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PARSON AND PARISH

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PARSON & PARISH

the magazine of the English Clergy Association
“serving the people and their parishes”
Issue Number 177 2017

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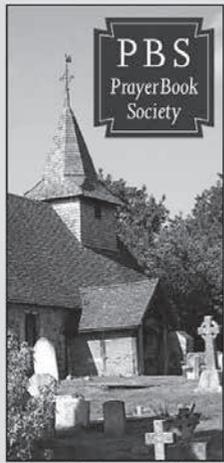
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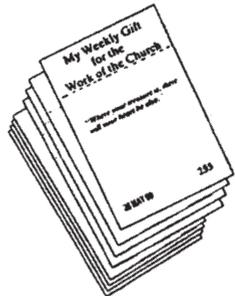
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FROM THE EDITOR

Attending a recent conference in Oxford, with clergy from across the country, I was struck once again by the sheer diversity of the Church of England, and the resilience of its people and clergy in the face of very challenging and demanding situations. The title of the conference was “Saving time: pace and rhythm in ministry” and in the final session the Dean of Christ Church, the Very Revd Professor Martyn Percy, set before us a number of challenges relating to our, and God’s, time – as well as the demands of the Kingdom and the maintenance of the institutional church. Anyone familiar with Martyn Percy’s writings will know just what this will have entailed, and his talk was certainly the cause of animated discussion before we all set off from Oxford to return to our parishes and dioceses, and to assorted and varied mission action plans, vision creation events and target setting!

And it is of course in the deaneries and parishes, on the ground across the whole country, that the interplay between Kingdom and institution is worked out, in very different communities and with equally varied responses. One of the questions posed by Martyn Percy was how to convince people, in an age when according to the most recent statistics from the British Social Attitudes survey only 15% of people of all ages associate themselves with the Church of England, that the church belongs to them, and that the Christian faith is for them, in its radical acceptance of all people, its assurance of God’s love and its message of generosity, welcome and hospitality.

If, as Martyn Percy asserts, we are called primarily to be ambassadors of God’s love to all in our communities, rather than simply propping up the institutional church, how do we go about this? Church planting, fresh expressions and pioneer ministries all come to mind – but none of these seem to be especially radical and all have about them a strong and direct connection to the institutional model of church, in spite of their novelty and, for the present at least, their undoubted popularity in some quarters. In the face of these initiatives, which are clearly aimed at attracting and retaining younger generations of Christians, a worrying statistic from the BSA Survey is that 71% of 18-24 year olds ticked “no religion” whereas 30 years ago the equivalent figure was 56%. The short piece from the Revd Jane Proudfoot about a church presence at a major music festival in Cheshire over the summer is simply one way of proclaiming the kingdom and being alongside those who may well have ticked that “no religion” box.

Clearly there is much to be done – at parish, deanery, diocesan and national levels – and although various figures have recently been bandied about in terms of the survival of the institutional church, proclaiming the kingdom has no time limits and nor is it limited by buildings and systems (just think about the work and influence of people such as Cuthbert, Francis of Assisi and Charles Wesley). More important than ever perhaps is the collaboration between laity and clergy in this great work, as reinforced so clearly in “Setting God’s people free” and in their articles Bishop Libby Lane and

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Canon Emma Percy point to the central importance of clergy well-being as part and parcel of this work. Reviewed in this edition is Brown and Woodhead's "That Was The Church That Was: How the Church of England Lost the English People" – it is my fervent hope and prayer that a future edition will review something along the lines of "How the English people rediscovered both the Kingdom of God and the Church!" Now I wonder who could write that story...?

The Revd Alec Brown

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CLERGY WELLBEING

The Rt Revd Elizabeth Lane, Suffragan Bishop of Stockport

Diocese of Chester, September, 2017

Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ ... I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it.

1 Peter 5.1–2

I spend a lot of time with ordinands and clergy: with those exploring vocation, with those in training, with those about to be ordained, with curates, with those moving posts, with those approaching retirement. I spend time with them in their homes, in their places of work, in the churches they serve. It is one of the best things about being a Bishop.

When a bishop is ordained we are reminded:

They are to discern and foster the gifts of the Spirit in all who follow Christ, commissioning them to minister in his name. They are to preside over the ordination of deacons and priests, and join together in the ordination of bishops.

As chief pastors, it is their duty to share with their fellow presbyters the oversight of the Church, speaking in the name of God and expounding the gospel of salvation. With the Shepherd's love, they are to be merciful, but with firmness; to minister discipline, but with compassion.

