

# The Kingdom at Work Project



## *Bulletin 4* April 2015

### The Kingdom at Work Project - ten key questions

This edition of the *Bulletin* carries information about some of the issues that the Kingdom at Work Project is seeking to address through the recent publication of the book of that title and of a second printing of *Breaking the Mould of Christendom* (first published in 2005), which originally set out the theological and ecclesiological foundations on which the project is based (see notices at the end of this *Bulletin*).

Reviews of *The Kingdom at Work Project* have so far been very supportive of the project as a whole. However, only one or two reviewers have picked up the key issues which the project is seeking to raise, issues urgently needing informed discussion and practical action in the life of the churches in the UK. This *Bulletin* summarises these issues in the form of a series of questions addressed to all those concerned about the relevance of the church's mission - to the world of work and beyond - in today's world.

*[The references in square brackets are to the relevant  
Stages of The Kingdom at Work Project.]*

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*If you are able to contribute a response, reflective or practical, to any of the  
questions posed please get in touch before the end of May so that your contribution can  
help inform the next Bulletin.*  
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### Ten key questions which the project is raising

**1. Is any discussion about the nature of a kingdom theology and its implications for mission currently taking place within the church in the UK?**

For many years until well into the 'sixties, theological debate about the nature and practical significance of the kingdom in shaping mission was to the fore in the life of the church in the UK and well beyond. Notably, such debate underpinned the development of industrial mission, of urban mission and of the emergence of the role of ministers in secular employment [Stage 11]. Since that time (with certain notable exceptions) pre-occupation with the survival and, of late, anxious concern for the numerical growth of churches has pushed the concept of the kingdom into the wilderness. Even the resurgence of multi-sector

chaplaincy has not led to a kingdom theology coming to the fore again. Thus the issue of how a kingdom theology should guide and inform mission remains unaddressed.

*Breaking the Mould of Christendom* and *The Kingdom at Work Project* put the kingdom upfront as the benchmark for understanding the meaning of mission. The *Kingdom at Work Project's* insights into a communal kingdom theology and communal kingdom spirituality [Stages 2 and 3] are explored as relevant to *all* aspects of mission. The project applies a communal understanding of a kingdom theology specifically to the world of work largely as just one example of the relevance of such a theology to the whole of the church's mission.

## **2. Is our understanding of the meaning of 'community' and its implications for church and world receiving the attention it requires?**

The need for society and world to discern and express what it means to become a global community of communities is rapidly coming to the fore in secular debate - the church in the UK seems to be lagging way behind here though it has an immense amount to offer to this conversation. The nearest concept to that of community currently in evidence on the church scene at the moment appears to be that of 'the common good' - but the long history of sociological, ecclesiological and theological exploration of the concept of community, especially in a Trinitarian context, needs to be revisited and brought to the fore. *The Kingdom at Work Project* argues that far from being a trivialised and thus meaningless word, the concept of community lies at the heart of a Trinitarian understanding of the nature of the kingdom and thus of the purpose of mission [Stages 1, 2 and 3]. *Breaking the Mould of Christendom* likewise argues this point.

## **3. Where is there evidence of a concern for mission focused on the transformation of society (rather than simply of the individual)? What examples are there of what this approach to mission might mean *in practice*?**

In recent years, the churches in the UK appear to have been pre-occupied with a model of mission focused on 'making disciples' - to the virtual exclusion of mission as enabling society and its institutions to manifest the nature and gifts of the kingdom [Introduction - Diagram 1]. Of course the making of disciples remains central to the gospel - but not at the expense of the transformation of those mores, cultures, economies, technologies and structures which so often hold the individual to ransom and destroy humanity in the process. Nevertheless, a societal and transformational approach to mission needs to be grounded *in practice* [Stages 4, 5 and 8], and not left as an exploration of general principles. In this context, there is need to give a more practical focus to the current discussion of potentially seminal terms such as 'the common good'.

## **4. Are any attempts being made to explore the relationship between mission on a human scale and mission on a global scale?**

This issue is about making connections between mission writ small and mission writ large. The link between what the individual can be and do as a Christian in a world increasingly shaped by global forces and how that fits in with any vision of a transformed society (such as attempts to spell out what an economy based on Christian principles would look like) needs much more in depth and honest exploration [Stages 6 and 8(1)]. Is it because it is so hard to make a meaningful connection in this context that we end up with the either/or of

discipleship/or societal transformation? If so this is all the more reason for an urgent debate of this issue.

