

A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF CHAPLAINCY

*Edited by John Caperon, Andrew Todd
and James Walters*



‘This excellent and varied collection of essays confirms chaplaincy studies’ place at the vanguard of practical and public theology. In affirming the mission of God as beginning in the world beyond the church, it challenges us, in turn, to become a more worldly church through the practices of discernment, participation and witness.’

– *Elaine Graham, Grosvenor Professor of Practical Theology, University of Chester*

‘With the massive changes currently going on in the public sector, churches, along with our colleagues in the voluntary sector, are being looked to as partners in ways we have not known for decades. In chaplaincy, we have models to help us do this effectively but, all too often, a lack of theological reflection on its guiding principles leaves us diminished. These essays help to fill that gap and I warmly commend them.’

– *The Right Reverend Colin Fletcher, Bishop of Dorchester*

‘Chaplaincy is flourishing in the twenty-first century, and one of its great needs is for a Christian wisdom that can open up its depths and potential and also face its challenges. This book meets that need. It offers helpful ideas, models, images and experiences to think with, and it has the capacity to inspire ministries of meaning and practical action in diverse settings of our complex society.’

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CHAPLAINCY AND TRADITIONAL CHURCH STRUCTURES

— JOHN CAPERON —

So far this book has offered a range of theological perspectives on chaplaincy. It has been argued that the incarnation itself prompts us to recognise the Christological character of humanity, and that chaplaincy both fully shares and expresses the four marks of the Church as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. Chaplaincy stands at the forefront of multi-faith engagement in the present age, it has also been argued, prompting a ‘generous orthodoxy’ of Christian belief. Considering the range of possible theological and secular models of chaplaincy, it has been suggested that chaplaincy ministers in a particular way to ‘humanity’s innate need for relationships’. And in exploring the nature of ‘embedded’ chaplaincy, it has been argued that the chaplain’s ‘prayerful presence’ is ‘an ascetic witness to the vision and the practice of life in all its fullness’. In short, chaplaincy’s specific identity is of huge significance for the Church’s ministry and mission in the twenty-first century.

But the fact remains that chaplaincy is still often regarded as something of a sideshow to the established Church’s central, traditional understanding of ministry as being rooted in parish and church, vicar and people. At a time when chaplaincy is rapidly developing as both a lay and a

clerical ministry, incorporating both secular and multi-faith elements (Ryan 2015), the question then inevitably arises: how much can the Church's traditional structures still offer? As a worker-priest, I have been extensively involved in parish life and ministry, in addition to experiencing chaplaincy in my own professional context of secondary education (Caperon 2015). From this dual perspective, I aim in this chapter to explore what the institutional Church needs to treasure from its parochial inheritance, and what it must learn from chaplaincy if its understanding of ministry is to be appropriate to the present age. My focus is explicitly on chaplaincy as a genre of ordained Christian ministry.

Parish and vicar: resonant traditional institutions

The parish system is indelibly imprinted on the English landscape. The church towers and spires visible from motorways and railway lines speak of a whole pattern of inherited tradition whose influence has shaped our communities and culture. However far the much-debated process of secularisation may now have reached, it remains hard to imagine 'England' and English culture without the parish church and the vicar.

The role of 'vicar' still resonates in English popular culture. And while this may be particularly true in rural settings, the common assumption still seems to be that 'the vicar' is a person (a 'parson') who has a recognised, respected place within the local community. He or she is someone whose religious and spiritual role retains validity, who is evidently committed to the welfare of others and to the support of community life, as well as to the institution of the Church. Even nationally reported clerical sexual abuse seems not to have damaged general perceptions of the role, just that of aberrant, individual officeholders. Recent media presentations of the vicar's role have been overwhelmingly favourable. Dawn French's rural

Vicar of Dibley is affectionately portrayed; Tom Hollander's down-to-earth Rev wavers in faith but is strongly committed to pastoral ministry in his East London parish; and the vicar-sleuth hero of ITV's *Grantchester* reveals real spiritual struggle as a key element in his encounters with crime.

The idea of 'parish' still resonates, too: a knowable community, a place of neighbours and friends of 'all sorts and conditions'. While this may carry an element of nostalgia for a vanished rural past, a sense of parish as the basis of community is locked into our political system, with parish councils being the base level of (rural) local government. Nor is it that long since 'the parish' carried significant responsibilities within the social order, as an agency of social support, and as the context for licensing adult unions. The phrases 'on the parish' and 'of this parish' still have some currency, and whenever banns for a forthcoming wedding are called in a parish church the rooted structures of the past are implicitly invoked.

