

**Liberating Lay People for Mission in the World of Work.**  
**-reappraising the role of church leaders,  
chaplains and sector ministers.**

**Cliff College Postgraduate Dept.**

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**Cliff College, Derbyshire.**

The following notes were made during the conference by Revd Robert Hill.

Conference Chaired by: David Clark, Methodist Deacon (Rtd)

David Clark led the first session: What is mission in the world of work?  
After an introduction, attendees were asked to discuss the main question in small groups and then reflected their thinking back to the whole conference.

It was noted that Lay people are appallingly neglected by the church where it comes to ministry in the work place as there is a seeming attitude that one cannot be a volunteer [ie. layperson] minister in the [professional] world of business.

‘Mission’ and ‘the world of work’ inform each other. But what does ‘mission’ mean for us in the world of work? The 5 marks of mission give guidance, but one of the keys is the breaking down of the boxes that separate the various parts of life these days allowing faith and work to connect. It is important to apply our Christianity to all parts of life, not just our time at church. This includes our voluntary work as well as our paid work. Christianity involves engaging with the world. We also need to be challenging the concept that Christianity ‘is a given’ and therefore part of the mindset and structure of today’s world of work. Keeping Christianity relevant is important now that, in reality, Christians are a minority.

Presence is a key word: Being there – bringing that presence of Christ in front of you. Christianity is a sign post in the world of work. For the Christian there is an implicit and an explicit factor. Living out a Christian life – integrity – example to others. Evangelism is only part of mission.

Breaking down barriers, through sermons in church, and inviting people to engage can be difficult especially in our culture of reticence. It also involves challenging the sacred/secular divide, bringing in spirituality rather than just counselling, getting our hands dirty with practical help rather than just comment and judgement, and thereby earning the right to talk to people by sharing with them. Christians have a call to stand up for justice issues and for keeping the moral code.

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Mission in the world of work – a kingdom model.

‘What are we on about’ verses ‘How do we do it’. Understanding what we are doing rather than just concentrating on the practical. There is always a need to (re)ask the question ‘What is our message?’

Christianity addresses big issues (currently the economy). These are presenting problems, but what are the causal or essential problems. How can we enable our world to be a global community of communities? - Uniformity is not a realistic option. What are we saying to these issues?

'Community', sociologically, is now about experience rather than location. At the individual level there are 3 dimensions of community:

A sense of **S**ecurity – having a safe place to stand - adequacy of material needs and safety.

A sense of **S**ignificance – having a role to play – self fulfilment and worth.

A sense of **S**olidarity – having something to belong to - being part of something.

A community in/of the workplace will need all 3 elements or it will fail. Any community will also fail if it becomes introverted. It needs enough confidence in each of the 3 elements to be open to learning, and accepting that individuals and the group can grow in different ways. This is the element of **I**nclusivity or Learning.

Theologically, mission adds another dimension to the 4 elements (SSS&I). Images of the Trinity show us diversity in unity (Sovereignty of God in relationship with people), and the concept of the Kingdom shows communal potential that was recognised by Jesus as already being present. So the gifts of the Kingdom transform the elements of SSS&I:

Security becomes an issue of life in all its fullness, and abundance of life.

energy, *joie de vive*, joy, a peace that passes all understanding, beauty, creativity.

Significance brings liberation: My whole nature is free to be a valued child of God.

from... fear, anxiety, loss of self-worth, failure and sinfulness

for... realisation of human potential, the affirmation and well being of others.

Solidarity implies a more dynamic and challenging love, even a love of enemies.

caring, empathy, tolerance, concern for the common good.

Inclusivity/learning gives discernment and wisdom.

learning as a spiritual journey, openness to the truth revealed through others,

openness to dialogue with those we do not understand or agree with,

readiness to change, grow and develop in response to God's purpose.

Mission becomes more than 'comfort of souls', it is how we can transform and encourage the world to rise above the basics – above the survival of the species.