And:

Mindful of the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep, they are to love and pray for those committed to their charge, knowing their people and being known by them.

It is an extraordinary privilege to be so engaged and involved in the lives and ministries of those who understand that their call to follow Jesus is to be expressed as a servant of His church. I see clergy who are thriving and who are struggling. I see them at their best and at their worst.

When we feel burdened, overwhelmed, irritated, indignant, frustrated in ministry (as we all do, at least sometimes) and so become resentful, disrespectful, cynical, dismissive or casual (as we all do, at least sometimes) it is good to be reminded how God sees us. The words of St Paul, in Acts 20, are a reminder of how precious is the 'church of God', bought at immeasurable cost; that of the blood of Jesus.

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.

Acts 20.28

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That ‘keeping watch’ in the Diocese of Chester confirms what recent survey data suggests – exercising ordained ministry is hard work. Clergy face considerable pressures. Our external context is challenging: the impact of ‘austerity’; anxiety generated by fear of the ‘other’; the prospect of change with unknown outcomes following ‘Brexit’; technological and scientific advances impacting the future of work; genuine and conflicting questions of identity – to name but a few. The internal pressures for the Church of England are also considerable: a focus on numbers – finances, demographics, vocations, those who attend and when, of those who believe or don’t; our place in a changing society and our place in the world-wide church; the evangelistic challenge in such diverse and divided communities; the proclamation of ‘good news’ in a world of ‘fake news’ – the list goes on.

And clergy, like everyone else, face personal pressures too: strained relationships; concern about financial security; ill health for themselves and those they love; domestic responsibilities across generations; unrealistic and unsustainable expectations (self-generated as well as imposed by others) – and many other concerns. One of the consequences of all this for clergy may be a decline in mental well-being.

‘Mind’, the mental health charity, explains mental well-being like this:

- If you have good mental wellbeing you are able to:
- feel relatively confident in yourself and have positive self-esteem
- feel and express a range of emotions
- build and maintain good relationships with others
- feel engaged with the world around you
- live and work productively
- cope with the stresses of daily life
- adapt and manage in times of change and uncertainty

There is an increase in reported and diagnosed mental ill health across all society in recent years, and clergy are not immune to that. ‘Components and Correlates of Mental Well-Being: Harvard research paper’ (Morton Beiser, *Journal of Health & Social Behaviour*, 1974) implies that for mental wellbeing there is a relationship between self-governance and social and/or professional context, and that control over context is key.

The feeling state of well-being is probably the reflection of a complex interaction among psychological processes. Evidence is presented that at least three affects may take part in this process: negative affect, positive sense of involvement, and long-term satisfaction. Different patterns of association are demonstrated between these three affects and variables such as social participation, cultivation of hobbies, planfulness, emotional reactivity, physical health, and expert ratings of psychiatric disorder.

This is evident from the initial findings of Ministry Division from research to map the wellbeing of Church of England clergy and Ordinands. They are exploring how different modes of training influence future ministries. They ask the question, ‘what enables ordained ministers to flourish in future ministry?’. This research is only in its first phase and so early findings are being further tested but can be accessed via: www.ministrydevelopment.ord.uk/living-ministry-research

I commend this engagement in working to understand mental health among clergy by research and am committed to learning from its outcomes and implementing its findings. But I also want a theology that offers a deeper and wider understanding. Jesus offers ‘life in all its fullness’ and our mental health is integral in the life Jesus invites us to share.

There are a number of theological models of wellbeing, for example, an ‘Entropic’ model recognises the creation ideal of wellbeing,

And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Genesis 2.2-3

But that work, well done and completed, is damaged by the Fall and the striving to redress the consequence is ultimately futile,

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Genesis 3.19

This model looks towards restitution for restoration to an original state of wellbeing.

And a ‘Freedom’ model recognises the barriers to flourishing and offers the possibility of release from that which prevents wellbeing,

“‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’”

Luke 4.18-19

These, and other models have much to commend them, but I want to consider a theology suggested by Paul’s address to the elders of church at Ephesus, referenced earlier from Acts 20, ‘shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son’. I want to begin with Jesus’ wounds, with the cost to Jesus of our

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wellbeing. I am to be a shepherd of the flock mindful of the Good shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep. We follow a ‘wounded healer’ who knows all the wounds of our experience: rebuff, sorrow, bewilderment, anger, abandonment, conflict, agony, even death.