Institutions and significance

But what exactly do parish and vicar embody? A continuing affectionate, even cosy regard for 'the vicar' may not be the only resonance, for there are ambiguities in these traditional institutions from which, it is arguable, chaplaincy may be free. The pastoral-administrative terms 'diocese' and 'parish' are traceable back to the administration of the later Roman Empire, when the Church, freed from persecution, quite naturally adopted imperial terminology and structures. Similarly, the roles of bishop and priest were in part shaped by imperial magistracy (MacCulloch 2009, pp.196–97). So, deep in the institutions of parish and vicar there lie suggestions not just of pastoral care and oversight, but also of rule and governance.

The 'cure of souls' traditionally shared by the bishop with his 'curates' or parish priests may sound as if pastoral care

or 'cure' is the core significance of being a vicar, but hints of power and rule are never far away: the Church of England still employs the term 'interregnum' when one vicar has left and another is to be inducted. At one level, vicars offer care, but at another, they rule. These hints of power carried real force until quite recently; the nineteenth-century clerical magistrate was a common feature of the civil order, handing out legal punishment to local malefactors. Though the current Ordinal describes the calling of priests as being 'servants and shepherds among the people to whom they are sent', common usage refers to a vicar 'running a parish', suggesting the exercise of managerial – if not magisterial – authority.

And somewhere in the notion of the parish lies the idea of a place not just of known relationships and community, but also of a limited and limiting locality. There may be regular reported instances of village communities coming together to resist change, with protest meetings held in the parish church against proposed new housing developments or mineral exploitation: the parish can still be an active community. But the common use of the word 'parochial', meaning 'of limited vision', 'domestic', even 'petty', tells a story: in reality, a parish may be a place of enclosed and limited opportunity. If once the parish was the place of security, its bounds regularly beaten to demonstrate the extent of the known community, those boundaries are now largely invisible and disregarded, except by the Church, for whom they still mark the limits of a vicar's authority. So the idea of parish as a mixed community bound together by place, residence and common interest is more nostalgic ideal than current reality. It scarcely needs adding that freedom from the authority role of vicar and from the limitations of parish may for some be a real attraction to the ministerial sphere of chaplaincy.

Church and community

The Church of England still draws on this nostalgic ideal in its website strapline: ‘A Christian presence in every community.’ The Church’s care, this suggests, still covers the whole nation, despite what national church attendance statistics may suggest. There is a church in every parish, and wherever you are in England, you are within the sphere of the Church’s ministry. The Church of England, it seems to say, is for everyone, everywhere; it is a national, territorial church and embraces all within its parishes who will accept its ministry. This ongoing territorial commitment is evident; but the website avoids the word ‘parish’ – aware perhaps of the negative implications of the term – and the use of ‘community’ instead is interesting.

‘Community’ has a complex and shifting meaning. It can carry the general sense of ‘society’; and more specifically ‘a body of people organised into a particular group’. It has also conveyed the idea of shared living and common ownership, as in a religious community; and by the late nineteenth century it had been extended to cover the idea of a specific religious or racial group, as in ‘the Jewish community’. Ideas of locality, common identity and shared interest are all included in current usage: ‘community’ conveys a positive sense of involvement and identity, as in ‘the local community’; and usage such as ‘the LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex) community’ both identifies a specific interest group and also helps convey a sense of belonging for its members. ‘Community’ can therefore suggest not only locality, but also associational identity.

So although the obvious intended meaning of the Church of England’s website strapline refers to *local* community, it carries a wider implication. For ‘community’ is not just about locality – it is also about association, identity, membership and group belonging. It seems clear that the Church of England wants to identify itself publicly as a church of locality, of territory. But the reality is that the ‘communities’ of England

are both local and associational; formed both by locality and by all the other social factors – shared interests and activities – that bring people together. But does the Church's self-understanding sufficiently incorporate a vision encompassing not just geographical locality but also the whole of society in all its diverse associations and networks?

