

Chaplains Blog Stardate 25:09:2016

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Dear Friends

When I started these monthly newsletters / Blogs I wondered if I would run out of things to write about..... silly me! As I sit on various committees that affect us as Readers (Licensed Lay Ministers) including Diocesan Safeguarding, Readers in Training Management, Readers Management, Readers Committee there seems to be much to disseminate! So I was going to write about life with grandchildren, the pressures on schools and Readers in Training.... but they will have to wait!

If any of you want to see the back issues of this newsletter they are all available on the Redruth Benefice website. www.redruthchurch.org.uk

Hot in the news, to me at any rate, is a document on the legal side of fees for funerals. This may well affect a number of readers and so I will include the relevant document as a pdf file with this newsletter. *'Crematorium funerals and parochial fees,'*

Thoughts about sports (Reflecting on Matthew 10:37)

Since the last Chaplain's Epistle to the Readers the Soccer Season has begun in earnest, the Olympics and the Cricket season is drawing to a close. I cannot really class myself as a sports fan; I like watching some sport and I follow a football and cricket team but I am not a fan in the true sense of the word. Fan when it is short for fanatic means you support your team watching them through good times and bad and often spending vast sums of money to follow them around the country or even the world!

Is our discipleship of Jesus different to that of the committed fan? Indeed it is because there are rules behind our following that Sports, or any other sort of fans, do not have. The code of the football fan does not forbid the fan of the losing team heading for the pub, drinking more than they ought and then going home to vent their fury on an innocent spouse for example. And yet.... Jesus says we must hate our father and mother

– those closest to us if we want to be his disciples. But what does this mean? Perhaps I will chat to my Spiritual director☺

Spiritual direction

The annual survey showed that about 25% of readers have a spiritual director of some sort.

I spent a Friday early in September at Epiphany House with Spiritual Directors, both experienced and potential, and Bishop Tim who was 'setting out his stall' about the subject as he underlined the importance of everyone having ways of exploring their faith more deeply. Bishop Tim suggested that there were many ways of doing that including groups and that not everyone required an individual director. Personally I think that all of us in active ministry should have someone to talk to / challenge us / explore with.

That it is a good idea for everyone and especially those in ministry to have someone with whom to discuss their spiritual lives seems eminently sensible if not vitally important, but actually finding that someone can be quite difficult especially as ideally they should be independent from the place in which we minister. Currently the system is to contact the 'Epiphany Network' and fill in a form. There is a link and some more about it here: <http://www.epiphanyhouse.co.uk/spiritual.html>

If you have had any difficulties in getting a Spiritual Director and would like to explore this further, do get in touch for a chat and I will do my best to help the process along! Rev'd Hilary Spong, who is very knowledgeable about the subject, is running a course beginning in November that I am very much looking forward to because accompanying others feels central to my own ministry at the moment. She may even have a place or two left so if that ministry interests you, do get in touch with her.

Useful Apps for phones and tablets: I Promised a link for some readers... the links to the lectionary and other useful things are in a box on the same page!

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/other-information/official-products/apps-for-worship.aspx>

Training and courses are often what you make them

That leads me very smoothly into a bit about CMED and training in general. I spent this morning with Canon Jane Kneebone planning the almost monthly day schools for the Readers in Training where the aim is to cover a wide range of practical aspects of ministry and spirituality. This year the programme contains things as varied as the theology of preaching to creating a prayer labyrinth. Last year's programme included sessions on spirituality in art, personality and preaching and conducting funerals. As someone who was trained getting on for 3 decades ago I learn something from each session even if it is not a subject that I am especially interested in. It occurs to me that the value of training relies upon that attitude of the recipient. If one goes with an open

mind and looks for learning opportunities it is amazing what one can learn even from a session that takes one out of the usual comfort zone... or is, heaven forbid, just plain dull.

Does the same go for our sermons and for congregations?

Readers' concerns and the survey

Another little hat of mine is assistant secretary to Carrie Tucker, not that I do a lot apart from proof reading minutes and occasionally updating email addresses on the data base but it does mean I get to see the results of surveys and correspondence fairly early. This year's survey is most interesting. The fulfilling part of Reader Ministry is incredibly varied though as one might expect from trained lay theologians preaching and teaching was pretty high on the list!

The concerns can be grouped and are worth thinking about!

Breadth of opportunities for Readers to widen the scope of their ministry such as Baptism Preparation, Marriage Preparation & Confirmation and Funerals Ministry: A number of readers commented that they would like to do more funeral ministry but that this often proved difficult. There was a variety of reasons from the incumbent wanting to do them all to funeral directors not contacting alternatives! Sometimes the directors have their own funeral orators and I know of at least one Reader training to do this.

Margaret Hill said that in Pydar they were sending list of all ministers able to conduct funerals to Funeral Directors because not all the funeral directors are aware of Readers or the fact that they are licensed to officiate at funerals.

Transition support for Readers waiting for the appointment of a new incumbent was a common thread and there are more than a few Readers who feel quite strongly that they are not given enough support. Both Bishop Chris and I have asked for a list of Parishes in transition so that we can check that Readers are managing, however a phone call to the Rural Dean, or me as Chaplain might work wonders ☺

Some wondered about how to get **people under the age of forty** into our churches and our church leadership and into Readership. If anyone knows that answer....

One Reader was worried about the **literalist interpretation of the Bible** that 'preachers feel they need to adhere to' wondering if it was just them that was 'out of step'. I am not sure about everyone else but it's certainly not out of step with me! I love a good metaphor! More on that another month!

Communion by extension....

