



## **Worship and give thanks but beware the stones for 'tis easy to stumble.**

So there I was walking the dog down the tarmac path on the side of Carn Euny thinking about the word adoration and whether it was easier to give thanks to God rather than to adore Him when I trod on a stone the size of a walnut, turned my ankle and ended up sprawling across the path, the adrenaline flowing and wondering which bits of me I had damaged!

So after the emission of a few choice expletives, dusting myself off and hobbling off after the dog it occurred to me that I should perhaps be thankful that a) I could actually hobble, b) that I did not land in the pile of horse dung a few yards away and c) that I was wearing thick gloves and did not take the skin off my hands.

Further to that it has to be a sermon illustration as a metaphor or illustration for..... something or other..... send your ideas! :)

## **Thoughts on how we recruit and train Readers (licensed Lay Ministers)**

Making the training of Readers relevant and useful for an evolving vocation within evolving structures within an evolving church is a tricky subject, one that I am sure some of you will have diverse opinions.

Yesterday I took a trip to SWMTC at Marjon to experience a foundation course day and the annual lecture by Revd Dr Harriet Harris MBE, University Chaplain at Edinburgh University with Director of Reader Training Canon Jane Kneebone.

### SOUTH WEST MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE FORMATION FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

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#### Foundations in Christian Ministry

Do you feel you would like to serve the Church more, but are not sure of the direction? Are you interested in preaching, or pastoral care, or evangelism, and feel the need for more training? Would you like to work with others in a group, praying and learning together for a year while listening for God speaking about your vocation?

The Diocese is offering up to 25 people a year of lay formation. This might lead into:

- Training to be a Reader, over two further years
- Training to be a pastoral assistant
- Training to be an evangelist

This opportunity is mainly for those exploring a lay vocation, though you may also be recommended to do this year by the Diocesan Director of Ordinands. The first step is to talk to your parish priest and explore whether he or she would like to sponsor you for this year.

The basic commitment will be six Saturday study days, plus involvement in courses in your local mission community.

The costs are met by the Diocese through its contract with South West Ministry Training Course, though you would still be responsible for your own costs for travel and books. Interviews for the year will take place in March, May and July and the programme itself will start in September.

More information can be obtained from The Revd David Carrington, Director of Lay Education at SWMTC, on [davecarrington@swmtc.org.uk](mailto:davecarrington@swmtc.org.uk).



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The best part of the day from a personal point of view was undoubtedly the lecture on University Chaplaincy which focussed my thoughts on the nature of chaplaincy and the common thread that runs through chaplaincy in all its diverse forms. Harriet mentioned that the most common problems for students were 'loneliness and busyness' and I mused that these could easily be the most common problems for head teachers and for Readers too.

The foundation course we sat in on had opening and closing worship for the day, a couple of teaching sessions and a tutorial session when the group split into five smaller groups with personal tutors following a short presentation from a couple of Readers on Reader ministry. It was a shame here that it did not include someone who could speak about the diversity of Reader ministry and how the training equipped for the possibilities though, as you might imagine, I did my best to add a few thoughts!

The first teaching session was on the theology of pastoral work and was very good with a clear presentation using the huge flat screen provided in the MARJON teaching rooms. There was good discussion, useful quotations and suggested reading and certainly well linked to practical pastoral matters.

The second teaching session on 'sin and redemption,' though presented enthusiastically and competently by a Reader, left the feeling that too many aspects were packed into too little time resulting in some 'messy' theology. Looking at redemption without mention of the Old Testament was interesting.

If the students had been sent a handout or a book to read beforehand the discussions could have been more focussed and perhaps more fruitful. Having said that, it was very worthy and those who took part certainly found it efficacious and stimulating I think.

This general foundation to ministry would seem to have a good deal of mileage though one was left wondering about whether the studies would be deep enough to provide the basis for the further studies required. The real bonus would be that those exploring vocation but not knowing the exact nature of their calling would have a good place to start and that year of consideration and discernment would form part of the training. In the climate where ordinands and readers are finding vocation later in life, time is sometimes of the essence.