Debating the Church's mission and ministry

How the Church understands and envisions its mission and ministry is a core question, and one that has been vigorously debated since the beginning of this century. Traditional assumptions about parish and vicar were first challenged in *Mission-Shaped Church* (Cray 2004). Identifying the changing context of the 'networked' twenty-first century and the 'postmodern era' as major challenges to the Church of England's traditional pattern of a parish ministry rooted in place, this report argued that a truly 'mission-shaped church' would look to 'fresh expressions' of church, to 'new ways of being church' in the networks and communities of society, to 'church plants' rather than to traditional parish structures. Seeing the static, territorial model of church as outdated, *Mission-Shaped Church* in effect proposed its replacement by a dynamic model in which new churches and church plants would be centres of evangelism and growth. To one critic, however, this was more about 'church-shaped mission' than 'mission-shaped church' (Hull 2006), the emphasis being still on 'churches' rather than on the wider society which the Church is called to serve.

The Future of the Parish System (Croft 2006) offered a conservative and stabilising response to the challenge of *Mission-Shaped Church*. One key contributor to the volume, the then archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, presented a positive picture of what the traditional parish model of ministry could still provide. He envisaged 'a group of worshippers within every 'natural' community in

a country, trying to let that community know what kind of God it worships and what, as a result, is possible for human beings' (Williams 2006, p.53). Affirming this outward-looking vision rooted in the traditional pattern, Williams suggested that 'parochial presence' was the embodiment of its vocation of service to the whole community.

The idea that parochial ministry represented the Church's time-honoured commitment to society, expressed in the continuing presence of the parish church and vicar, was further explored by Martyn Percy. Arguing that 'it would be premature to sound the death-knell for the parish church', he pointed to the importance of 'maintaining religion as something that is public, accessible and extensive, while also being distinct, intensive and mysterious'. Percy argued that '... in the complex, porous and ambiguous spaces of our future, the Church will need to find its places in society once again, if it is to continue to offer a religion that is public, performative and pastoral'. The central issue was 'ensuring that ministries engage with people' (Percy 2006, pp.12–15), and the prime locus of this engagement would remain the parish, the locality. What is fascinating about both these contributions is that without mentioning chaplaincy, they drew on two concepts central to its theology: presence and engagement.

The most outspoken reassertion of the parish model of mission and ministry, presented as a riposte to 'fresh expressions' thinking, was *For the Parish* (Davison and Milbank 2010). Identifying what they saw as theological, ecclesiological and sociological shortcomings in *Mission-Shaped Church*, Davison and Milbank highlighted the importance of the 'practices and disciplines of the inherited church', defending the concept of the parish as a mixed, varied and socially comprehensive community and contrasting it with the 'special interest groups' which, they argued, 'fresh expressions of church' essentially were (Davison and Milbank 2010, p.vii). Their vigorously argued book dismissed *Mission-Shaped Church* as both superficial and over-reliant

on an evangelical theological perspective that failed to acknowledge the significance of Catholic tradition in the ongoing continuity of the 'inherited' Church.

What the different participants in this debate generally failed to acknowledge, though, was that varying models of church and ministry might reflect different social contexts. The most traditional of these – the rural village – was perhaps inevitably the one where a traditional pattern of ministry might seem most in place. Here, particularly in villages fortunate enough still to be places of work as well as retirement, locations for genuine social class interaction rather than being socially and economically monochrome, the church might still be the locus for community worship and the vicar still a friend to all – the Dibley world. In the urban, inner-city context, with the vicar being possibly the only professional person in a downtown, deprived parish – the world of 'Rev' – things were different. And they were different again in the prosperous suburbs, where 'successful' and growing churches, often evangelical and/or charismatic, were able to assemble an eclectic membership, drawn together by the vigorous social identity of 'church' and a strong sense of a shared gospel to be spread to others.

But what was most remarkable about the debate around ministry and mission was that it singularly failed to consider the place of chaplaincy as a genre of ministry, one which is both inevitably responsive to context and also rooted in pastoral presence. Key contributors had highlighted the need for the Church's ministry to be engaged with society, but none seemed to recognise that chaplaincy provided a paradigm in which engagement with the varying associational contexts of the social world was its very *raison d'être*. Chaplaincy and its distinctive ministry were the absent factors in the debate, which almost reduced to a battle between old and new, tradition and change, between proponents of a Catholic view of the continuing Church, and an energetic, evangelical impulse towards radical change.

The Church's developing agenda on ministry and mission

The debate about ministry and mission emerged at the end of the first decade of the century as a key policy issue for the Church of England's General Synod. In a context of still declining attendance figures and reduced numbers of ordinands, *Challenges for the New Quinquennium* (House of Bishops 2011), took a serious look at the nature of the Church's ministry and mission, concluding with a firm recommitment to the traditional, territorial view. 'The Church of England's vocation is to provide a worshipping and serving Christian presence in every community in the country', it stated. What was emphasised, despite a wider awareness of the networked, associational nature of the new century's society, was community as *locality*: 'the Church's vocation of being present in every part of the land', 'its rootedness at local level'.