Jesus chose this route. He, perhaps, might have won salvation another way. He certainly prayed that their might be another way. But he chose to fulfil the will of the Father in perfect obedience. These wounds are the fulfilment of the incarnation, God’s kenosis or ‘self-giving’. Jesus does not bring fullness of life as powerful ‘superhero’ but, in the words of Bonhoeffer, as The Humiliated One.

Christian ministry (from the Latin word minister, meaning lowly one or servant) derives its essential pattern from Christ’s own life, as summed up in Matthew 20.28, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.” The Greek verb *diakonein* used here is associated with the work of servants, particularly those waiting at tables, and recalls both the washing of feet in John 13.4ff and also the image of the final judgment in Matthew 25.31ff. To respond to Christ’s call to repent, to accept the rule of God, is to accept a way of life devoted to service. This is an inversion of the usual order of precedence with its profound implications for models of behaviour, particularly with regard to leadership. Not only are clergy called to serve, but we are called to seek out the ‘least of these’, the poor, the weak, the powerless, and serve them first of all.

So, it may be that a kenotic model of ordained ministry is more than an ‘imitation of Christ’. Maybe choosing to enter into Jesus’ self-giving, even humiliation, in our own ministries allows the wounds of our experience to become the very means of our wholeness. This is not self-abasement, or lack of self-concern. We are tasked to keep watch over ourselves as well as the flock of Christ. But it allows that ministry can take seriously choosing to be ‘less’ in order to make space for others as a reflection of God’s own self-denial and self-giving. Further, it allows that it is weakness that becomes strength in God’s hands. Such a model may allow proper authenticity which faces our limitations and failures, which encourages self-understanding and acceptance. And which allows for a secure identity as those who are fully known, and nonetheless fully loved.

The search for identity in relation to ministry may therefore start with an acknowledgement of weakness. “Who am I that I should go?” asks Moses in Exodus 3:12. As Christopher Cocksworth and Rosalind Brown write in *Being A Priest Today*,

Moses’ recognition of his own weakness is a justifying recognition. It justifies that God has made the right choice. It justifies that Moses is the right person for this work because it shows that Moses is in the right place to realize that the work will be completed not by his own abilities but by God’s abiding presence and power.

I am reminded of the Collect for Purity in the Eucharistic Liturgy: “Almighty God,

unto whom all hearts are open and all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden.” Stephen Sykes, in his essay ‘Cranmer On The Open Heart’, examines the tradition behind the liturgy of the Eucharist drawing on the metaphor of ‘the heart’:

God alone can construe the human heart. Who I am... is by no means easy to interpret from my knowledge of human history or from a review of my past actions or speech. The heart has its secrets, therefore, because human meaning is obscure... In so far as I may realize that I am myself capable of a variety of behaviours, I may come to see my own meaning as doubtful or uncertain; and my heart...is deep or even divided.

Freud saw religion not so much as one of the civilising mental forces with which the unconscious is in conflict, but as a “neurosis which the civilised individual must pass through on his way from childhood to maturity.” (Moses and Monotheism)

What Freud missed, I think, is that in the idea of the unconscious we have an expression of the very weakness which God uses in his people to bring about transformation and to express his love.

Jung, by contrast, recognizes the role that religion plays in healing ‘psychic illness’ – “Man is never helped in his suffering by what he thinks for himself, but only by revelations of a wisdom greater than his own.” (Psychotherapists Or The Clergy).

In this essay, Jung discusses the need of both doctor and priest to help a human being by “accepting him as he is. And he can do this in reality only when he has already seen and accepted himself as he is.”

Jung goes on to say:

That I feed the hungry, that I forgive an insult, that I love my enemy in the name of Christ – all these are undoubtedly great virtues. What I do unto the least of my brethren, that I do unto Christ. But what if I should discover that the least amongst them all, the poorest of the beggars, the most impudent of all the offenders, the very enemy himself – that these are within me, and that I myself stand in need of the alms of my own kindness – that I myself am the enemy who must be loved – what then?

To accept our own weakness is the hardest of tasks and our response is often to turn away and distract ourselves, busying ourselves perhaps with the problems of others.

It seems to me that the shape of our Eucharistic liturgy reveals its deep wisdom at this point. We move from the Collect for Purity which recognizes the hiddenness of the secret weaknesses of our hearts into the Confession, which takes our weaknesses into the public realm of acknowledgement of the need for grace. Simply to utter the words, whether silently or aloud, is to begin the process of becoming well.

