Faith, Work and Economic Life

This paper is offered in response to part (d)(ii) of the General Synod motion from the July 2008 Group of Sessions, below:

'That this Synod:

- (a) affirm daily work be it paid or unpaid as essentially a spiritual activity;
- (b) recognise the importance of Christian values within economic life;
- (c) encourage bishops and clergy to give greater priority to equipping and resourcing church members through teaching, prayer, affirmation and celebration, to fulfil their vocations, ministries and mission in their places of work; and
- (d) request the Mission and Public Affairs Council to:
 - (i) convene a symposium on a theological understanding of work for today as outlined in sections 5.3–5.4 of GS Misc 890B; and
 - (ii) compile a collection of supportive resource materials for church members as outlined in section 5.5 of GS Misc 890B.

These resources to encourage and equip church members are described in line with section (c) of the motion, offering materials under the three headings of teaching, prayer, and affirmation and celebration.

I. Resources for Teaching

There are two ways most frequently used to introduce teaching related to faith and work into a parish teaching programme. Firstly, the careful selection of relevant sermon illustrations and stories enables people to reflect on the relationship of faith and work. And secondly, small study groups on the topic are frequently arranged to encourage individuals to engage with the issue.

Some preachers, such as Readers or non-stipendiary clergy, may have the experience of their own daily work context to draw on for sermon illustrations. Clergy who have less experience of contexts outside the church have to ensure they have ways of building this awareness, and may need to consciously seek out situations of work and economic life on which to reflect theologically. Clergy can approach this task in a variety of ways - for example, visits to working environments within the parish, shadowing or visiting some parishioners in their place of work, or intentional discussion with parishioners.

Short group study courses give an opportunity for people to draw on their own individual experiences in daily life. Some material offers opportunities to recognise a

range of activity in the world - those who are retired, unemployed or home makers also need to reflect on their activity along with those in paid employment. Other material can also be valuable for those with experiences in particular areas, to discuss issues of particular relevance in more depth.

Many courses on faith and work issues have been produced at different times by dioceses, churches and organisations. Most have been for local circulation or had limited print runs, and are now not available. Those listed below are all available at time of writing.

It has been observed that courses work best in parishes where faith and work issues are constantly referred to within the ongoing life of the church. Where this does not happen, it seems that participants can quickly conclude this is a topic they have "done", rather than see their involvement in the work context as an ongoing part of discipleship. They may then tend to look for alternative study topics.

• A priest from the Black Country describes a series set up locally to engage faith and work issues: "We decided that Lent would be a great opportunity to engage with the issues of 'Living Faithfully in a Consuming World'.

And so it was that a small group of Black Country Anglicans was joined by friends, young and old, from other traditions and other places, to tackle issues from 'employment and unemployment in a consumer society' to 'shopping addiction and the fantasy of happiness', to 'destitution and domination in the capitalist empire'. Passionate and experienced practitioners included a parish priest from Hockley Heath, a Methodist tutor from the Queen's Foundation, a co-director of the Ekklesia think-tank, the coordinator of the Churches Industrial Group Birmingham, and a member of the Catholic Worker Farm. And together, we 'got our teeth into' the challenges of contemporary Christian discipleship, through bible study, theological reflection, prayer and conversation."

• An evangelical church in a residential area of London describes the way they are trying to build awareness of faith at work issues into the life of the church:

"We want to help our congregation relate their Christian faith to their wider lives. Our area has a demographic profile which includes an unusually high proportion of people in their 20s and 30s, and we have easy commuting links to central London, so we have many people in the congregation who are 'economically active' and working in a very wide range of occupations.

For the last couple of years we have run a 4 or 5 week sermon series on themes relating to 'God at Work'. At the same time we have offered our weekly home groups additional follow up discussion questions and exercises, so that the issues could be explored further and related to individual experience. During each series we also arranged an additional mid-week evening event: for one we invited an outside speaker (arranged through LICC). The other time we held a forum and panel, with 4 members of the congregation giving a brief introduction to their work, and how they see their Christian faith relates to what they do."

• A suburban church with a strong culture of encouraging its members to be part of "house group: "Our church bought some resources and encouraged our house groups to use these during the term before our Parish away-day. Most groups chose to use 'Christian Life and Work' and found the DVD gave a good structure to the sessions without too much extra preparation (though bits of the DVD look dated and caused amusement as "a bit 20th century"). They found it got discussion going well, and a couple of groups said there were easily enough ideas raised to keep them going for longer than the 6 weeks.

