

The Kingdom at Work Project



Bulletin 15 **January 2019**

This issue of the Kingdom at Work Project *Bulletin* focuses on the future direction of the project.

Bulletin 14 explored a number of important matters concerned with the engagement of Christians in and with the world of work.

Last October, under the generous auspices of St. Peter's Saltley Trust, we gathered together a small group of people representing agencies and associations, involved in faith and work issues and training, to address these matters. This *Bulletin*, contains a report on that day and ways in which it might be followed up as indicated below:

I. Ian Jones (Director of the Saltley Trust) writes up the October consultation

II. Key questions arising from the consultation

III. Names and organizations of those attending the October consultation

IV. An opportunity to gather again and other ways forward

V. Ongoing material relating to the Kingdom@Work Project

In relation to section I of this *Bulletin*, we are very keen to have your response to some of the key issues currently to the fore concerning the ministry of Christians in the world of work.

Please guide as to the way forward for the project.

In relation to section II, we are asking for a response from those readers in a position to be more pro-active in any future development of the project.

David Clark
Project Co-ordinator

I. 'Educating for Mission in the world of work: where next?'

Report on a consultation of faith and work organisations held on 9 October 2018, hosted by the Kingdom at Work Project and St Peter's Saltley Trust

What is the calling of Christians in the world of work in post-Christendom?

A theology of mission for work is essential: it's like the rudder on a cruise-liner.

But we need a bigger conversation/process of envisioning. (But we also need to understand: are people actually asking for help with a theology of mission at work? If so, why? If not why not?)

Where do we find the ingredients for this theology?

From...

- Existing theological frameworks on mission (e.g. Anglican Communion's *Five Marks of Mission*, LICC's *Fruitfulness on the Frontline*, etc.)
- The theologies of work which already exist
- From the implicit theologies of work which arise from particular workplace contexts (both 'good' and 'bad')
- From related areas of theology – e.g., ecclesiology (what is our understanding of the Church?).

Where do we start?

- It starts with God – discerning what God is doing and joining in
- We also need to reflect on what work means, and how the meaning and nature of work and workplaces are changing
- We also start with people and their particular experiences of work – 'values have to be lived, not laminated'
- It needs to be holistic; dealing with all of what work is, and all that mission might be in a workplace context (see right hand column).

A holistic theology of mission in the world of work will attend to...

Aspirations for what work could be in Kingdom perspective *and* the (sometimes) 'crushingly negative experiences of work'

Conversion/transformation of/in work *and* coping with work

Individuals *and* institutions/systems

The workplace *and* helping the Church understand the implications of a missional theology of work

Faith and work within the gathered neighbourhood church *and* new forms of church in the workplace *and* individuals as the 'scattered' church in diverse workplaces

Our general vocation as Christians *and* particular Christian vocations of individuals

Sharing Christian faith *and* transformation of workplaces

Prophetic critique *and* affirmation of what is already good in work/workplaces

The transcendent *and* the immanent

Products, services, workplace ethos/values, use of money and resources, interpersonal relationships, etc.

White collar *and* blue-collar work

How can Christians be equipped to fulfil that calling?

Attention to 'calling':

- Getting better at helping people identify and articulate their calling in general
- Identifying language which is not misleading, disabling or vague (e.g. 'vocation')

Attention to worship/liturgy:

- Commissioning for daily work
- Recognising work milestones (e.g., transition, retirement)

Attention to theology/learning:

- Carving out regular time and space within congregational life to explore work experiences
- 'Appreciative enquiry' method
- What does 'good' and 'bad' work look like (as a theological task)
- Developing Christian groups within workplaces, for prayer and reflection
- Exploring what happens when work goes wrong
- Teaching of ethics – what does it look like to be an ethical accountant, etc.
- Inviting work into the life of a congregation (including people who aren't members)
- Shop-steward type formation for Christians in work (examples given of St John's and Durham 'workplace ministers' certificate)
- Understanding what are the 'nudges' that lead people to connect faith and work, and/or act in kingdom ways within their workplaces (cultivating good habits without 'nudge' becoming about 'manipulation')
- Modelling/sharing good case studies of faith at work
- Do we feel there are sufficient adequate materials to help people explore faith and work? (URC's new 'Stepwise' and 'Faith-Filled Life' programmes noted as one example)

Other Approaches:

- A 'bishop in secular ministry' (or other denominational equivalent) would send a signal that work matters
- Important not to forget the value of 'para-church activity' in relation to work and workplaces (e.g., organisations seeking to tackle modern slavery or human trafficking, or seeking to influence workplace ethics) – there is potential to cooperate with other organisations here (e.g., trade unions, health and safety, etc.)
- Churches supporting and offering apprenticeships
- What is the potential of social media/contemporary communications technology to support people to connect faith and work?