Henri Nouwen’s book *The Wounded Healer* tells the story from the Talmud of the

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Messiah sitting among the poor covered with wounds, binding them one at a time, waiting for the moment when he will be needed. “So it is too with the minister.” Nouwen writes, “Since it is his task to make visible the first vestiges of liberation for others, he must bind his own wounds carefully in anticipation of the moment when he will be needed.”

Nouwen suggests that it is in the minister’s ‘woundedness’ that the source of ministry of healing to others can be found.

Making one’s own wounds a source of healing...does not call for a sharing of superficial personal pains but for a constant willingness to see one’s own pain and suffering as rising from the depth of the human condition which all ... share.

So what might ‘making one’s own wounds a source of healing’ look like? We have already seen that it might mean acknowledging our woundedness – not pretending to be a superhero to ourselves or others. It will mean being honest with ourselves at least. Our wellbeing depends on our accepting that we are accepted.

In *The way of the Heart: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers*, Henri Nouwen comments:

We enter into solitude first of all to meet our Lord and to be with Him and Him alone. Only in the context of grace can we face our sin; only in the place of healing do we dare to show our wounds; only with a single-minded attention to Christ can we give up our clinging fears and face our own true nature.

Being ‘at home’, as Nouwen puts it, in our own heart is hard work but necessary to our wellbeing. It is also necessary for our capacity to have the resilience to sustain wellbeing in the midst of the brokenness of others.

We are speaking here about a mystery for which words are inadequate. It is the mystery that the heart, which is the center of our being, is transformed by God into his own heart, a heart large enough to embrace the entire universe. Through prayer we can carry in our heart all human pain and sorrow, all conflicts and agonies, all torture and war, all hunger, loneliness, and misery, not because of some great psychological or emotional capacity, but because God’s heart has become one with ours.

In 2015 St Luke’s Healthcare conducted a survey in the Diocese of Chester to assess levels and sources of stress for clergy. More than half our clergy felt stretched, strained or overwhelmed by one or more area of pressure. A Diocesan working group followed up this with further research that explored time off, support, prayer life, physical exercise, personal study, and hobbies or interests. Their conclusions are that,

Many of the issues highlighted may result from (among others); poor boundaries, inadequate self-care, isolation, lack of privacy and demands on clergy time. However, many clergy reported feeling guilty about taking time out and needing permission to do so, suggesting a change of culture may be needed to encourage a different approach where self-care is considered not just desirable but essential.

The clergy of the Diocese themselves offered a number of practical ways that their wellbeing might be improved, including:

- Opportunities to develop relationships with others.
- Educating the PCC, church wardens and congregation regarding expectations and need for self-care.
- More administrative support.
- Better communication about patterns of working and expectations.
- Better communication about resources that are already in place.
- More retreat days.
- Improved funding for buildings, vicarages and staffing.
- Permission to ‘sharpen the saw’.
- Greater honouring of balance and self-care.

These are insightful and useful proposals that we will address. My hope is that such practical responses to the issues of clergy wellbeing will be offered in the context of continuing exploration of the theology of wellbeing.

My reflection here is that the ‘wounds’ of our experience need not prevent wellbeing but may be key to our flourishing: for Jesus teaches us that we ‘find’ ourselves by ‘losing’ ourselves. If we discover the echo of his redemptive self-giving in the honest acceptance of brokenness we may not only flourish ourselves but also find space for others to flourish too.

CREAMFIELDS 2017 – HERE TO LISTEN

The Revd Jane Proudfoot

It might not be the place that anyone expected to find a Church Tent but the August Bank holiday festival goers at Creamfields in Cheshire this year were in for a surprise!

The organisers of the biggest Electronic Dance Music Festival in the world agreed to have a Christian presence on site this year to offer pastoral support and refreshment.

Organised by The Rev'd Jane Proudfoot in partnership with Bridgewater Churches Together, Great Budworth Deanery, Warrington Youth for Christ, the Dioceses of Chester and Liverpool and Warrington Street Pastors, volunteers worked 24 hours for the four days of the festival. This year was the 20th Anniversary of Creamfields which has been held at Daresbury since 2006, in the parish of All Saints.

The idea for a church presence sprang out of a conversation three years ago at Great Budworth Chapter and has built on the great relationship built up with the organisers over the years by the Vicar of Daresbury, Rev'd Canon David Felix, and his congregation. The volunteers came from a variety of churches across Warrington and beyond and were a real mix of ages.

Volunteer Catherine Dixon said, "I've never done anything like this before and I have to admit I was a bit worried about what it might be like but I loved every minute and will definitely be back next year."