We asked each group to prepare something on the theme to contribute to the Parish away-day. One produced a wall poster - using collage and Biblical texts. Another group had written some prayers. Several groups had members who shared thoughts about their own experience with all of us."

Group Study Materials

The group study materials listed are available currently (Jan 2011). All these have received some positive 'user comment', though potential users should note that approaches vary and some offer a much more introductory look at this topic than others.

<u>Supporting Christians at Work</u> - Hereford Diocese offers downloadable learning material, designed as a 4 session introductory course with learning activities, discussion topics, and some suggestions for practical planning that could be used in a parish.

http://www.hereford.anglican.org/churchwork/training/christians at work.aspx

Being a Disciple at Work - Peterborough Diocese offers a 3 session course designed for use in parishes. It is freely available to download and copy.

Resources include leaders' and participants' handouts, worship, Bible studies and practical exercises that can help people relate their Christian faith to their working life. The website also includes further links and reading suggestions. http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/workingdisciple.htm

<u>Christians in the Workplace</u> - a pack produced by Chelmsford diocese for those who want a searching level of engagement with this issue. The pack includes leaders' notes and resources, outline suggestions for different ways in which the material might be used, handouts for participants and a CD-Rom containing course material. For details and ordering information see: http://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/CITW.html

<u>Mind the Gap - connecting Faith and Work</u> - CPAS study pack by Richard Higginson, offering 5 Group sessions, with materials that include briefings, group

bible studies and discussion starters which introduce underlying theological concepts in an accessible way. To order see: http://www.cpas.org.uk/shop

God at Work - This course is designed as 6 sessions of I hour, based on Ken Costa's book of the same name. The intention is that ah hour long time-scale makes it possible to use it with a small work-based fellowship group as well as in a parish session. It does focus on 'work', rather than daily activity in general. To order see: http://godatwork.org.uk/course

Christian Life and Work - A small group video / DVD resource

The course package includes 2 DVDs (made in the 1990s) with accompanying booklet and material planned for 6 sessions. Some groups have found this easy to use without additional preparation, and a stimulus to discussion. To order see: http://www.christianlifeand.com/titles.php?id=1

God and Work - Study material produced by 'After Sunday'. For each of the 7 topics there are 2 downloads - a facilitator guide and a worksheet for group members. The material engages participants with some theoretical and theological concepts, and invites reflection on their own work experience. Downloadable: see http://www.aftersunday.org.uk/main-resources/god-and-work

Additional Material for Parish groups

Some current books that have been found useful for study or discussion purposes in some places. Many include 'user friendly' practical suggestions or ideas.

Grove Booklets: http://www.grovebooks.co.uk/

These 28 page explorations and theological reflections can also be used as discussion starters. The range of topics and include many on issues related to faith, work and economic life. New titles are published quarterly:

examples are:

Corporate Ethical Accounting: (How) Can Companies Tell the Truth? E 120 The Ethics of Executive Pay: A Christian Viewpoint E 159

A Christian Understanding of Daily Work P 57

Transforming Capitalism: Entrepreneurship and the Renewal of Thrift E 156

God at Work: Living every day with purpose Ken Costa, 2007, Continuum

Thank God it's Monday Mark Greene, 2001, Scripture Union

Organisations offering study material etc

Many organisations exist with interests in this area. The ones listed here offer some web-based resources that could be useful to parishes.

CABE - The Christian Association of Business Executives

The organisation aims to affirm Christians in leadership roles in the private, public and voluntary sectors in order to exercise influence through our life and work. The website includes a small resources section http://www.cabe-online.org/

Christians at Work

The material offered is primarily geared to workplace fellowship groups. However they suggest that Bible Study materials in the Resources section are "specifically written for workplace Christian Fellowship groups, but are also suitable for church house groups and individual use". See: http://www.christiansatwork.org.uk/cgi-bin/caw.cgi

ELCA

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) has a long history of involvement in supporting discipleship in everyday life and work. This includes a section on 'Ministry in Daily Life theology'. See: http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Vocation/Ministry-in-Daily-Life.aspx

Ridley Hall 'Faith in Business' project

The information on the website includes informative guides to further reading. See http://www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/fibresources.html

Transform Work UK

The organisation aims to support Christians in the workplace, and offers an extensive website. http://transformworkuk.org/

2. Resources for Prayer and Worship

It has often been suggested that the early Methodists learned their theology through the singing of hymns. In the same way, theological perspectives are absorbed by participation in worship and prayer. If the world of work is never mentioned in words used during public worship, people may without realising it develop a theology that sees work as unimportant to their faith.