Behind this renewed focus on the traditional structures of parochial ministry lay three principles outlined by Archbishop Rowan Williams in his Presidential address to the General Synod in November 2010:

- To take forward the spiritual and numerical growth of the Church of England – including the growth of its capacity to serve the whole community of this country.
- To reshape or reimagine the Church's ministry for the century coming, so as to make sure that there is a growing and sustainable Christian witness in every local community.
- To focus our resources where there is both greatest need and greatest opportunity.

However, these importantly prioritised principles have since then undergone significant modification as they have morphed into official Church policy. Originally, the Williams principles of 2010 balanced a continuing commitment to

providing ministry – service – to the ‘whole community of this country’ with a commitment to seek spiritual and numerical growth in the Church itself. First re-emerging as ‘quinquennial goals’, then evolving further under the ‘Renewal and Reform’ (earlier, ‘Reform and Renewal’) programme inaugurated by the archbishops in 2015, the order and wording have further changed, bringing a greater emphasis on ‘mission and the growth of the church’, and a prioritisation of ‘numerical’ over ‘spiritual’ growth (see Spencer 2015).

Reconceiving ministry and mission

This significant shift of emphasis has meant a profound change in the Church’s public agenda, almost a total reconceiving of the concepts of ministry and mission. Instead of an emphasis on serving the whole community in each locality, ‘Renewal and Reform’ (Church of England 2016) now advocates talk of the Church having a ‘missionary agenda’; of the ‘need to do mission very urgently’; of the key task for the Church being ‘the re-evangelisation of England’; of the priority to ‘re-structure in order to evangelise the country’. It is as if ‘mission’ has been reconceived as the narrower concept ‘evangelisation’; as if ‘ministry’ is being understood as ‘making disciples’; the service of ‘the whole community of the country’ being seen as secondary to a focus on boosting the numbers of the gathered church community. Prompted by the demographic decline of the Church of England nationally, it has been argued, numerical growth to ensure survival may now be the national Church’s main motivational impulse (Percy 2016).

This has involved a subtle but profound shift in the meaning of the term ‘church’. Whereas traditionally ‘local church’ would have meant ‘local church building’, it seems now rather to designate the identifiable ‘church community’ – those who regularly meet for worship in the church building. This indicates a shift from the Church of England’s traditional

'societal' ecclesiological model, where all those living in the parish are assumed to be stakeholders in the parish church, to a denominational model in which 'membership' is ascribed to those who actually opt in by attending and contributing to the costs of the church and the parish ministry. This shift from a parochial model to one of the 'gathered congregation' implies that the church community's prime function is to draw others into membership through evangelistic outreach. Thus the local church grows numerically, also thereby increasing financial giving to the Church and providing the resource to maintain the Church's diocesan and managerial structures.

This shift in perspective also involves a marked change in the understanding of what 'ministry' itself consists of. In the societal view, a minister's task is to serve the whole community, seeking out and supporting those in any kind of need within the parish. And if there is still, as I suggested earlier, a degree of affectionate recognition of the role of vicar, this is probably largely to do with the way in which in popular memory that role has been exercised. In the denominational view, however, a minister is reconceived as leader and manager of the church community. No longer is his or her prime concern with the people of the whole parish, but rather with the people in 'his' or 'her' church. For them, he is the source of teaching and advice, the one who 'disciples' them, and whose task is to lead the strategy and resourcing of the gathered church congregation in its mission and evangelisation, designed to bring 'outsiders' in to the church community.

To summarise: we are currently seeing a significant reimagining of mission and ministry, with mission becoming first of all about numerical growth and ministry becoming first of all about evangelisation. Alongside this, there has been a focus on recruiting more professional ministers to enable the Church to continue its traditional commitment to the parish and vicar, to 'a Christian presence in every community'. What has changed, though, is the assumed role

of the minister: once the servant of the whole community, she or he is now conceived as the leader of a minority church group within that community.

