Morison, All Saints, Branksome Park
John Stott, St John the Baptist and St Mary, Devizes
Paul West, Broughton Gifford, Great Chalfield and Holt St Katharine

SHEFFIELD

9 SEPTEMBER 2000

Admitted and Licensed

Peter Broxham, Wickersley
Shaun Clarkson, Goole
Ann Fitzgerald, Maltby
Jim Glynn, Grenoside
Linda Gormley, Maltby
Albert Head, Askern
Peter Heath, Askern
Roy Kohler, Greenhill
Gerald Marks, Laughton
Elinor Noble, Beighton
Jenny Nuttall, Waterthorpe LEP
Susan Wesley, Conisbrough

SOUTHWARK

23 OCTOBER 2000

Admitted and Licensed

Lesley Bell, St George, Tolworth
Stuart Buchanan, St Francis, West Wickham
Godwin Buraimoh, Emmanuel, West Dulwich
Sabine Burningham, (to be licensed in Winchester Diocese)
Arthur Cheeseman, East Greenwich Team Ministry
James Harris, St Paul, Clapham
Susan Horle, St Mary, Addington
Sarah Jones, St Paul, Hook
Serena Josolyne, St James, Malden
Mark Lanyon, Waringham with Chelsham and Farleigh
Freddie Loh, St John, Coulsdon
Rita Mather, St Luke, Charlton
Kay Nicholls, St Mildred, Lee
Robert Norbury, St Luke, Eltham Park
Brian Pickett, Emmanuel, Morden Team Ministry
Isobel Robinson, All Saints with St John, Kingston
Chris Ruse, St Andrew, Ham
Audrey Seamons, East Greenwich Team Ministry
Patrick Shorrock, St Luke, Eltham Park
Richard Sweet, St Mary, Battersea
John Townsend, St Paul, Wimbledon Park, Wandsworth

*Licensed***Diana Coutts**, St Mildred, Lee**SOUTHWELL**

7 OCTOBER 2000

Admitted and Licensed

Sally Barton, Christ Church, Chilwell,
Sally Bayliss, Saint John, Carrington
Christopher Chambers, Saint Mary, Greasley
Christine Childs, Saint James, Porchester

Kate Colcough, Saint Edmund, Mansfield Woodhouse
Kathy Crawford, Saint Paul, Carlton-in-the-Willows
Alison Duckers, Parish of Lenton
David Harvey, Saint Mark, Woodthorpe
Jane Hayward, Clifton Team Ministry
Anne Hedley, Southern Cluster of Parishes in Southwell Deanery
Judith Jones, Saint Mark, Woodthorpe
Brian Kent, Malkin Group of Parishes
Hazel Lunnon, Saint Mary, Edwinstowe
Lyndis Rowley, Everton and Mattersey with Clayworth
Andrea Russell, Saint Paul, Wilford Hill
Geoff Shipman, Saint Michael, Bramcote
Jane Skidmore, All Saints, Huthwaite
Raymond Tew, Selston with Westwood
Joan Wright, Warsop Parish

WAKEFIELD

1 OCTOBER 2000

Admitted and Licensed

Karen Campbell, St John the Baptist, Wakefield
Christine Gaunt, St Augustine, Scissett
Alan Hoggard, St John the Divine, Rastrick
David Mann, St Hilda, Halifax
Julie Morton, St Peter, Gildersome
Gordon Nevill, Holy Nativity, Mixenden
Anne Pickard, St George, Ovenden
Wylva Ravy, St John the Baptist, Kirkheaton
Dennis Shields, Christ the King, Meltham
Len Smith, St Bartholomew, Marsden
Ann Sykes, St John the Evangelist, Newsome
Joanne Sykes, St John the Baptist, Kirkheaton
Sue Ward, St Catherine, Sandal
Mark Watkins, St John the Baptist, Halifax
Bobbie Whitaker, Upper Holme Valley Team Ministry
Cicely White, Grimethorpe, St Luke