Public prayers in church sometimes address only a limited range of concerns. The Book of Common Prayer was compiled at a time when society was agricultural, so our heritage includes BCP prayers and thanksgivings related to rain and fair weather for crops, but not for other economic activities that have developed during later centuries. Intercessions may also demonstrate selectivity in the issues that are prayed for. Certain work-related topics can recur frequently, while others rarely seem to feature. It has been noted in some churches that workers involved with education or health are often prayed for regularly, while less prayer may be offered for those working in commercial occupations or in service activities that are not identified as caring professions.

In order to develop a church culture and proclaim a theology that does not separate religious and secular issues, it is helpful at times for words used in public prayer and worship to reflect the integration of faith, work and economic life.

• A pattern of prayer organised by a rural multi-parish benefice:

The benefice has developed an annual prayer calendar. Each congregation contributes details from their parish area:
(a) The organisations or places members of the congregation are involved with in the course of their daily lives. These range from large multinational companies some are employed by, to small local charities where some people volunteer for a couple of hours a month.
(b) All the organisations and formal activities that take place within the parish. This includes places involved in production and retail activity, institutions and organisations, service activities and groups that meet regularly.

• A service held in a church with a strong liturgical tradition, and a socially diverse congregation:

The evening service once a month is led by a different group from the congregation. One Sunday the 'Faith and Work' group led a service, advertised as "SEND US OUT: prayer for the week ahead."

The service included carefully chosen hymns and bible passages - with a reflection based on the book of Daniel and Daniel's faithfulness to God when as a 'civil servant' he refused to bow down to the golden image. To introduce our prayer time, all those present were given a card and invited to draw the place where they would be the following day. We invited people to share these in groups of 3 and then briefly pray for each other. People then laid their cards on the altar, and we led prayer offering our time and work to God. The final reading was Jesus' call to his followers to be salt and light. Each person was

invited to take a nightlight - but rather than light it in church as usual these were for us to take away unlit to remind us it is elsewhere in the world we need to be 'light to the world'.

• An event at an inner city church with a multi-racial congregation:

One session at our parish day was a workshop on everyday prayer.

- Introduction: We looked at the images Jesus used in the parables he told, and how these were familiar in everyday life at the time.

- Prayer using everyday images: Everyone was given a handout of written prayers that use everyday objects as helpful images or metaphors. Several of these came from other countries.
- Discussion of which images were helpful: It was relatively easy for many to understand and pray with the Asian tailor who said to God "you are the needle and I am the thread", but harder to immediately identify with the one asking God to treat us like manioc roots (they need to be prepared carefully to get rid of poisonous juices before they are fit for purpose). This was followed by a time for small groups to think of current activities / images from our daily lives that could be meaningful in prayer (the car mechanic and the dry cleaner came up tops).
- Prayer for daily actions: We looked at some brief arrow prayers written by Chinese Christians for use when undertaking daily activities (e.g. when building a wall: "I pray thee Lord, to make my faith as firmly established as a house built upon a rock, so no flood or wind can ever destroy it"). Individuals wrote a list of actions they regularly performed as part of their work | daily activity, and invited to write prayers for some of these. (An example from our group was a prayer to use when turning on the computer: "Lord, as I become connected to the World Wide Web, help me also to be connected to your concern for your whole created world").
- From 'Prayers for the World of Work' (see below: reproduced with permission):
 A prayer for Market Research and Product Development

"God of love you have given us many gifts in the products and services we share with one another. We remember before you those whose work it is to identify human needs and to discover ways of enabling technology to meet those needs: we pray for market researchers and product designers. Guide their work, Lord, into ways that will bring upon our community good and not evil. Enable them to rise above the trivial and the transient, and to foster a market that brings true satisfaction to man"

Prayer Resources

While many suitable individual prayers have been written, the resources listed here offer collections that have been compiled with the specific intention of encouraging prayer related to the world of work.

Pocket Prayers for Work. Compiled by Mark Greene, 2004, CHP A pocket sized book, including some prayers that have been specially commissioned.

Power Lines: Celtic Prayers About Work, David Adam, 1992, Triangle This collection makes use of insights and patterns of the Celtic tradition, incorporating these into modern prayers about the concerns of work-whether paid or unpaid, in factory, office or home. A chapter of litanies offers material for congregational use.

