

## CAN CHANGE BE MADE TO LAST?

In her exciting paper with this issue of DX, Beren Hartless offers a vision for a Local Shared Ministry that is fit for the 21st century. In it she speaks of the need for a culture shift. A genuine culture shift is irreversible; it represents a clear 'moving on' from the past. Beren, in her paper, identifies several reasons why this will not be easy. People can too readily claim they support changes whilst actually working to preserve the status quo. 'Collaborative ministry' has been promoted for more than a generation; but it appears that the associated culture change has not yet happened:

**Bishops** still often hanker after having a Local Ordained Minister in every parish – implying that local laity are unable or unwilling to be the People of God in that place.

**Clergy**, feeling keenly their responsibility for the 'cure of souls', frequently drop subconsciously into a 19th century paternalism – effectively seeking to control a wilful and ill-informed laity to keep them on the straight and narrow.

**Busy lay people** frequently collude with this patronising attitude – because it's easier just to do what the Vicar tells them! Those who resist either leave the Church, or else they collude in a different way – by seeking ordination!

Good stories can be told where this debilitating culture of dependency has been broken. The irreversible shift, however, has not happened. If it is to happen now, three factors must be in place:

1. **Dioceses must remain committed over several decades to the disciplines and structures that support Local Shared Ministry.** Only this will ensure that Local Ministry Teams are renewed and that sharing ministry becomes the habitual lifestyle for both laity and clergy. This long term commitment is undermined when dioceses attempt to manage God's mission through successive high profile initiatives - including currently Pioneer Ministry, which can easily be anything but 'collaborative'.

2. **A new conversation is needed between bishops, clergy and laity about 'the cure of souls.'** A genuinely priestly ministry is about fostering people's spiritual well-being and enabling people, through their relationships and at their own pace, to find and grow their new life in Christ. In the past this was done by the parson in a settled village community. Today, most clergy are expected to do it while leading/managing a missionary congregation – where the laity 'collaborates' only by supporting the Vicar's or the diocesan strategy. Local Shared Ministry suggests a third way, provided clergy can face the implications.

3. **Lay people** who have enjoyed the challenges and fulfilment of shared ministry must not let it wither away – whether through neglect or by other priorities imposed from elsewhere. If this vital and renewing culture shift is to happen, lay people must set the pace.

John Cole

# Deanery Exchange

**Ideas for Deanery Bible Study** dominate this DRU mailing with both a normal Briefing on the subject and also an Extra Briefing for this mailing only, "Does the CofE Really Value the Bible?" adapted with permission from two articles by Very Revd David L Edwards in the Church Times in November 2008 and July 2009. David suggests that Deaneries come together for a Eucharist with extended Bible Study on four Sundays a year, around Advent, Lent, Trinity and the Autumn. The idea has been put to the House of Bishops but they have not yet found time to discuss it. David Edwards is now 86 and lives in a home for 'definitely retired clergy' - he described his protest at the initial lack of interest as his 'last act as a gadfly'

The Briefing "Ideas for Celebrating the Ministry of All" describes a planned series of Bible Studies, culminating in a full day celebration in Spring 2010 in the Milton and Blandford Deanery (Salisbury Diocese). Two copies of both this Briefing and the Extra Briefing have been included in the mailing, so if you want to see either or both of them contact your Rural/Area Dean, the Lay Chair or whoever receives the mailing in your deanery, or for your own copy or copies send £1 for each one required to the P&P address in the box on page 3.

**Harvest Resources.** Amongst Harvest resource materials available, USPG invite us to 'take a journey down the Amazon' (booklet from 020 7378 5678 or online at [www.uspg.org.uk](http://www.uspg.org.uk)). For appropriate material from the Arthur Rank Centre

go to [www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/publications](http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/publications).

**Three Score Years - And Then ?** This is the intriguing title being used by Stafford Deanery for a day conference to respond to and learn from older people.

**Booklets and Briefings.** Beginning with this mailing, we are sending two copies of each Booklet and Briefing, and we hope this will encourage a greater circulation of them amongst the officers and members in your deanery. The annual subscription, even with these extras, is being held at £12 ( including 50 copies of DX ), or £20 for larger deaneries that need 100 copies of DX. To assist circulation, each booklet or briefing will now have on its inside cover a circulation box and list, which we hope will be used as an extra aid to wider circulation in the deanery. We list each mailing's enclosures in the box on page 3, so if you would like to see any of them, please contact whoever is the mailing contact in your deanery - alternatively extra copies can be obtained from the P&P address in that box ( £2 for Booklets, £1 for Briefings ). Once a year we also enclose an updated list of all the booklets and briefings that are still available, and we will happily send a complementary copy of the latest 2009/2010 list if you let us know using one of the contact details at foot of page 3.