Ministry and mission in missiological understanding

All this suggests an insufficient engagement by the Church with the theology of mission. Contemporary missiological thinking emphasises that mission is the mission of God, the *missio Dei*, rather than the perceived 'mission' or project of any one church. And this divine mission is about far more than just increasing the numbers of those who attend church. Instead it has to be understood as a divine movement impelling the world towards the Kingdom of God, with the Church being called to collaborate in that mission. This missiological outlook leads to an understanding of the grace of God as already present and active in the world, rather than introduced solely through the Church's activity: in the words of the Second Vatican Council's *Lumen gentium*: '[God] has generously poured out his divine goodness and does not cease to do so' (Abbott 1966, p.585). An Anglican version of this understanding is offered by Paul Avis, who declares that: '*Missio Dei* speaks of the overflowing of the love of God's being and nature into God's purposeful activity in the world' (Avis 2005, p.5). The prevenient reality of *missio Dei* means that '...Christians are not in the futile business of attempting to bring an absent Christ to an abandoned world. God is already ahead of us in mission' (Avis 2005, p.7).

This underlying theological stance points to the real task of the Church being to discern where God is at work in the world, 'already ahead of us in mission'; to celebrate and in the name of Christ to support and continue that work; and through its life of worship and service to bring to the world the good news of God's love and coming Kingdom. There is thus a 'missiological identity' between Christ and the

Church (Avis 2005, p.8), the Church replicating the mission and ministry of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. This theology of mission cannot easily accommodate a view of the Church which sees it as the sole dispenser of grace, the company into which people are drawn by evangelistic activity as a place of redemptive safety from the world.

So, the current Church of England emphasis on evangelisation and church growth in the Renewal and Reform programme indicates that the Church has taken a view on mission which is substantially thinner than that of mainstream missiology. Focusing on a single aspect of the Church's calling – the call to evangelisation rooted in the Great Commission of Matthew 28.18–20 – it has chosen to give lower priority to broader concepts of ministry as contributing to human flourishing, to 'life in all its fullness'. This classic Anglican stance sees ministry in terms of pastoral care and service to the world; and in this tradition, the mission of the Church is 'executed through the ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care' (Avis 2003, p.200). Ministry is to be modelled on the example of the Jesus of the Gospels, the teacher and healer, the Incarnate Son. In contrast, evangelistically focused approaches have arguably drawn the inspiration for their understanding of mission from the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters of St Paul. As so often in theological debate, this is a hermeneutical issue about which parts of the Scriptures are given greatest emphasis.

It is as if the Church of England has been panicked into adopting a missionary agenda by grim church attendance figures and wider attitudinal research portending terminal institutional decline. It is clear that the Church has less claimed adherence in England than in the past two centuries, that adherence is reducing by generation, and that the rate of actual parish church attendance is tiny by comparison with the peak figures of the 1950s. Further, the numbers of those claiming 'no religion' are rising alarmingly. But the simple secularisation thesis – that society becomes less

religious all the time – looks less and less convincing in the light of the vibrancy of black Pentecostal churches and the burgeoning social and religious significance of Islam among immigrant communities, not to mention the existence of implicit or vicarious religion (see Bailey 1998). Evidence for the persistence of at least some varieties of religion is strong.

In all these circumstances, it is perfectly possible to understand why the Church is urgently looking to church growth as a key priority. What has been neglected, however, is a more reflective consideration in the light of core missiological understanding of what mission and ministry actually are, and what the Church's vocation actually is. Similarly missing is any substantial consideration of the potential of the specific genre of ministry that is chaplaincy. But chaplaincy's inherent engagement with the structures of society, its location within the varying associational communities of the land, offers a paradigm for ministry and mission that is arguably far richer than the reduced, narrow vision of 'church growth'.

Chaplaincy as a historic form of ministry

What in fact has been quite extraordinary throughout the recent Anglican debate about mission and ministry is the complete absence of any serious consideration of the place of chaplaincy in the Church's ministry in the twenty-first century. Despite the long history of chaplaincy as a specific genre of ministry alongside but distinct from the parochial ministry of the Church, it has had scarcely a mention. But the long and distinctive history of chaplaincy is plain. Karl Rahner, reflecting on the 'passing of the local community' in *Mission and Grace* (Rahner 1963), argues against the widespread assumption – one at the core of the Church of England's current self-understanding – that the Church's activity has always been rooted in territoriality:

...the Church's mission has never simply moved between the local community and the local parish as its beginning and its end...besides the territorial basis there have always been other sociological facts forming the natural foundation for Christian communities. (Rahner 1963, p.58)

Rahner's realisation is that 'other sociological facts' are, and always have been, as significant as locality. And in the present century the parish, once the locus of birth, life and death, no longer shapes our whole existence. Instead, we experience a myriad of associational connections for all kinds of purposes: for work, health, leisure, wellbeing and so on. And while chaplaincy may have originated in locality – in the care of chapels built to preserve relics of St Martin (MacCulloch 2009, p.313) – as a distinctive genre of ministry, it has, since its origins, been in a state of continuing and socially permeating development. Providing ministerial pastoral care and spiritual support within the varying networks and 'natural communities' of society, chaplaincy has embedded itself in changing and varying social contexts, offering a specific kind of ministry: 'ministry where people are' (Westcott House 2013).