YORK

4 NOVEMBER 2000

Admitted and licensed

Robin Catchpole, Sutton Team
Dorothy Clark, Kirk Fenton
Jean Faulkes, Derwent Deanery
Steve Carton, St Mark, Newby
Graeme Hay, Scalby, Hackness and Harwood Dale
Pat Heath, Marfleet Team
Alison Lewis, Sutton Team
Tim Old, Elloughton with Brough and Brantingham
Ros O'Toole, Cloughton
Judith Palmer, St Thomas, York
Nadine Parkinson, Saltburn
Jane Shaw, St Martin, Hull
David Simpson, St Chad, York
Ann Smith, St Nicholas, Beverley
Stuart Turner, Middle Esk Moor
Sarah Zettel, Huntington and New Earswick

Licensed

Richard Costin, St Martin on the Hill, Scarborough
Gareth Morgan, Askham Bryan

The lists for Bristol, Oxford and Rochester are held over until the next issue.

In Memoriam

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

Birmingham

Mr S Cashmore
Mr S Ellson

Mr E Martin
Mr R Rollings
Blackburn
Miss M Hargreaves
Mr R McLeish

Coventry

Mr CP Davis
Miss EM Rumbold

Ely

Professor A Cameron

Exeter

Mrs J Poole

Guildford

Mr J Skinner
Mr K Allison

Oxford

Mrs V Instone
Mr EW Revill

St Albans

Mr TA Clements

Sheffield

Mr D Hunt
Mr P Worton
Mr D Arkley

Truro

Mr JE Hickling

Worcester

Mr S Dixon
Mrs A Palmer

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



Gleanings

Margaret Jackson, a Reader in Southwell Diocese, was presented with the Archbishops' Diploma for Readers by the Bishop of Sherwood at a special ceremony on 8 October 2000. She had been unable to receive it at the ceremony in York in July because she was suffering from cancer. Sadly Margaret died a couple of weeks after receiving the Diploma: her sensitive thesis on the importance of music in worship and spirituality acts as her memorial.

Dot Hooker whose article about the experience in Yalding appears on p.14 of this issue has written a booklet called 'Worshipping with Older People'. It is published by 'Church in Society' in Rochester Diocese, sets out some general principles and includes ideas for themes. Readers working with the elderly, *eg* in care homes might find it very useful. It is obtainable from: Church in Society, 60 Marsham Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1EW Tel: 01622 755014; email: office@csr.org.uk for £1.50 including postage.

Lay canons

We are proud to report that Pat Nappin's contribution to the church's ministry has been appropriately recognised. She has recently been appointed as a Lay Canon of Chelmsford Cathedral. Also similarly honoured are John Field, the previous National Moderator of Reader Training and at present Warden of Readers for Rochester Diocese and Olga Garner, Project Officer for the Mothers' Union in the same diocese. They have both been made Honorary Lay Canons of Rochester Cathedral.

Postscript to Swanwick Conference

A number of you were keen to receive copies of a reflection given at the July 2000 Swanwick Readers' Conference. It

was titled 'Arthur's Story: The Turn of the Tide'. We thought that the easiest way for us to make this available was to put the text on the Readers website at <http://www.readers.cofe.anglican.org> It will be there for a limited period of time.

Apology

I sometimes receive kind letters which seem to imply that the editorial team of *The Reader* must be on the scale of a national daily. Far from it! We are a small group of volunteers, mostly with other jobs or commitments. I myself hold a full-time position as Theological Officer for USPG. We are given some helpful assistance by the CRC staff, and use the services of a professional designer. These remarks are by way of explanation that we do rely on information that we are fed by the dioceses and simply have not got the resources to check its accuracy independently. Regrettably this can mean that occasionally mistakes creep in. One unfortunate one was in the August 2000 issue where we mentioned David Ogg of Chester Diocese in the 'In Memoriam' list. We are glad to say that this was an error and that David is very much alive. We apologise to him and his family for the distress this must have caused.

50 years service

Blackburn Diocese reports that the following Readers are still active, each having been licensed for over 50 years: Edwin Ashworth (51 years) serving at St Matthew the Apostle with Holy Trinity, Burnley; John Dart (51 years) serving at St Thomas, Lancaster; Campbell Hopwood (53 years) who is based at St Mary Magdalene, Clitheroe.