"We wanted to be where the young people were and to show them that the church cares and that God loves them" said Rev'd Jane of St Wilfrid's Church, Grappenhall, "They were really surprised that we wanted to be there and we were impressed by how they responded to us. We were there to get alongside them and to listen."

Over 2000 bottles of water were given out and many, many packets of Jammy Dodgers! Stories were shared, friendships built and Chris Gilbert, Reader and artist co-created artwork with revellers. Funding for the event came from the Diocese, Churches and individuals.

Kim Wellens from Warrington Youth for Christ was excited to be a volunteer and said, "We had some amazing encounters and conversations. The young people that we met were curious and very open. We talked together about love, peace, hope and faith as well as music!"

The green light has been given for a return of the Church Tent in 2018 so if you would like to get involved please contact: revdproudfoot@hotmail.co.uk

JOHN MASDING – TRIBUTE

Chew Magna Parish Church

27th April 2017

The Revd Stephen Seamer

Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not by shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock

1 Peter 5:2-3

John tended and contended for the flock and the faith. He brought considerable insight, intellect and understanding to the conflicts and concerns faced by clergy and lay leaders amidst the realities of parochial life, its worship and governance.

Parochial life can be both exhausting and unremitting. John knew that from his own leadership and service of over 26 years in the parish of Hamstead, north of Birmingham. In his comments and advice he drew upon this parochial experience, as well as using his own detailed study and knowledge of church law and institutional practice.

It is my privilege today to pay tribute on the behalf of many parochial clergy, who in concern, anxiety or extremis, contacted John to seek his help. Day after day, over many years, John listened to and answered their concerns. He calmed fears, spotted the central issue and advised wisely and discreetly.

To my mind he had two particular gifts. Firstly, he was able, sometimes almost without you knowing it, to help you see how the people on the other side of a contentious issue might view the situation. Secondly, John would not only grasp the specifics of a case but he would also encourage people to take into account the spirit and meaning of the law behind an issue or problem. He did so without pomposity or remoteness; in the language of Peter's first epistle: "as a good steward of God's varied grace".

Those who worked with him in the English Clergy Association – and we must not forget that John contributed to a large number of other organisations and societies – knew of his genuine love for Christ's people. He spoke up for matters of integrity and good practice, regardless of the status or function of anyone involved, even if feathers might be ruffled, just a little! He wisely warned against change for fashion or popularity's sake and amidst everything John was often able to add wit and good humour.

He had a good eye for detail amidst the parochial or institutional big picture. When you met and talked over the issues, John had a way of looking at you that exuded understanding and compassion. He heard you; he understood. His advice was invariably specific and always knowledgeable. His command of language and any

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necessary terminology was precise. I am reminded of a remark by William Blake: “He who would do good to another must do it in minute particulars”.

John willingly served His Lord and master, Jesus Christ. As Peter’s first epistle originally charged the early church leaders, so, in our own day, John Masding illustrated its call: “*willingly tending the flock*” and “*being an **example** to the flock*”. John’s “example” and “willingness” benefitted clergy and lay leaders country-wide, regardless of tradition, gender, orientation, background and age. Amidst an ever changing society and institutional church John stood steadfast, his service was faithful and we can remain thankful.

Many of us are aware of his last debilitating year of ill health. During that time the care and loving kindness shown by the staff at Stanton Court Nursing home went way beyond the call of duty, and was so appreciated by everyone who visited John there.

This afternoon, as we support Margaret, Elf, Miranda and family members, we are people who, amidst grief and thanksgiving, are ‘not without hope’. Peter’s first epistle reminds you and me: “...the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish and strengthen you” (1 Peter 5:10). We who knew John can say ‘Amen’ to that truth. Well done, good and faithful servant.

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BOOK REVIEW

'That Was the Church that Was'

How the Church of England Lost the English People

Andrew Brown Linda Woodhead

Bloomsbury 222 pages

I was prepared to be thoroughly irritated before I began to read this book.

To begin with, my first thought was that the title was an own goal, as younger people wouldn't even remember the TV programme that the title parodies.

But after finishing this deftly handled exploration of Anglicanism from the mid 20th century to the present, I stepped back in admiration at the sure, but light touch with which the authors handled the relentless process of disaffection with the Church of England, and the sense of loss that crept imperceptibly over the English-speaking population.

For most readers every landmark-moment can be recalled and recognized, and yet the book never stalls, moves swiftly on, and, with the excellent notes at the back, provides a most satisfactory overview of what, for various reasons, has befallen the Church's expression of Christian Faith within the Anglican Communion.