The distinctive nature of chaplaincy

But chaplaincy's 'ministry where people are' has been theologically under-explored and under-resourced, with only a handful of theologians offering illuminating insights into chaplaincy's distinctive nature as a genre of ministry. The practical theologian Paul Ballard is one (see also Chapter 5). Ballard notes the 'dispersed' nature of contemporary life, in which 'we move from one sphere to another', and he importantly sees chaplaincy – located in many associational contexts – not as 'an aberration of ministry but an attempt to express the relevance of the gospel to every facet of life'. The chaplaincy model of ministry, he argues, 'is characterised precisely by entering into and working with social structures'

(Ballard 2009, pp.19–20). There is even a case for saying that contemporary chaplaincy echoes in some key respects the early intentions and practices of the parochial system. A vicar represented the Church's ministry and care throughout the locality where people lived, worked and died, interpenetrating its varied social strands and networks. Today, says Ballard, chaplaincy's context is precisely within the varied structures and dispersed communities of the world; whereas the parish priest, situated within the limitations of the local community, he suggests, now operates mainly in, with and for the structures of the Church. This is precisely what gives chaplaincy its sharp distinctiveness as a genre of ministry: its situation within the structures of the wider society, whether hospital, prison, regiment, school, university, shopping centre, football club or other societal context.

The primary reason for a chaplain's being in any context is for him or her to be a 'Christian presence' within that (associational rather than local) community, suggests Ballard. While sharing the life of that community, the chaplain points beyond it, having a core loyalty to the person of Christ and to the values and teaching of the Church, which he or she seeks to relate and apply to the life of the community. And this is a missional vocation, rather than a simply evangelistic one; it isn't first and foremost about increasing the numbers of confessing Christians. Instead of seeking to gather a 'church' from within the working context, the chaplain is called to witness to Christ as the truth of God in the world. It is also a prophetic ministry, in which the chaplain is called to shed meaning and light and to be 'a positive presence, representing the possibility of hope and change'. Like those they work among, chaplains are caught up in the tension of the 'now' and 'not yet' of the Kingdom of God, the missional task being to discern what makes for the coming of the Kingdom for which we pray, and to work alongside others for its coming (Ballard 2009, pp.21–23).

The chaplain can also be seen as an interpreter, one who seeks to negotiate between the worldview of the ministerial context, its values and assumptions, and the spiritual vision of the Church. Community theologian Ann Morisy has explored this intermediary, interpretive role of chaplaincy and suggests that chaplains can 'open the conversation of Spirit' with those beyond the Church who do not share its spiritual awareness and who do not have access to the 'symbolic understandings' that link us to the transcendent. So the chaplain 'develop[s] the skill of code-switching'; that is, shifting between the language and symbolism of faith and that of every day. The chaplain 'works at the level of the imagination', to help people see beyond the routine and discover that 'within our ordinary experiences there are rumours of angels and traces of ultimacy' (Morisy 2006, p.153). This is a ministry of awakening, helping people become aware of the spiritual dimension and of the possibility of God.

As an interpreter of life's experiences, awakening others to the spiritual, the chaplain's role – whether or not he or she is ordained – is essentially and definitively priestly, helping bridge the gap between earth and heaven, using imagination and sensitivity to work alongside and with others.

Embodying a spiritual vision, the chaplain is involved in the process of 're-enchanting' people's view of the world, helping them explore their sense of there being more to life than meets the eye, helping them interpret their own experiences in the light of the spiritual. Chaplaincy is about 'being priest for the everyday...representing, and occasionally speaking about, God's alonsideness in relation to daily life – whether the moment is filled with delight, stress or struggle' (Morisy 2006, p.129). It is this sense of being alongside people in the midst of their daily lives, sharing both their working context and the issues they face, that chaplains relish: seeking and finding Christ in the everyday, the Christ who calls us all to live in the light of the coming Kingdom.