How was your training?

- Relevant?
- Thorough?
- Practical?
- Did it equip you for what you are asked to do?
- Do you do what you thought you were being trained for?
- Would you have liked a foundation course?

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I commend the blog "**The Scruffy Vicar**" to you..... here is a link to his late December offering:  
<https://scruffylvicar.wordpress.com/2017/12/27/silent-night/>

## **Richard Rohr on prayer: Practice: Praying Always**

Prayer is not a transaction that somehow pleases God but a transformation of the consciousness of the one doing the praying. Prayer is the awakening of an inner dialogue that, from God's side, has never ceased. This is why Paul could write of praying "always" (see 1 Thessalonians [5:17](#)). Prayer is



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not changing God's mind about us or about anything else, but allowing God to change our mind about the reality right in front of us (which we usually avoid or distort).

When we put on a different mind, heaven takes care of itself. In fact, it begins now. If we resort too exclusively to verbal, wordy prayers, we'll remain stuck in our rational, dualistic minds and will not experience deep change at the level of consciousness. Prayer is sitting in the silence until it silences us, choosing gratitude until we are grateful, and praising God until we ourselves are an act of praise.

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<https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>

## **The New Bishop Consultation- a compendium of comments - somewhat précised and anonymised.**

My grateful thanks to all of you who contributed such thoughtful responses.

Communion by extension. Many churches already have no HC for weeks on end and I can see that situation getting worse as time goes by - I suppose it depends on where you view that Sacrament?!

Someone who will listen to the people with a sensitive ear, find out where we are and then lead us on

Our Bishop would be about, obviously, love for others. I frequently feel that the 'church' is closer to the Scribes and Pharisees than Jesus. We often give the impression of being introspective rather than outward looking.

I happen to believe that caring for others in the widest sense is a way of getting closer to God and developing a stronger relationship with Him than all the Bible study and prayer you can muster.

In the past 25 years we have spent, if not wasted, so much time talking about sex. Women priests, Gay Priests, Gay Bishops etc.. that you would think that 50% of Christ's teaching was about gender.

A middle of the road Bishop who is full of infectious enthusiasm is to my mind the best way forward, but as I shall be hanging up my scarf in the not too distant future I will not be greatly affected. I appreciate that this is not the incisive input you are seeking but just the off the cuff ramblings of a man of faith.

An awareness of Cornishness; pastoral; people-person, not necessarily an academic theologian - in fact may be better if he/she is not.

A female could be great.

Also, a supportive spouse might be an excellent idea for all the obvious and right reasons.

My hope is for a wise, holy and kind person, male or female, ethnicity irrelevant, liberally minded and keen to be a follower of Jesus, rather than someone keen to toe the party line and maintain the status quo. Someone who relates to, and includes ordinary people, the sort of person happy to share a cup of tea and a simple chat in a kitchen, like, for example, Stephen Dawes. Someone who sees the shrinking, wrinkling congregations in so many large, cold, expensive buildings all trying to keep going and struggling with huge MMF demands they find increasingly hard or impossible to meet and, who therefore, will have the imagination and creativity to work towards a better inclusive way forward.

I hope we don't get an evangelical, as the diocese is already unbalanced that way, and most of all not a corporate executive type Bishop full of jargon who could be the head of any large institution.



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It would be good to have someone prepared to allow communion by extension in certain circumstances, someone who would encourage more clergy to use their Readers. That is my prayer!

My prayer is for the best person for the job. Please do not get hung up on gender issues. I pray for God to share his wisdom with the selection panel. Male is good, female is good for me ...but what is God's plan? I'm praying for Truro Diocese and all people of Cornwall

I too would like Communion by Extension so that I may be more helpful with in my team.

I would like to see Bishop Chris get the appointment if this is possible? Otherwise how about a woman, black, gay and disabled - I think that just about covers all angles!! Actually I'm serious; it should be someone who covers all angles of the community with love and a sense of humour!!