Touching the Pulse: Worship and where we work, Bernard Braley (ed), 1996, Stainer and Bell

This anthology includes a wealth of prayers, verses and short extract for reflection. With a few exceptions, materials can also be copied for one-time use in worship or study groups.

ICF (Industrial Christian Fellowship) The website includes a prayer calendar (based on the 'Touching the Pulse' resource above), suggestions for approaching prayer, and a range of prayers including some related to saints days and commemorations of some whose ministry touches on some aspect of the world of work. http://www.icf-online.org/page6.htm

Prayers for the world of work.

A web based resource - http://www.cavhmc.org.uk/pwow/index.htm
This encourages prayer that does not ignore or filter out "less obviously caring occupations and public services" or industry sectors with which some may "instinctively feel uncomfortable," Prayers are suggested for a range of 'Industries and Occupations', 'Roles and Functions' and also for situations workers may find themselves in (described as 'Moods and Dispositions'.)

Some sections from **Methodist Diaconal Order Faith and Work group** offer suggestions for worship services (though not liturgical material) - http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/F&A complete.pdf.

See:	Н	Worship and the world of work
	- 1	Spirituality

Liturgical Resources

Common Worship offers opportunities to incorporate some suitable variations within a fixed structure. Authorized and commended material can be found in **New Patterns for Worship' (2002 CHP)** and **Times and Seasons (2006 CHP)**

Eucharistic liturgy (Common Worship):

Confession:

New patterns for worship B53
New patterns for worship B 67

Absolution:

New patterns for worship B 82

Intercessions:

New patterns for worship F 49
New patterns for worship F 71
Times and Seasons

H1 (p 610)

Prayer at the preparation of the table:

New patterns for worship 116

Short Preface: New patterns for worship **G 141**

Extended preface: (Eucharistic prayers A, B and E)

New patterns for worship G 63

Blessing: New patterns for worship **J 97**

Litany: Times and Seasons p 614 - 7

Hymns and songs

While a much wider selection of available hymns also relate to daily living and Christian Discipleship, not so many include specific reference to work or economic life.

All who love and serve your city (CP)

Come to us, creative spirit (HP, HTC)

Creating God, we bring our song of praise (SP)

Christ be the Lord of our days (NEP, SP)

For the fruits of all creation (widely available)

Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go (widely available)

Jesus, our Lord, our King and our God (AMNS)

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy (widely available)

Praise and thanksgiving, Father we offer (AMNS, CP, HON, HP, RS)

Praise to the Lord, the almighty (widely available)

Son of God, Eternal Saviour (RS)

Take my life and let it be (widely available)

Teach me, my God and King (widely available)

When morning gilds the skies (widely available)

AMNS Hymns Ancient and Modern – New Standard Edition
CP Common Praise

HON Hymns Old and New – Complete Anglican Edition

HP Hymns and Psalms
HTC Hymns for Today's Church
NEP New English Praise
RS Rejoice and Sing
SP Sing Praise

Some appropriate contemporary hymns, such as those below, are available on the web. Permission is given for these to be used with proper acknowledgement:

Breathing on the formless water (© Jeremy Davies) Hope of our calling (© Ally Barrett)

Trope of our carring (@ 7th) Barrett)

http://www.churchofengland.org/media/56540/New%20Hymns.doc

Your challenge comes to serve you in the world (© Rosalind Brown) http://www.aftersunday.org.uk/at-my-church/worship-resources/hymns

3. Resources for Affirmation and Celebration:

Some lay Christians feel the church fails to take seriously some of the roles they undertake beyond the church and their discipleship in the world. These Christians are not usually looking for affirmation in the form of any personal 'stokes'. However many would welcome the opportunity to understand and reflect more on their discipleship, and would value some assurance that their worth to God isn't only measured in terms of what they do in church.

Affirmation will be experienced when the importance of discipleship in daily life and the workplace is made clearly visible within the church context. While there is an implicit awareness of the whole of life in parts of the liturgy, some people will only make connections when the importance is regularly explained and made explicit. Even when church leaders believe they have said discipleship at work is to be valued, this will not be communicated if only stated as theory rather than visibly acted out in practice.

The ongoing life of the church provides a variety of opportunities to celebrate and draw attention to the integration of faith, work and economic life. This can offer Christians encouragement to see their daily lives as a focus for their discipleship, and to recognise and reflect on Christ's presence in and mission to the world.