We have also heard from Worcester Diocese who asks us to mention John Callaghan who was admitted and licensed as a Reader on 4 February 1951 at All Saints, Evesham. He transferred to the Diocese of Guildford

in 1969 and was licensed in Worcester Diocese to Badsey, Evesham on 11 April 1981 where he had served ever since.

Common Worship and All age worship

Angus Cleaver, a Reader in Guildford Diocese laments the fact that Common Worship seems to include very little material that is suitable for a younger or less sophisticated congregation or occasional worshippers. He also wonders whether a 'lectionary' might be devised with appropriate and balanced biblical readings for a monthly all-age worship service. Frank Barlow of Lincoln Diocese comments that he does not think that Common Worship has taken full account of the needs of the partially sighted. We intend to give you an opportunity via a 'Postings' in the November 2001 issue of *The Reader* to let us know your impressions of Common Worship a year in.

Coming up

We thought you might find it useful to know the broad 'themes' that *The Reader* will focus on for the remainder of 2001. These are Prayer, Worship and spirituality (May 2001), Church and Society today (August 2001) and Matthew's gospel, education and law (November 2001). The first issue of 2002 will look at mission and dialogue and the World Church. A number of articles for each of these issues have already been commissioned so space is limited, but if you have a particular contribution to make do get in touch with the editor. It is important to bear in mind that any contributions published in *The Reader* have a national audience and they need to be written with this in mind. They also need to say as much as possible in as few words as possible! However if they are unsuitable for publishing in full, we may be able to include an excerpt or a reference to them in 'Gleanings'.



The Last Word – from Church House

What a year! The millennium year has been one that, for a number of reasons, I will not forget in a hurry. I spent almost the whole of October overseas visiting our Chelmsford link Dioceses in Kenya and – for a long weekend – the Church of Sweden with whom we have a Diocesan agreement following on the Porvoo conversations.

The joy of Kenya

Kenya was humbling and challenging as Christians respond with joy to the challenges that their environment and living conditions set for them. With drought in many areas for some two years, with no elec-

tricity or sanitation (except for the 'long drop'), no refrigeration and therefore no meat in the diet and with transport difficulties and often atrocious roads, life is hard in the extreme. It is nothing for clergy to walk for an hour and a half in order to reach

the church and most are required to live away visiting home, only on their days off. Mothers' Union funding often provides the only car in a diocese and the Kenyan clergy were astonished to learn that virtually all our clergy have their own vehicles.

The church works hard to support the farmers and to provide some meals and occasionally homes, for the large numbers of street children who are present in each town. It is certainly true that they give out of their own poverty.

Readers are a valued part of the ministry, though mostly (but not always) in the absence of clergy and not part of a ministry team. On two occasions I met Readers resplendent in cassock, surplice and blue scarf and a hat which would in each case have graced a garden party or wedding in this country.

The wealth of Sweden

The wealthy church of Sweden with its large teams of full-time paid staff was the greatest contrast that can be imagined. There they provide most of the social services as well the care of all the cemeteries in the country. The parish in which I stayed had a full time staff of thirty-five which included the treasurer, the organist and her assistant as well as children's, youth, elderly people's workers and the caterer in the full time refectory. It will be interesting to see how and if they can sustain this work now that the government has made the church tax optional for the population. But it was a joy to be invited to administer the chalice at the parish church and to be welcomed into their fellowship.

Here at Church House

Nor have we been idle in the CRC office since the Swanwick conference. Discussions have begun over the production of a slim book, which would provide an introduction to Reader ministry. *A Reader Diary for 2002* will, hopefully, be on sale in May and I will look forward to receiving your comments as to its usefulness. A working party is also about to begin considering plans for a national conference in Cambridge in

September 2002. The proposed dates are September 13-15 so please book them now.

I send my best wishes and prayers to you all as we begin another year in the service of our Lord.

Pat Nappin, *Honorary Secretary*



Faith in action in Kenya





Readers' Robes

Cassocks

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and Scarves

Brochure sent on request

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