Any mid-twentieth Century expression of Enthusiasm would have been awkward for a patrician, pipe-smoking clergyman, and anyway, Enthusiasm was A Very Horrid Thing, according to Bishop Butler, (born 1692).

Prayer Book cadences were there to maintain a steadying grip upon any potential tremors in the status quo. 'Bishops and Dons' were a perceived bulwark against anything other; and the seismic shift towards 'Women and Gays' had not seriously been dreamt of.

The question threading through the book is how the shift, and therefore the loss of the 'English People' from the church, came about. And the unspoken question isWhat was actually needed to keep the English people on side in a world that was changing at an unimaginable pace?

Divorce, feminism, gays, liberation, leftism, welfare state, multiculturalism, a confusion of liturgies, syncretism, all severally from time to time seemed to present battles to be fought, and obscured the need in the Church for very careful consideration of what was actually happening, and equally careful consideration of attitudes that currently prevailed. It was the handling of the battles that did the damage.

From Church Assembly to Synod, to 1987 Crockford's, to Women, to the 1998 Lambeth Conference and the Jeffrey John affair, and 'Sharia'.....the unquestioning societal Church suffered shock after shock. T.S. Eliot once remarked that the Church of England lamentably has a habit of washing its dirty linen in public.

The congregational churches fared better; but the Church and English Society were rapidly becoming uncoupled.

The Church appeared to work busily for ‘no change’ regarding Women’s Ministry, and often great lack of charity was apparent for all to see. Half measures and sitting on the fence with both ears to the ground became an habitual Anglican mode of procedure, and alienated so many well educated and committed men and women, storing up trouble for the future.

The ‘interminable, terminal arguments’ about homosexuality drove one of the book’s authors to resolve, ‘never to be mistaken for a Christian again’.

Church Commissioners’ financial mishandling and the need to recoup, along with poor Anglican preaching where it occurred (with no penalty for dullness) often caused congregations to feel taxed, but unrepresented and therefore detached.

The great Church of England edifice had relentless undercurrents eroding its foundations . Rising to the surface from earlier years was the influence of the Billy Graham rallies that somehow legitimised expression of emotion, and prepared the ground for the Fountain Trust and the Charismatic Movement .

In my teens I sometimes attended Evensong at Holy Trinity Brompton long before it became HTB; and the shift from the patriarchal and the patrician to the ministry which has given us our present Archbishop Justin Welby could not be greater. Sunday worship ceased to be ‘just what you do’, but rather an expression of individual relationship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We have now an Archbishop who lost no time in addressing thousands of young people at New Wine soon after his appointment. Rather tellingly, our authors comment in the closing chapter, “When Welby moved to the lectern in Lambeth Palace, a spare and ascetic figure dressed all in black, the head of PR for HTB could be seen watching from the sidelines....

Their man was in post... But what was left of the Institution?

This deft analysis of the eddies and cross-currents besetting the Anglican Communion in our lifetime is shot through with telling humorous touches and wry observations which make for a compelling read.

The book concludes with a comment about congregations who think that the Parish Church at the centre of their community belongs only to them. The congregation, a group of people, is the point; for only they can move on and out from an open and welcoming building to the other real ‘them’, English people who have for some time now lost sight of what it is to be ‘found’.

Margaret Masding

Note

Two days after writing this review in November 2016, I heard Archbishop Justin Welby speak in Wells Cathedral. He endorsed the hope expressed by Pope Francis that we will be moved by a fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe. We all need to be captured afresh by the love of Christ about which each of us actually does have a story to tell.



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GRANTS FOR “A REST FROM DUTY”

THE ENGLISH CLERGY ASSOCIATION BENEFIT FUND (registered charity no. 258559)

From the Almoner

The English Clergy Association can sometimes help by way of a grant towards a holiday. We know from the postcards and letters we receive how much our help has meant to the recipients. We are able to make in the order of 50 to 60 holiday grants a year. These grants are specifically for holidays, or rests from duty, for serving or retired clergy of the Church of England (as set out below).

Eligibility

The Association is able to make grants towards “a rest from duty” to those who are:

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e-mail: revrichardhall45@gmail.com

A note from the ECA Treasurer

You can now nominate the English Clergy Association Benefit Fund to receive all or part of any tax refund due to you. Please complete page CH2 of your Self Assessment Tax Return, entering code UAH88UG in box 5. If you are able to tick the Gift Aid declaration your donation will be augmented by a further 25%.