This is a thorny issue for some Readers who would very much like to be able to take a Communion Service when someone ordained is not available. In our diocese this is not going to happen anytime soon except for extraordinary circumstances. Currently permission has to be sought from the Bishop for each and every occasion and I, for one, am content with that. Personally speaking I do not want to be filling in for the ordained ministers because my own ministry is something different and maintaining the status-

quo is not part of it, though I would be happy *in extremis*. More of that another time but in the meantime I would love to hear from those of you for whom this is a really heart-felt issue.

The converse of that for some Readers is the **over-emphasis on Eucharistic worship** with only rare opportunities for other sorts of services. Worse still are Parishes where the sermon / word is not really valued making those Readers feel unappreciated.

Some Readers felt that new incumbents did not understand or know what to do with them and others felt that incumbents did not want Readers. In my time as a Reader I have known both types but thankfully not for a long time and my current Rector, having been a Reader, is probably the most inclusive of all. With every change in clergy I always feel that I need to earn my stripes again and hope they will come and listen to me preach / watch me lead a service so they know how best to fit me into a team. That does not help anyone else however so do contact me if you would like to talk through your particular issue.

The whole future of Reader Ministry is a worry for a number of people especially because of the views of the church at large and suggestions about the Central Readers Council. I think it is important that in Cornwall we plough our own furrow and work as united as we can be. To that end the training opportunities such as the AGM day are vital.

The name game

The responses to the vote were very interesting and surprisingly clear in outcome with the vast majority wanting a change and the largest group wanting to be able to use both titles. My view is that this is really the best of both worlds. Those who feel strongly about calling themselves one or the other can do so and I can keep my ancient title of Reader and add the bracketed qualifier/descriptive phrase (Licensed Lay Minister) legitimately!

Administratively, we don't have to change the names of committees, training bodies etc. and the Licensed Lay Minister bit can just be *added* to the licences from next year. PCCs need no consultation and we can keep the tradition intact.

Safeguarding requirements – participation and audit

All Readers and Readers in training must do the **C3 Lay Leadership and Ordained Training**. If they have done no safeguarding training in the past (e.g. teachers in Schools, Social workers, Medical professionals etc.) then the C1 foundation course should be done before doing C3.

Latest courses can be found here:

<http://www.trurodiocese.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/C1-Foundation-sessions-for-website-as-at-23-08-16.pdf>

If you are finding it difficult to find a foundation course I can always help arrange one for your area / church. If you can't get to a C3 Lay & Ordained session please let me know and I will make sure those planning the sessions know that one is needed for your area.

Whilst on the topic, Margaret Hill in the Pydar Chapter reported their good idea for good practice when home visiting: "If visiting in someone's home, make a short report in a book. This may help if any problems arise from visit at a later date."

There is far too much here to write more so I am going to publish this epistle and go for a lie down!

I leave you with the following that I found when trawling the internet for useful stuff...

Prayers for Use with the Sick & Suffering

I will face this pain.

I will accept its full impact silently

Turning my gaze onto the crucified Christ who is in this hell with me.

Even here I am held in the love of Jesus who is both love in death and Love-Risen.

Dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,

I hold up all my weakness to your strength.

My failure to your faithfulness,

my sinfulness to your perfection, my loneliness to your compassion,

my little pains to your great agony on the Cross.

I pray that you will cleanse me, strengthen me, and bide me,

so that, in all ways, my life may be lived, as you would have it lived,

without cowardice, and for you alone.

Come. O Christ my Light and illumine my darkness.

Come. my life, and revive me from death. Come my Physician,

And heal my wounds. Come Flame of divine love.

And burn up the thorns of my sins

Kindling my heart with the flame of your love.

For you alone are my King and my Lord.

Oh Lord. Jesus Christ,

Stay beside me to defend me,

Within me to guide me, before me to lead me,

Behind me to guard me.

And above me to bless me that with you

And in you I may live and move and have my being,

For ever and ever.

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, bear my voice!
If you, Lord, should keep account of our sins,
Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with you,
So that you may be revered.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits for him,
And in his word is my hope.*

*In this thy bitter passion,
Good Shepherd think of me
With thy most sweet compassion
Unworthy though I be:
Beneath thy Cross abiding
For ever would I rest,
In thy dear love confiding,
And with thy presence blest.*

*Jesus, what have you not suffered,
what have you not given for me?
I can never comprehend you,
but I can love you and wonder
at the depth of the darkness which you entered,
and the cost of the love which you would not betray.*

*Soul of Christ, sanctify me;
Body of Christ, save me;
Water from the side of Christ, wash me;
Passion of Christ, comfort me;
Good Jesu, hear me;
Within your wounds, hide me
Never let me be separated from you;
In the hour of my death, call me,
That with the saints I may sing your pray
For ever and ever.*

*Lord, however fearful I may be,
I know that nothing can separate me from your love:*

*Neither death, nor life. angels nor principalities.
Things present, nor things to come, evil powers, heights,
depths or anything else in all creation - nothing at all!*

*For the courage of the martyrs, I thank you;
for the courage to stand up for what I believe, I ask you.
For the strength of all who died for you.
I thank you.
for strength to stand firm when the crowd disagrees, I ask you.
For the joy of your saints, I thank you;
for delight in the gift of each moment of life, I ask you.
Father of mercy, bless my efforts to love you,
and help me, in spite of my uncertainties,
to bear your call, trust your victory of love,
and surrender my life into your hands.
May the power of the cross, the joy of the resurrection,
and the presence of the risen Lord be with me, and all whom I love,
Amen.*

Blessings & Best wishes

Jim

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