**5. Where is **the art of being able to discern** the signs of the kingdom of God in daily life being nurtured?**

This question promises a more positive response than many others set out here. There seems to be a refreshing quest for the discovery of a spirituality, from the Celtic to the Catholic and beyond [Stages 3 and 7], which can further a deeper appreciation of the presence of the kingdom of God in daily life. How can this quest be encouraged and, above all, its outcomes channelled into a new understanding of and commitment to mission, not least in the world of work?

**6. Where is the church exploring what **'mission as dialogue'** entails in a pluralistic society?**

Lip-service is often paid to the importance of dialogue as a necessary approach to mission in an increasingly diverse society. But dialogue is a process which needs particular conversational skills. The project contends that it also needs to be informed by a kingdom theology if it is to be a genuine means of mission [Stage 8(3)]. Where is the necessary research and education being undertaken which can inform and guide the church in how to engage effectively in 'dialogue as mission' in a world of diverse beliefs and values?

**7. What attempts are being made to spell out the implications of a kingdom theology for **a new way of being church** in an age when a Christendom ecclesiology is so clearly in terminal decline?**

It is perplexing why most denominations in the UK still give the impression of believing that they can continue throughout the current century without radical change to their way of life. Recently, a notable American Methodist historian has referred to what he believes to be 'the dying embers of British Methodism' - an observation no less relevant to other mainstream denominations in the UK. Nor is it at all certain that Establishment (and the Church Commissioners) will ensure the survival of the Church of England in its current form for all that many more generations to come. Furthermore, the ecumenical passion of a few decades ago has now faded away leaving even that vision of the future in disarray. The only current response to the situation of gradual attrition clearly observable seems to be one preoccupied with numerical growth (of clergy and church members) at all costs - but without asking how a kingdom theology might be offering a model for the emergence of a very different way of being church, for new forms of church leadership and for a new perspective on mission [Stage 5]. *Breaking the Mould of Christendom* explores in detail the likely characteristics of such a post-Christendom church which it terms 'a diaconal church'.

**8. Where can new **forms of worship and prayers of relevance to the world of work** be discovered?**

Over recent decades there have been only a handful of forms of worship and prayers published which have any immediate relevance to the rapidly changing nature and challenges of the world of work [Stage 8(5)]. It seems as if the church often lives in a domestic cocoon and is incapable of supporting through worship and prayer those members wrestling, often in isolation, with the immense challenges of ministry and mission in secular places of work.

Furthermore all those involved in the world of work, Christian or otherwise, are robbed of the prayerful support of the church as that world also wrestles with immense and often dehumanising changes.

**9. Where are any gathered (local) churches actively equipping their lay people for ministry in the workplace to be found?**

Is it true that the number of gathered (local) churches in the UK actively supporting (through worship, pastoral care, education, etc.) the ministry of their members *at work* can be numbered on the fingers of one hand? To counter that stark observation, please let the project know of any churches bucking this trend so that good practice in this vital area of mission can be shared [Stage 10].

**10. Where, as part of courses training ministers or priests (within theological colleges, those for chaplains or for ministers in secular employment, and so forth), is material included concerned with teaching the skills required to equip lay people to exercise their ministry within the workplace?**

Past and present research shows that theological colleges are not addressing this need [9 and 11]. Nor would it seem that other courses for clergy (including those for the training of chaplains) have yet grasped the importance of the ordained minister as mentor and enabler of the laity at work. Consequently what is in effect clericalism, typical of the Christendom church, remains deeply entrenched in the UK understanding of ministry and mission at work. It would also seem that new courses seeking to equip *lay people* for chaplaincy likewise fail to pass on the skills of the chaplain as a mentor to the people of God at work. Which course and where will be the first to take seriously the role of the ordained minister and lay chaplain) as mentor to the people of God in their ministry in the workplace?