I'd like to see a bishop who would promote and assist churches to explore and become "Inclusive Churches". Cornwall doesn't have any churches that will categorically state it is inclusive for all people.

My own feeling is that the new bishop needs a) a listening ear, and b) an open mind - we are a disparate lot down here in the Truro diocese, and there needs to be room for everyone.

I'm inclined to agree with the larger part of the general position adopted by Jim in his latest Chaplain's Blog, especially this bit: "A Bishop with a heart for all the people in a broad church, not too evangelical who does not get too hung up on the politics of gender / sexuality but focuses on the really important issues of our time." Nor would having a reputation as an academic theologian be high on my list of priorities.

That said, theological grounding matters, even if the theology seems invisible because of the pastoral strengths that are so much more important.

The selection process should recognise that, according to the scripture-based teaching of the Church of England, a bishop is called to be:

- 1) a shepherd of the flock;
- 2) a guardian of the faith. The two are inseparable.

As the consecration service in *Common Worship* puts it: "Bishops are ordained to be shepherds of Christ's flock and guardians of the faith of the apostles, proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom and leading his people in mission." More than lip service is needed.

It is comparatively unimportant whether the new bishop comes from any particular wing of the church (evangelical, high-church etc.). Much more important is that the new bishop should be strong in the doctrine of "the faith of the apostles". Such strength usually requires a good theological grounding; and such grounding can be present even if the person concerned has no obvious record as a theologian. The crucial thing is that the bishop should offer leadership that is both spiritual and practical -- someone who will have the pastoral, practical and intellectual abilities "to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people." (Jude 1:3)

Recent appointments to bishoprics and even archbishoprics have tended to favour managers rather than theologians. (That does not impugn the Christian virtues of those recently appointed.) This emphasis in appointments has been a major factor in freeing up space for the many tensions that have arisen within the Anglican communion in general and within the Church of England specifically;



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and it has given room for questionable decisions within all three houses of the General Synod, but notably within the House of Bishops, as so many bishops have tended to emphasise keeping the show on the road rather than on contending for the faith.

So I hope that the new Bishop of Truro will be someone who will have the strength not to bow to the ideas of the world's present age, who will have the wisdom to know what the Gospel of Jesus Christ can say to the present age, and the wisdom to know when to speak out, within the church and without, as a shepherd of the sheep and as a guardian of the faith of the apostles.

Here in the Parish there is much prayer about the new appointment. We include prayer that the Holy Spirit will impart godly wisdom to everyone participating in the long process of consultations and recommendations. Of course, that includes all of you.

This is a very personal view but two things came to mind as important.

I notice there is getting to be a big split in the diocese between the two, as it were, wings of the church and this seems a shame. My analytic psychotherapy training would lead me to acknowledge that splits and antagonisms are universal but need strong leadership and a steady hand on the tiller. Secondly, returning to Cornwall where I was born and brought up, from an extremely multi cultural part of south London, I feel that most 'outsiders' don't recognise that Cornwall is multi cultural (very) and suffers from these same problems, but this element is much harder to see overtly. I could expand on this if you're interested but respect your need to condense everyone's views to one sheet of A4.

In respect of the new Bishop, I would like him/her to be a wonderful listener. Unless one listens intently to another, there is little chance of the right action following (if action is needed). Listening is the first and most important step in a relationship. This was the case with the Rabbi who listened and only then did he use his wisdom in words.

Hugely varying practices in the use of Readers.

- With the increase in multi-parish benefices, involving Readers in a management team, with Incumbents, planning the best use of resources for the benefit of the parishioners.
- The Church puts significant resources into training Readers, as do the Readers themselves, yet their employment seems to depend on the particular priest to whom they are attached.
- In the absence of a priest why cannot Readers sensitively take Eucharistic services using pre-consecrated bread and wine? This seems to vary from diocese to diocese.
- Clarification of the roles of Readers and Worship Leaders seems necessary, given the considerable difference in the length of training.