**'The mission of the church in the world of work is to build a global community of workplace communities that manifest the gifts of the kingdom community.'**

The gifts are out there, but can we see them? Jesus told stories from the world of work (The sower of seeds, the shepherd etc). We can go into the world and say 'I can see God in this' or 'This is not of the Kingdom': This is a matter of telling out the justice of situations. "This is not new, but we can be freshly aware" .. of our situation. We should be starting where people and God are, starting at the non-chained (?) religious roots, starting at the human level. By doing so we are adding value to SSS & I.

What is it that we are trying to do? This is the 'How to...' How do we need to prepare for this? The Ordained should be training the Lay to do the ministry. Ministry is not confined to the Ordained.

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### **The Laity as primary source for mission in the world of work.**

'Lay' is the resource already there in the world. We do not need to 'break in' to the world. [Church] Leaders must get alongside the laity and be the 'servants of the servants'.

- Laity should have the attitude: 'I am going to work. God will be there. The Kingdom will be built/challenged.'
- Suggestion: Keep a diary – seeing the moments of God's presence (ref: story of the wise/foolish virgins) and finding stories of God in everyday life.
- Ask the question: How can I be an example of Christ's life, liberation and love?
- Be explicit: Narration (telling the stories), Interpretation (for today's worlds), Advocacy (for those without voice) Telling the truth about what is happening in the world.
- Walk with people: Do not be above or below others, but come alongside them.
- Remember the cost: We all have a cross to bear – there is always a cost to all this.
- Walk together: We all need to share with others as we do all this. The Lost Generation that only went to church on a Sunday who were never given the chance to support people in their lives.

Stories and communication needs to be at the human level.

"A thousand tiny empowerments" can bring people to fullness.

"..mini-narratives feed into Meta-narratives."

Mini narratives that are important to the individual, feed into the meta-narratives that are important to the community.

People respond better to coffee and buns rather than leaflets.

Our vulnerability can open a door. – Especially true for laity (without the 'uniform').

Preachers should talk about real issues, not just about the bible.

Barnabas Spot – Witness and issues ordinary.

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### **Church Leaders as community educators in the world of work.**

Historically, the role of church leaders in relations to the world of work has been:

Pastor – Pastoral work.

Priest – Chaplain – Services and Function.

Prophet – Advocacy and Justice.

Presence – but not allowed to proselytise.

The role of Community Educator is being missed.

- Educating Lay people to engage in and as community.
- Lay ministry needs to be affirmed, encouraged, informed.
- Education for the building of community.
- Leaders can not exist on the 'Lone Ranger' syndrome'.

Leaders are to be:

Catalyst – *Raising awareness of and stimulating people to fashion a new vision of the nature of the kingdom community and how its gifts can help to transform the workplace.*

Enabler – *Enabling and equipping people to discern, acknowledge and employ the gifts of the kingdom community to build workplace communities that manifest the gifts of life, liberation, love and learning.*

Acting as intermediary – *Enhancing ‘the flow’ of divine-human energy which can give people access to the gifts of the kingdom community.*

Resource person – *A ‘reflective practitioner’ helping people share and deepen their understanding of God’s Kingdom and purposes. Offering resources to equip people for ministry.*

Servant – *An attitude and stance that brings them alongside people as a partner, encourager, facilitator and guide.*

Lay people are representatives of the Kingdom of God in the work place. We should not collude with popular thinking that only licensed/Ordained Ministers can represent God.

Trying to build community within a workplace is about reflecting the gifts of God, not just about the sociological environment of the group.

Speaker calls for a shift in understanding of ministry to include concept of Lay Educator. But where do Lay people ‘take’ those they minister to beyond Alpha Courses etc? Answer lies in idea of ‘growth and ‘development’ rather than an idea of stages or phases.

Sector ministry is not well rooted back into the local church. A church that is separated from the world around it will not be realistic. Local clergy need to engage with sector ministry. Engagement encourages parishes to think about what it is to be Christian in the World of Work. Chaplaincy can develop ideas for Christians in the workplace. Some Christians will always hide in the shadows.

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Copies of the hand-outs can be obtained from the SR files at Bouverie Court. A copy of the Methodist Diaconal Order’s Faith and Work Programme is also on file. Contact Robert Hill. [SR File C4.]

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The document has been drawn from the Speakers’ Hand-outs and personal notes made by Revd Robert Hill.  
Social Responsibility Adviser.  
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