Questions for consideration...

In what dimensions of discipleship would we hope to see change?

- Beliefs/values, practices/behaviour, 'disciplines' (i.e., devotional framework), 'dispositions' (i.e., not just what we do but the manner in which we do it), 'fruit' (i.e., outcomes).

What would the process of change look like?

- Individual and corporate, organic and inorganic metaphors for change, drawing upon both an implicit and explicit curriculum, attentive to both enabling and disabling factors.

Do we know what works? If not, we may need to find out!

Next steps?

Towards the end of the day we started to think about next steps - what works, what doesn't work - and what we don't yet understand (and might need researching). We recognised that 'what works' varies from place to place and person to person – there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Looking at the ideas we noted down, we also realised that some of the same things appear more than once or in different columns!

Mentoring – Part of the solution?

What works?

- Chaplaincy (for the 'chaplained' and the chaplains) and MSE
- Gathering working people to share their stories (hopes, fears, etc) as Christians at work – perhaps in clusters of related occupations
- Working with employers and business ('One thing that frustrates me is that many projects I have run have been embraced by business but not by the Church')
- Self-initiated workplace groups
- Pairing a congregation with a company/ workplace for a shared project around some common purpose
- Taking clergy/those who teach into church into workplaces
- Theological student placements in workplaces
- Sessions within congregations with a work focus (e.g., Lent courses)
- 'This Time Tomorrow' or similar opportunities to hear about work/ workplaces within service time
- There are some books which can be eye-opening for some
- Material on good business ethics at work (e.g., Quakers and Business booklet)
- Mentoring and coaching for people working out their calling for themselves
- Prayer for workplaces
- Harvest celebrations of work

What doesn't work?

- Churches being so focused on their 'house' vision that they do not think about how to equip for work and workplaces
- Tightly-structured and/or poorly-led didactic courses
- Traditional 'one-size fits all' church teaching
- Faith and work courses during Lent
- Small group courses
- One-off faith and work events 'though better than nothing, are of limited value'
- Many current patterns of theological training – there's little that habitually reflects on work as a theme in human experience and teaches people to help others to reflect for themselves as well
- Misunderstandings of Biblical economics
- Seeing Self-Supporting Ministry or Ministers in Secular Employment as just 'an extra pair of hands on a Sunday'
- Workplace fellowships that don't discuss work

What don't we yet understand (and might need researching)?

- Whether people are asking for help with faith and work? Might it help to find out?
- How to compete for the attention of a church with a focus fixed on buildings and maintaining the status quo in the face of reduced resources?
- What is the role of discipleship in creating missional workers?
- How to draw people together into workplace Christian communities (and in a way which isn't dominated only by seeking to convert workmates)?
- What are the current models which are really bearing significant fruit?
- How best to help people identify and fulfil both their specific individual calling and their more general calling as Christians?
- How to change the cultures of the church (liturgy, habits, practices, theological emphasis, etc.)?
- How best to recognise working life milestones liturgically?
- How best to harness social media to help people connect faith and work?
- How best to partner with other sorts of organisations in common cause?
- Is there a repository of best practice on faith and work, and would it be helpful to create one?

This was the start of a discussion of mentoring.
The notes suggest there is more to be explored.
However, here is what we produced in the time available:

Is mentoring valuable in the faith and work context?

- There was some personal experience of finding mentoring valuable.
- We mentor ordained ministers for new work – so why not mentor others for new work?
- There was some interest in the idea of an ‘animator’ role for faith and work, within a church community (is ‘animator’ the same as ‘mentor’ or is it two different roles?)
- There was some discussion as to whether the real shortage is of mentors, or of mentees willing to be mentored?
- Is the idea of ‘mentoring’ too middle-class/professional? (One suggestion: adult community education model of ‘learning champions’ could offer an alternative model.)