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**A reminder!**

*If you are able to contribute a response, reflective or practical, to any of the questions posed please get in touch with us before the end of May. Your contributions will provide an important resource for the next Bulletin published in the early summer.*

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**For all matters relating to this *Bulletin* please contact -**

**Deacon Dr David Clark**

at:

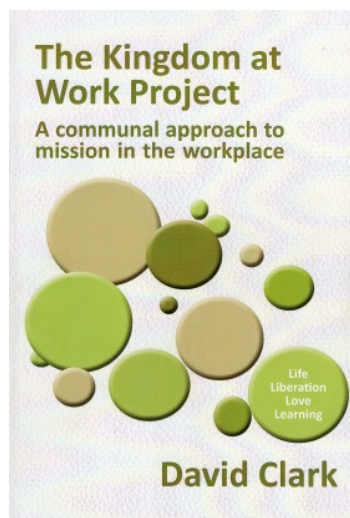
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## ***'The Kingdom at Work Project'***

**David Clark**



Mission in the world of work has been neglected by the churches within the UK for decades. The Kingdom at Work Project addresses this crippling failure. It sets out a new and comprehensive model of mission for the transformation of the workplace. The model is founded on a radical theology of community and related spirituality. These guide and empower an innovative process of discernment and intervention. The latter covers individual and collective action, dialogue, the use of symbols and messages, prayer and worship. Mentoring, the role of chaplains and ministers in secular employment, and the responsibilities of the gathered church are some of the key issues covered in depth. This book is the most thorough and imaginative exploration of mission in the world of work to appear for many years. (Published December 2014)

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*A brilliant work-book for the servant leader who genuinely starts where others are in their work.*

**Peter Challen** - Sloan Fellow of the London Business School

*The book is a valuable mission resource which explores at depth context, theology and intervention concerning mission at work... the project is much to be commended.*

**Jennifer Tann** - former Professor of Innovation Studies at Birmingham University

*I welcome this detailed and helpful study of mission in the workplace on which people can draw in many different ways.*

**Ruth McCurry** - former Commissioning Editor with SPCK

*What sets the Kingdom at Work Project apart is its truly holistic approach.*

**Robert Fox** - Customer Relationship Manager at HM Revenue and Customs and a priest in the Church of England. He is editor of *Ministers-at-Work*.

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**David Clark** is a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order. For twenty years he was a leading figure in the Christian Community Movement. For most of his working life, as a sector minister, he was a senior lecturer in community education at Westhill College, Birmingham. During that time he was deeply involved in mission and ministry in the world of work setting up the Christians in Public Life Programme and founding the Human City Institute (Birmingham). He is the author of numerous seminal books and articles on the future shape and mission of the church in contemporary society.

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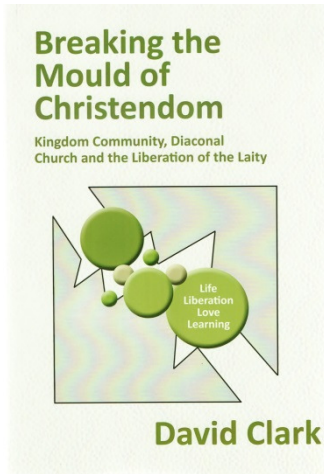
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***'Breaking the Mould of Christendom: Kingdom Community,  
Diaconal Church and the Liberation of the Laity'***

**David Clark**



This book is a ground-breaking study of a new model of church, 'the diaconal church'. Its background is a world facing momentous change and a church stuck fast in 'the mould of Christendom'. The author argues that for the church to break free from that mould and to fulfil its mission in today's world, at least four fundamental changes have to take place. First, it must hammer out a theology of community rooted in the nature of the kingdom as a learning community. Second, it must be transformed into 'a diaconal church' whose mission is to serve 'the kingdom community' within the world. Third, its 'laity must be liberated' from clerical domination to become the servants of the kingdom community in the world. Fourth, a renewed diaconate is needed to help further the liberation of the laity. The book includes five case-studies of the diaconal church in action, and an evaluation of the diaconal potential of five worldwide Christian 'renewal movements'.

(First published 2005; reprinted December 2014)

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*This book brilliantly analyses the mission of the church in contemporary life presenting a vision of a church for the world which is full of the spirit of Jesus Christ.*

**John Hull** - Honorary Professor of Practical Theology in the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Birmingham

*David Clark offers an arresting portrayal of 'the diaconal church' that deserves to become a key text for those who are concerned about issues around faith and life ministries on both sides of the Atlantic.*

**Sally Simmel** - Formerly Director of 'Ministry in Daily Life' for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the USA

*In this ground-breaking text, David Clark provides a comprehensive and inspiring vision of church and ministry from a diaconal perspective.*

**Stephen Pattison** - Professor of Religion, Ethics and Practice at the University of Birmingham

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