Postcards 2017 (addressed to The Revd Richard Hall)

We are having an amazing time in Provence! Thank you so so much for the Grant that made it possible for us to get here – I don't think we realized how much we needed a holiday until we arrived. Ah! Peace, sunshine, good food, great beds and beauty all around. Thank you so much!

Following a very difficult 2 years my wife has finished her latest chemotherapy and we have managed to take a family holiday in central Portugal, in part thanks to your financial support. We are having a very special time. Thank you!

Thank you for your very generous gift of money which has enabled us to come to this beautiful island of Menorca and to have a wonderful family holiday together.

We are enjoying a fantastic family holiday here in Canada. We spent the first four days in Vancouver; then went fruit picking in the Okanagan Valley and learned about Grizzly bears at Kicking Horse Mountain. We are now in Banff, in the Rockies, where the sun is shining and the scenery is truly magnificent. Do pass on our gratitude to the Trustees for their generous gift.

We are just coming to the end of a varied and relaxing holiday in Devon and Cornwall, including a visit to the Eden Project, which was truly impressive. Please pass on my thanks to the English Clergy Association for the holiday grant which went towards this trip. We are very grateful. The contribution of the ECA to the welfare of the clergy is very worthwhile and encouraging.

My wife and I have just returned from a 2 week holiday in Dorset where we used your generous gift to rent a cottage near Lyme Regis. It was secluded and perfect for reading and relaxing and enjoying marvellous spring sunshine. Chesil Beach was magnificent for walks. Thank you for making this holiday possible.

A note to say a huge "thank you" to you and the Trustees for your very kind gift towards the cost of my holiday in New Zealand and Australia. I had a wonderful time, made possible by your generosity. Please pass on my thanks. PS Wellington was beautiful!

A card to let you know we are enjoying a wonderful family holiday here in Northumberland. This is due in no small part to the generosity of the ECA - please pass on our thanks to the Trustees for enabling us to have such a great and restful time.

A little note to wish you well and thank you for the holiday grant which you gave to my family and I towards our family holiday in Scotland as part of my extended study leave. We are very grateful and have had a great and restful time so far. With thanks and best wishes.

We've just come back from a fantastic holiday in the Dordogne and then Normandy. The children said it was the best holiday we've ever had, and Dad has come back very rested and refreshed too. So thank you so much for your holiday grant to us – it was much appreciated.

Just writing to thank you for the grant facilitating our family retreat on Skye. It's been transformational for all of us in finding family rhythms of prayer and worship, coming closer as a unit and deepening our personal faith. We've also found time to explore and enjoy this wonderful island and be balanced between eating very well and getting fit running up and down the hills!

Safely arrived in the Vendee for summer holiday.....family enjoying a much needed break from Parish Ministry and school pressures. Our sincere thanks again to the Trustees.

I am having a wonderful time in the USA as part of my sabbatical, and have also had a lovely week walking the coastal path of Wales. Time has passed very quickly. Thanks again for the support given to enable this to happen.

After only two days I am loving my time on Shetland and the Isles. The space, peace and gentleness of the place are just what I need. Thank you for your generous contribution to this time away. The puffins are the most gorgeous creatures I saw on arrival at Sumburgh Lighthouse!

Here we are in Wester Ross. Not been to this part before – absolutely stunning! Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity – the grant has paid for our accommodation, b&b stops en route to and from to break the journey. We are really relaxing – thank you.

A card from Dorset, where we are holidaying thanks to your generous grant. Worshipping in Beaminster on Sunday has inspired some thoughts and ideas for my own benefice.....but these can wait whilst we enjoy our holiday. With thanks.

WILLS — Making a Donation in your Will

The Association and our Benefit Fund are helped greatly if there are legacies and bequests. By making a posthumous gift of money or property you may also reduce your estate's Inheritance Tax liability.

The options for a donation in your Will are:

- a legacy of a specific sum
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- a bequest of the residue of your estate or a share of it with other charities or individuals

What to do to help us in your WILL:

If you wish to include a donation in your WILL please first consult your solicitor.

A simple form of legacy might include the following words:

“I hereby bequeath, free of tax, the sum of £ _____ to

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This wording can easily be adapted to cover the bequest of a property or of all, or part of, the residue of your estate. In any case of doubt please ask your solicitor or get in touch with the Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer. This is especially appreciated if you intend to lay down conditions as to how the bequest should be used.