Where would mentors come from?

- From within congregations themselves
- Chaplains/ministers in secular employment – could be mentors in a workplace context, and act as a bridge into congregations

What training and qualifications would mentors need?

- Experience of the workplace
- Methods of person and situation-centred reflection
- Project management/group work skills
- Understanding of both formal and informal models of mentoring
- (It was noted that the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS) do a good mentoring course, amongst others)

Another Idea...

Could one conceive of a congregational audit/badging framework (in the mould of the eco-congregation or dementia friendly church) for faith and work - e.g., being a ‘workplace affirming church’?

Next steps in collaboration:

We discussed possibilities for next steps.

- There was **enthusiasm for meeting again** as a group of representatives of organisations committed to the relationship between faith and work (several people said that they had never previously been in a room together with so many other organisations with this focus)
- **Future networking could be valuable** – perhaps as an annual gathering – but must be **for a specific purpose**, and not be burdensome. People don’t just want to have another meeting for the sake of it.
- It was important to include in this **representatives of some of the newer faith and work focused organisations** (might need to do some research to make contact)
- There were suggestions that a project to test out the value of **a congregational animator or mentor** to help churches equip their members for ministry in the workplace might be useful.

Ian Jones

II. Where next for the project? *Your response requested*

We are currently taking stock of the Kingdom@Work Project and looking to clarify the future shape of this important initiative. We remain convinced that the task of educating for mission in the world of work must go on. The participants at our consultation, held last October, all felt there was much more to be done.

Based on the last Kingdom@Work *Bulletin* (No. 14), the October gathering and some subsequent suggestions by participants, a few important questions have been identified to guide any next steps which might be taken.

*We would be very grateful if you could offer a response to the following question:
Of the numbered shortlist of possible future directions suggested below (or from anything else which is of concern to you), which do you think is a priority and why?*

Please [let David](#) have your response
by Friday 15th February.

- 1. How can we enable people to explore and deepen their sense of God's calling within their workplace contexts?**
Including - How do we catalyse and support that? What contribution could specially trained mentors/coaches or 'animators' (which might possibly be different roles) make to that?
- 2. How can we deepen our theology of work?**
Including - How can we develop a theological understanding of blue-collar and gig economy work, which is not only fit for these workplace contexts, but also emerges from *within* them? And how do we ensure such reflection results not only in good understanding, but also in what Jake Belder calls 'counter-formative practices' which help reimagine and reshape what we understand work to be?
- 3. How can we harness social media and new communications technologies as a resource for deepening Christian discipleship in the workplace and furthering the kingdom at work?**
Including - Would it also help to create an online hub of good practice, good stories and good theology to resource people in connecting faith and work and teaching others to do so?
- 4. How could we help individuals, workplace groups and churches mark to celebrate significant workplace occasions and transitions (e.g., job changes, redundancy, retirement, promotion, parental leave, etc.)?**
Including - What kind of prayers, hymns, songs and liturgy could help with this?

III. Alvechurch Consultation 'Educating for mission in the world of work - where next?'

Participants

Tuesday, October 9th, 2018

Revd Phil Jump	Industrial Christian Fellowship
Andrew Fincham	Quakers & Business [Intended to but unable to attend.]
Karen Hanley	Quakers & Business
Ed Fordham	UK Unitarians (The Inquirer)
Peter Sellick	CIGB Workplace Chaplaincy
Richard Higginson	Faith in Business
Charles Hipsley	London Institute for Contemporary Christianity [Intended to but unable to attend.]
Revd Bill Mash	Black Country Industrial Mission
Revd Elizabeth Gray-King	United Reformed Church (UK)
Rev Canon Alan Robson	Methodist Church Workplace Chaplaincy
Steve Bavington	Chaplaincy Plus (Birmingham)
Jake Belder	Researcher - St Johns College, Durham
Jeremy Fagan	MODEM
Phil Aspinall	CHRISM
Keith Tripp	Business Development Director, St John's College, Nottingham
Dick Johnson	Workplace Chaplaincy Mission UK

Deacon David Clark	The Kingdom at Work Project
Ian Jones	Director, the Saltley Trust

IV. An opportunity to gather again: *Tuesday, 8 October 2019* *Your response requested*

Participants in the October consultation were enthusiastic to meet again. With this in mind we are planning a second gathering of representatives of the UK's faith and work organisations or initiatives on *Tuesday, 8 October 2019*, to focus on a specific current issue or question which will be agreed with potential participants (either one of the areas or concern identified above, or something else).