Chaplaincy – locating the Church in the midst of society

This vision of chaplaincy is one which places it – and thus the Church which chaplains represent – in the very midst of society, rather than at its margins. I noted earlier Martyn Percy's view that 'ministries must engage with people', and – writing of a parish church – that a church 'must find a community and locate itself within it' (see p.125). It is essential to the nature of ministry both that it engages with people, and that it finds that engagement within the community in which it is located. Once we begin to see 'community' as a concept that may include but certainly extends beyond locality, it is clear that 'a Christian presence in every community' is a vision for the Church of England that can simply no longer be achieved solely on the basis of locality or of parochial ministry.

Rather, the Church now needs a vision that sees ministry extending throughout the complex range of interlocking, associational communities that form the wider community of the nation: all of these come under the heading of 'every natural community', which former Archbishop Rowan Williams sees as the proper sphere of ministry. If the Church's ministry is set within the midst of the community – the nation – in this sense, genuinely engaging with the national community about its concerns and aspirations, then there is a real chance of opening up for the wider society a vision of the Christ of every day. Public theology – the direct engagement with public and community issues from the Church's standpoint – becomes a priority, and chaplains are, as Ballard suggests, 'pivotal public theologians'. And it is in the varying and widespread contexts of chaplaincy – as well as in the traditional location of the parish – that the Church needs to be 'finding its places in society again' (Percy 2006, p.15).

The realisation that complex, modern societies comprise a web of interconnected and overlapping 'communities' of place, activity and interest is one that prompts us to have a vision

of ministry broader than that offered by the impulse behind *Mission-Shaped Church* and its subsequent re-emergence in the 'Renewal and Reform' agenda. 'Inherited church', perceived as the dead hand of traditionalism by more radical voices, has in fact ensured the preservation and continuity of Christian presence, worship and ministry, and to dismiss it is to be in danger of abandoning the distinctive way in which the Christian faith has been shared and perpetuated in the context of English history and culture. To this extent, the inheritance of traditional structures – including the institutional forms of parish, church and vicar – is one that, as the authors of *For the Parish* insist, could be jettisoned only with dire consequences for the future of Christian faith in England.

The unexplored potential of worker-priest ministry

But there are further dimensions beyond those of parochial and chaplaincy ministry. A truly comprehensive vision for ministry in the Church of England of the future would not only encompass a continuing (if reduced) 'traditional' parish ministry alongside a developing variety of authorised chaplaincies, but also recognise the special nature and contribution of worker-priest ministry. Originating in a French Catholic movement of the 1950s, and beginning in the Southwark diocese in the early 1960s, worker-priest ministry has gone under a number of titles: auxiliary pastoral ministry (APM), non-stipendiary ministry (NSM), self-supporting ministry (SSM) and ministry in secular employment (MSE). The very variety of nomenclature expresses tellingly the Church's uncertainty about the nature and purpose of this ministry, and its potential remains severely undeveloped.

But worker-priest ministry, despite the Church's uncertainty, is in its essential conceptual nature close to

chaplaincy: the associational community of the workplace is the sphere of mission and ministry, the worker-priest representing the Church in an officially recognised capacity. However, instead of being conceived in this way, worker-priest ministry has generally and reductively been seen as a usefully cost-free way of providing additional support to parish ministry, so that worker-priests have been deployed as parish curates, juniors in a hierarchical system of ordained parochial ministry, whose own ministerial and pastoral outreach in the workplace has been overlooked – much as chaplaincy has tended to be overlooked in a focus on the traditional Church and its pre-occupation with parish.

Worker-priest ministry has, again like chaplaincy, been seen as ‘on the margins’: a deeply ambiguous position. Chaplains speak of the rewards of liminality – being at the very edge of the Church and thus in a place of interaction with the wider world. And yet, liminality may mean being marginalised by the Church, as Steven Croft (2013) has recognised. Highlighting the key characteristics of worker-priest ministry as ‘generosity, humility, liminality’, he spoke in a sermon marking the 50th anniversary of the first Southwark worker-priest ordinations of the difficulty of living ‘between two worlds’. Arguing that worker-priests should be properly supported by the traditional, structural institutions of bishops and dioceses, he talked about the importance of sustaining ‘this edgy and liminal pattern of priesthood which is so vital for God’s mission’.

