



Chaplain's Blog



February 2018

Who am I?



Badges for Readers came up as a topic for discussion at the Readers committee last Saturday. I won't rehearse the arguments for and against here because that has been in previous blogs but suffice it to say that the Diocese has no plans to make badges for Readers but Bishop Chris is quite happy that individual parishes might make identity cards / badges if it is found helpful.

I often look at badges and think they might be a good idea, and I do have them for chaplaincy to head teachers, being a governor and even have a reader badge but to be honest I either forget to wear them or can't be bothered because most people know who I am or soon will if I talk to them. I wonder in some ways if it just says, "please notice me I am doing a job here!"

When I first took on the Chaplain to Readers (LLMs) role I made an email signature template with a flourishing font and all sorts of contact details.... just in case people did not know how to use directory live in the diocesan website but mainly because I wanted to say, "er.... excuse me I am your new chaplain, you probably don't know me from Adam, probably are not bothered but just in case, well, this is me." Of course a badge, flourishing signature or Facebook page is not 'you' at all. It's merely the image we want to portray. (Thanks to Don for pointing this out! ☺)

As Christians, identity gets in the way between us and God and it is only in losing ourselves that we find Him. I'm sure many of you will have deep opinions on this especially if you are Richard Rohr readers. (I will expand next time!)

If I were ordained, and I have *no* plans at all to explore that, would I want to be constantly available with a dog collar marking what people would think is my identity? I think not! Though I really sympathise with Readers who feel called to be available to people who don't know about the Reader's vocation and see nothing to mark them out from anyone else.

Except.... that we are marked out by our behaviour, the way we speak and act and that is what makes us someone to speak to, not whether we are lay ministers.

Final thought for the moment on this.... is it healthy for anyone including our ordained colleagues to be constantly recognisable / available?

So who am I? I'm Jim and I care about you. (Well that's my aspiration!)

Lent Course

I expect I am alongside many of you who are leading the "Responding to God's Grace" lent course this year – the books are freely available across the diocese! I am surprised however that there appears to be no version available for download from the website. This would be especially useful because it contains links to videos which are far easier to click than to type in accurately.

I shall write to someone!





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Safeguarding Thoughts

Much of safeguarding is making a level playing field in life so that those who seek power to preserve or bolster their identity do not damage those with no power. We all do the safeguarding courses and hear about the abusing of children, the elderly and the more obviously vulnerable and although it is vitally important to protect them, there are countless other people who are suffering a slow drip of less obvious abuse. What makes matters worse is that the abused often seem to be blamed for what has happened to them!

Those people include Readers (Licensed Lay Ministers), ordained ministers, church wardens, organists and so on who are just as likely to be perpetrators! I have been saddened by the hurtful things that come to my notice that are said between one Christian and another where at best it has been pure thoughtlessness and at worst part of an intentional undermining of someone else to bolster the ego of the abuser.

Examples:

- A flippant dismissal of the version of the Bible being used by someone. (They gave their message Bible away as a result.)
- Ridiculing someone exploring a particular vocation.
- Working behind the scenes to paint a poor picture of someone so that a 'gang' / PCC/ group of Christians 'acting in love' confront the target.
- Using Bible chapter and verse to bolster a certain viewpoint and then using it to belittle / criticise / admonish the target.
- The ordering of someone feeling vulnerable to a meeting with no thought as to whether, for example, the venue is appropriate (neutral) or whether they need to be accompanied.
- A minister arriving in a church for a service where they had been on the rota only to be told that they were not wanted.
- And so on.....

Going on a safeguarding course is a good thing, going on refreshers is important, going with an open mind and a willing heart is imperative if we are to remind ourselves of our duties as disciples to love and care for one another as Jesus loves us.

News from St Bloward's on the Mire...

First in an occasional series of guest articles from readers and readers in training.

This offering from Reader with PTO Tristan Penwassock.

We are a strong little community here of Christian stalwarts at St Blowards. I like to think of us as the last bastion preserving the true faith and taking on all comers; the great British backs-to-the-wall attitude that inspired the bulldog spirit and prevailed against adversity. This is especially true now we have joined with a cluster of umpteen churches with only one priest and that definition is debateable!

Although grateful to Jim for his attempts as chaplain especially with the blog, I find myself compelled to pen a little something to redress the balance but I digress!

We were very comfortable here in our little worshipping community until we had a couple who moved here from 'over the border.' Now I am the least racist person I know so what I am going to say is not



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because they came from Birmingham with that awful whine as the undercurrent of every sentence or that they seemed to think that the European Union was a good idea but I do take issue with people from up Country who think they can change the traditions outlined by the Bible and practiced here for time immemorial. After all it is not as if we have been behind the times and there are even worship leaders who step in to lead Morning Prayer (BCP) when necessary and one is even a woman!

The PCC thankfully passed my resolution that we keep the King James Bible for our readings in services thus cutting off suggestions from our Brummies that we might have a 'more up to date version:' it is important to draw some lines in the sand. Of course we thanked them for their suggestions (in love of course) but we now have the problem of making sure the PCC is fully manned or they will want to be on that! I wonder if any other Readers have the same problems?

More next time. Tristan.

PS A badge is a good idea, but frankly the safeguarding courses are overkill and quite unnecessary for anyone with a modicum of common sense and a lifetime of experience.

Following on from my search for this year's lent course, if you Google "CMED Truro Diocese" the first 10 hits all refer to courses from 2015/2016

Readers do need opportunities for extending their knowledge but in order that the Readers Committee can follow it up it would be useful to know what do you need, when you need it and where would you like it. Please send me your thoughts.

A simple guide to Lectio-Divina – one wonders on the target audience for this.

<https://focusoncampus.org/content/do-the-lectio-3-step-an-easy-illustrated-guide-to-praying-lectio-divina>

Readers Day and the Prayer Labyrinth

Following the last blog there was a suggestion from a reader that the prayer labyrinth at the Readers Day might not be appropriate and not 'biblical'. I have learned that ways of praying can bring strong emotions and strong opinions to the fore. I have, in the spirit of discovery attached a pdf file I found about using prayer labyrinths in Christian prayer and why one might find them efficacious.

Personally I am looking forward to Rev Jane Horton's session on Ignatian prayer and spirituality – but there should be something for everyone- even if it is to take a day out away from the Royal Wedding and find time for your own prayer and contemplation at St Petroc's. I don't think the cup final starts until after we finish!

Jim