No one wants to add yet another meeting date to their diaries for the sake of it, and no one wants to create yet another 'faith and work' organisation. But one participant reflected that in twenty years of involvement in this area of mission and ministry, he had never before spent time with such a wide and diverse range of faith and work organisations. We believe that the benefits of such connectivity are worth building on wherever there is potential to consult and cooperate in specific ways.

If you would like to receive updates about the planned gathering on October 8th 2019 and/or have suggestions for the focus of this event, please [let Ian know](#) as soon as possible.

Future meeting and possible projects
Your response requested

We are looking for two or three people to meet with us in Birmingham in late February or March to explore how the vision of the Kingdom@Work Project, and the programme which it has initiated, can be taken forward.

We would also be keen to hear from anyone wishing to propose a project to address a related aspect of faith and work.

[Projects with a clear West Midlands region connection would be in a position to apply to St Peter's Saltley Trust for support.]

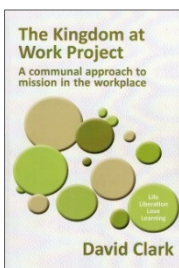
If you would be interested in the proposed meeting, or have a project in mind please, [let Ian know](#) as soon as possible.

Ian Jones
(director@saltleytrust.org.uk)
David Clark
(david@clark58.eclipse.co.uk)

V. Ongoing material

The Kingdom at Work Project
- a communal approach to mission in the workplace'
David Clark

Peterborough: Upfront Publishing (£14.99 paperback; £8.99 e-book)



Unique in recent literature on faith and work in that its focus is the on the transformation of the workplace - founded on an innovative communal theology of the kingdom 'profoundly lay-centred' - a wealth of resources for practice - argues for a new mentoring role for chaplains and ministers in secular employment - a comprehensive mission agenda for the local church

This book 'may represent the beginning of another stage in the historic and contemporary Christian engagement with work'
(*John Atherton in Crucible*)

‘A brilliant work-book for the servant leader’
(Peter Challen - Sloan Fellow of London Business School)

‘An extraordinarily stimulating book... Its huge strength lies in the sheer comprehensiveness of the vision, combined with a myriad of practical ideas, structured responses and imaginative, evocative prayers.’

(Roger Walton - President of the Methodist Conference, 2016-2017)

David Clark has a web site and blog on the theme of ‘the diaconal church’

<http://www.diaconalchurch.com>

Parts of this blog have considerable relevance to ministry and mission in the world of work.

Themes of past Kingdom at Work Project *Bulletins*

These can be downloaded from

<http://www.saltleytrust.org.uk/faith-and-work-in-theological-education-and-training/>

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| No.14 (August 2018) | Educating for mission in the world of work - where next? |
| No 13 (March 2018) | Sustainability at work |
| No.12 (Nov. 2017) | Quakers and Business |
| No.11 (July 2017) | Ministers in Secular Employment |
| No.10 (Feb. 2017) | The Christian Entrepreneur |
| No.9 (Nov. 2016) | Servant leadership |
| No.8 (July 2016) | Spirituality in the workplace |
| No.7 (Feb. 2016) | Christian faith and the economy |
| No.6 (Oct. 2015) | Chaplains and chaplaincy |
| No.5 (July 2015) | The Common Good |
| No.4 (April 2015) | The Kingdom at Work project – ten key questions |
| No.3 (Dec. 2014) | ‘Educating for Mission in the World of Work’ - conference report |
| No.2 (Oct. 2014) | Faith and work agencies in the UK and beyond |
| No.1 (Feb. 2014) | The Kingdom at Work Project and related initiatives |

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