**Some Valuable Ideas** for PCCs were expounded at a **ReSource** evening led by Martin Cavender for Deddington Deanery ( Oxford Diocese ). They included 1 ) Don't rush important decisions - ideally raise the issue at one meeting, discuss it at the next, and only decide at the third: 2 ) There are 7 stages of any new enterprise - Enthusiasm; Panic; Despair; Search for the Guilty; Punishment of the Innocent; Praise; and Honour for all participants: 3 ) Every PCC will have people who fit on each of the 6 rungs in the Decision-Making Ladder - Issue; Action Needed; Evaluation ( recognising different gifts ); Decision Making ( the impatient ); Implementation ( sometimes the quiet ones ); Monitoring ( making sure ideas are followed up ).

**Everybody Welcome** is the title of a new resource pack, published for parishes and aimed at making churches more welcoming. The Everybody Welcome materials, including leader's manual, training DVD and booklets for the congregation, are designed to help churches turn visitors into committed churchgoers. The material has been produced by Ven Bob Jackson, Archdeacon of Walsall, and George Fisher – Lichfield's director of Parish Mission. The course advises on social skills like making eye contact, smiling and remembering people's names, as well as training a welcome team to befriend newcomers, making services more attractive and the refreshments more palatable. Research indicates that 85 % of people visit a church every year, so more needs to be done to encourage them to come back. [www.religiousintelligence.com](http://www.religiousintelligence.com)

**The Bishop of Bolton**, Chris Edmondson, in a letter to the Church Times ( 24 July ) suggests that 'Encouraging parishes of different traditions from across a deanery to come together to engage in Bible study in the context of worship ( see Briefings and Editorial on page 1 ) could have a number of significant benefits. It would focus both clergy and lay members in a deanery on what our priorities should be rather than on the secondary issues that can sometimes dominate the agenda'.

**On Earth As It Is In Heaven** is a 32 page booklet on environmental decline from a Christian perspective, exploring Christianity's voice on creation through the ages, how the different elements of God's Creation are faring, the impact of specific sectors, and lastly our response : "Christianity was never intended to be a conventional path". The booklet is available for £2.50, including p&p, from Isobel Murdoch, Hopp House, Back Lane, Old Bolingbroke, Spilsby, Lincs., PE23 4EU ( Telephone 1790 763 603 ).

**Origin of Deans** ( continued from DX 63 ). In the Middle Ages Rural Deans were sometimes styled 'deans of Christianity', with a court empowered to handle moral, matrimonial and other cases. The office was eclipsed at the Reformation, when the Act of Submission of the Clergy ( 1532 ) abolished their authority, but in the 19th century bishops decided to revive the office, and in the contemporary Church they have a key role to play in encouraging collaborative ministries and reviewing a deanery's stewardship of resources ( Church Times, 23 May 2008 ).

**Eco-Advocates.** The Church in Society Group in Chichester Diocese has formed a partnership with local authorities in Sussex to form Eco-Faith which aims to help local churches of all denominations to develop their environmental responsibility. Each parish has been asked to appoint an Eco-Advocate and the Eco-Faith network exists to offer training, seminars and direct support. It is hoped to form deanery Eco-faith groups in order that joint activities may be undertaken and mutual support offered. Topics addressed in the Eco-Faith resource pack include Climate Change, Energy, Affordable Warmth, Waste Reduction, Food and Water Conservation - for more details see website [www.ecofaith.co.uk](http://www.ecofaith.co.uk)

Allerton Deanery ( Ripon & Leeds ) endorsed the diocesan policy of "commitment to the fifth Mark of Mission, which calls us to 'strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the Earth' ", and agreed that the issue should be tabled twice a year in synod to report and consider what progress had been made by parishes in the deanery.

**Street Pastors in Devon** ( see item in DX63 ). It is reported that Street Pastors in

Devon have been responsible for 'very impressive reductions' in crime over a six-month period, according to Devon and Cornwall police. Violent crime, burglaries and car thefts are all down by about one quarter.

**Rural Deans as Suffragan Bishops ?** In a letter in the Church Times ( 12 June ) it was suggested that all rural deans should be suffragan bishops, and suffragan bishops rural deans, all running parishes. "This would put them in much closer touch with the parishes, and ease the shortage of parochial clergy". The writer, Revd Philip Brownless, suggested that a well-run deanery is a splendid unit in which to get things happening. Amen to that sentiment !!

**Mailing enclosures with this issue**  
**BOOKLET** *Sharing Local Ministry*

by Beren Hartless

**BRIEFINGS**

*Ideas for Celebrating the Ministry of All and*

*Does the C of E Really Value the Bible?*

If you would like to see these ask your rural/area dean or synod sec. To order for yourself please contact:

**PARISH & PEOPLE** The Old Mill,  
Spetisbury BLANDFORD DT11 9DF  
Tel - 01258 453939

**e-mail** [PandPeople@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:PandPeople@tiscali.co.uk)  
**web -** [www.parishandpeople.org.uk](http://www.parishandpeople.org.uk)

**EDITORIAL MATERIAL should be sent to Peter J Bates**, Carselands,  
Woodmancote, Henfield, BN5 9SS  
Tel & Fax on 01273 493172  
email [peter@bateshouse.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:peter@bateshouse.freeserve.co.uk)

*Please feel free to copy anything from DX and other P&P publications - an acknowledgement would be appreciated.*