MOVING TO A DIFFERENT BEAT

Clergy will be familiar with the experience of sitting down to get a morning's work done, perhaps catching up on administration, only to be interrupted. The doorbell goes, or the phone, and suddenly there is a need to respond. It may be the Funeral Director, meaning that this week's diary needs re-arranging to fit in visits and a service. It could be serious news from a parishioner who needs a visit urgently or something far more mundane that only takes a few minutes of time to sort out. Such interruptions are part of ministry. They happen as you walk from home to a meeting bumping in to people who share news, ask questions or simply stop to chat. They happen while you are trying to prepare yourself before the service or slip away afterwards. Each interruption requires a shift in focus. You need to stop, attend to what is being said, judge how to respond and act appropriately.

Lisa Baraitser wrote a book about mothering called *Maternal Encounters: The Ethics of Interruption* in which she suggests that the meaning of mothering is found in the interruptions. It is in the responding to the interruptions of the child that the relationship develops. At one point she likens this to syncopated music, where the breaks are as important as the notes for creating the rhythm. In my own writing I draw parallels between the practice of mothering and ministry and this is one such parallel. The meaning and practice of ministry is found in the interruptions; the encounters with people that come in predictable and unpredictable ways. As clergy we need to learn to move to a syncopated rhythm.

In ministry we find ourselves working in a different way to many other professions. We are called to weave together different encounters, different moods. We plan our days but also know that they have to allow for the interruptions, the unplanned needs of people. In a sense we have to hold on to the tune, planning the regular diary events and work that needs to happen, whilst accepting the rhythm of the off beats, the interruptions and the unpredictability. This unpredictability comes from the unique individuals we ministry amongst, the randomness of many life events including illness and death and the glorious freedom of the Holy Spirit who works in ways that we cannot control.

In ministry we take on responsibility for a community of people and this means that we need to be always ready to respond. This kind of responsibility requires concrete thinking and the capacity to pay attention. I use the term attention drawing on the work of Iris Murdoch and Simone Weill. Weill reminds us that this kind of attending to the other involves the capacity to really ask 'what are you going through?' and Murdoch explores why we find it difficult. She speaks about the human tendency to 'fantasise' – that is, rather than really seeing and hearing the other person we see or hear what we think they want, what we fear they want or how they are likely to impact on ourselves. When we do this we often respond to our own needs rather than the actual need of others.

Parson & Parish

Attending to the other requires that ability to stop and then to listen not just to what is being said but, drawing on the wisdom we have built up through practice, to try and hear what this person needs. We do this whilst simultaneously tuning in to God, trusting that the Holy Spirit will help us to discern the right response for this person who is beloved of God. Sometimes little is needed from us and we can quickly return to what we were doing. Sometimes we need to focus for longer to offer comfort, consolation, practical help and spiritual support.

We are called to give of ourselves in these encounters but not to abject ourselves. As another writer on mothering says:

To court self-denial for its own sake perverts rather than expresses attentive love. Mothers are especially prone to this perversion, since they are rewarded for self-sacrifice. They are familiar with the danger of denying their own needs only to find they have projected them onto their children ... The soul that can empty itself is a soul that already has a known, respected, albeit ever-developing self to return to when the moment of attention has passed. (Ruddick 1989)

What she writes of mothers can easily be said of clergy.

Sara Ruddick is an author who has taught me to understand the concept of being good enough. In writing about mothering she points out that there are not rules, there is not a clear pattern to be followed because we are dealing with change and the unique reality of another person. Each encounter, however familiar, is also slightly different because it is in this moment, what the philosophers call contingent. Perfection is the wrong kind of terminology for such a practice. So instead of rules we develop virtues. Virtues help us to get it right often enough to be trustworthy yet allow for the rather trial and error way we need to work in the unpredictability of caring for people, whether that is as a mother or a minister.

The central virtue we need is humility. The capacity to understand what is and what is not within our control. The virtue of humility helps to guard against the fantasy that we will always know what is best for people, that we can somehow get it all right, that micro-management is caring. It also helps us guard against the temptation to despair at all the things we cannot control, all of the complexity of other people and their inability to respond at times as we think they should. It helps us to have faith in God who is in control, to give of our best and trust God for all that is needed beyond what we can do.

Moving to a different beat involves learning to live with the unpredictability of ministry, the lack of measurable outcomes and the trial and error method of working. It means knowing that the interruptions are central to our calling and praying that we may learn to attend well to all those we encounter.

*The Rev'd Canon Dr Emma Percy
Trinity College, Oxford*

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