Croft also noted the Church’s need to develop its patterns of ministry – its need to ensure that priests working in different ministries are equally valued, and the financial limitations which, realistically, have to govern future planning:

We will see the patterns continue to change and evolve in the next fifty years...more and more we will lose the distinction between priests who are stipendiary and priests who are self-supporting. I hope that all of us will learn to be generous, to be humble, to be liminal. I hope that we will grow a single

ministerial priesthood in which some of us, for some of our lives, receive financial support. (Croft 2013)

There is something singularly prophetic about this. But when we return to the current strategies of the Church of England at national level, we find little recognition, even, of the distinctive missional significance of chaplaincy, and even less of the potential of worker-priest ministry. So what pattern for the future might we envisage?

Engaging with society: in and beyond traditional structures

The English landscape speaks of the Christian past of the nation, and the institutions of parish and vicar retain resonance. 'Inherited church' is where we have come from, because Christian faith is continuous through history, a 'chain of memory' (Hervieu-Léger 2000) whose identity is perpetuated through all its acts of worship and commemoration, but most centrally through the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. The nation's churches – the places where these sacraments have been celebrated and where people have gathered over the ages to pray – remain a hugely significant part of the national inheritance of faith, even though the cost of maintenance may be unduly oppressive for small congregations in an age when active Christian affiliation is so slender. Inheritance is both gift and responsibility, cause for both gratitude and care. So, given the reality that 'communities' are geographical *and* associational, and that the parish is no longer the sole place where lives are located, the strategic challenge for the Church is to find the best way of maintaining the core of its parish-based ministry while actively developing its chaplaincy and worker-priest ministries within the networks and associations of wider society.

There are some hopeful signs that ways are being found to rethink how we use the inheritance of church buildings:

diversifying the functions of the local church building; developing the facility it offers; opening it up for more community use; designating 'festival' churches for occasional use only; taking out of use buildings that are no longer needed and conserving them as part of the national cultural heritage. Already some 350 church buildings have been handed into the care of The Churches Conservation Trust. Equally, there are hopeful signs that the traditional pattern of parochial ministry is being creatively adapted to provide a more flexible model responsive to new need and opportunity – though the complexities of some proffered solutions to adapting the Church's legal framework for ministry are frankly mind-boggling (see Church Commissioners 2010).

And change can be slow in the Church. It was argued almost 20 years ago that despite an increasing awareness of the need to diversify patterns of ministry, there has been an equally constant tendency to revert to the simplicity of the traditional model, characterised in the statement: 'Foster more vocations and grow congregations in our parish churches' (Williams 1998). The current 'Renewal and Reform' initiative could be heading in just this direction. An emphasis on seeking more vocations to professional parochial ministry and more church growth suggests that when thinking about ministry, the Church is unable to see or think outside the 'traditional structures' box, but this is understandable, since parish and vicar and church are what we have inherited.

What I am arguing here is that we should continue to honour the inherited parish ministry of locality, though accepting its limited reach into contemporary society. Hence, parochial ministry in the future should be on a necessarily reduced basis. 'A priest in every parish' has always been an unreachable ambition, and even 'a priest in every benefice' now looks unsustainable. The aim might be, therefore, 'a professional priest in every locality', where the definition of 'locality' will vary widely from town to city to suburb to country. One fruitful way of institutionalising this kind of approach is to look at the potential of the 'minster model' of

ministry, where a single church in an area is designated as the resource centre for local mission and ministry. But part of this honouring of locality should be the understanding that the ministry of a paid, professional priest must be complemented by the ministry of others – of locally living worker-priests and chaplains, of lay ministers – who share an understanding of ministry as being by its nature essentially collaborative and diverse. But as well as honouring the traditional structures through which we have inherited the Church, its gospel and ministry, and recognising the continuing significance of local communities, we must first recognise and then act on the realisation that ‘community’ is not solely about locality, but also about association.

And it is in the associational communities of our society, those that make up the daily reality of life for most people in workplace, leisure centre, shopping mall and school, that there is the greatest opportunity for the Church’s ministers and laypeople to engage with others as representatives of Christ and his Church. The varied ministries of chaplaincies – both the traditional ‘institutional’ chaplaincies of the health and prison services and of the armed forces, universities and schools, and the newer chaplaincies rooted in other associational communities (Slater 2015) – are, like worker-priests, at the very interface of Church and society. If we truly have a vision of mission that is broader and more profound than a focus on growth in numbers, and if we have a sense of the ‘now and not yet’ of the Kingdom of God, then we shall realise that chaplaincy and the work of priests in the workplace not only provide challenging paradigms for all ministry, but are where we need to see the frontier of the mission of the Church in this century.

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