• A lay member of a town centre church describes a Rogation Day service:

"The congregation was asked to come to church on Rogation Sunday dressed as they normally would be for work or their daily activity. It was explained that while traditionally Rogationtide was kept as a time of prayer for the growth and harvest of crops, as ours is not an agricultural congregation we would instead keep the Tide as a time for offering our working lives to God for him to bless the growth of the work we were "planting" in the world. We were also encouraged to bring a symbol of our work to church as part of the offertory that day.

Some unusually dressed folk came to church that day - blue overalls, wellington boots, aprons, supermarket uniforms as well as suits - and in the offertory we had cooking implements, red biros, process flow charts, ID badges, staff handbooks, acts of parliament, certificates - and a disposable nappy (a clean one!)

After the gospel, 4 people had been asked to talk briefly about what their faith meant to them in their work - we had a trade union official, an engineer, a factory manager and a "waste disposal executive" - as our local dustmen are now called. The readings and prayers were clearly related to the theme, and many left feel the Eucharist had affirmed us in our work, and knowing that we can offer it to God".

• In his book 'Equipping Christians at Work', Julian Reindorp describes approaches he has found helpful during his ministry in congregations in the Inner City, New Town and predominantly middle class areas:

"I have found 10 strategies useful in enabling clergy and congregations to equip Christians at work. This is in addition to taking an interest in people's working lives in conversations and pastoral visits.

- I. Christians at Work group
- 2. Morning conference annually
- 3. Evening Theme meetings
- 4. Rogation Sunday
- 5. Visits to people's workplace
- 6. The commissioning of people in worship for their daily work
- 7. Through preaching and public prayers
- 8. Through bringing together people who work in the same field
- 9. The minister visiting places of work
- 10. Through House Groups and Ecumenical Lent Groups including faith and work issues."
- A pattern developed in a church that is still recogniseable as the original parish church in a once independent community, now engulfed by urban growth and surrounding suburbia:

"Our PCC decided our challenge was to make the world of work and economic activity visible when you first enter the church building, so that people don't subconsciously begin to think of church as a place of escape from the world outside.

Our first project was to produce a big map of the region, and we asked people to mark on it where they spent their daily life. It has ended up looking like a "support our missionaries" map, with some visual information about workplaces around the edge where those involved feel this is appropriate. The map has been a starting point for discussion amongst many in the congregation, and has been a focus for prayer.

Our second - and ongoing - project has been to create a display (which changes monthly) about one of the organisations/ activities / firms or outlets in our parish. It's headed 'IN OUR PARISH - THIS MONTH PLEASE PRAY FOR.....', and alongside a map of the parish we invite the 'organisation of the month' to share with us in planning what information to display. This has been a brilliant way to build trust and relationships, and some have really appreciated being asked if there are particular prayers they would value. We started with a few 'caring agencies' and then a couple of charity shops, as some on the PCC were worried about this being seen as 'advertising'. But now the pattern is established this isn't a problem"

Some opportunities to celebrate faith and work issues in the life of the church

Seasons and Festivals of the Agricultural year

Plough Sunday, Rogation, Lammas, Harvest Resources available in 'Times and Seasons' - CHP, 2004, pp594 - 633

Vocations Sunday (4th Sunday of Easter)

Resources at

http://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/vocation/vocations-sunday.aspx

Saints days

E.g. St Joseph - Carpenters / workers (19 March)
 St Matthew - tax collection / finance (21 September)

Labour Day (I May)

Resources for Church Leaders and PCCs

The resources listed here offer ideas and suggestions for a wide range of ways in which issues of faith, work and economic life can be given a stronger profile in the life of the churches. These could be useful to all involved in planning church programmes and activities.

Printed resources

Supporting Christians at Work, Mark Greene, 2001, LICC

An easily accessible introductory resource, with ideas that are simple to implement in a local church context. Available from LICC:

http://www.licc.org.uk/shop/product/supporting-christians-at-work.

Equipping Christians at Work, Julian Reindorp, 2000, ICF

A readable account of approaches that have been used to equip Christians for their discipleship in their working lives. The author also reflects on his experience of doing this in parish work.

Bridging the Gap: Reader Ministry Today, Gordon Kuhrt and Pat Nappin (eds), 2002, CHP

Chapter 3 by Andrew Britton is titled 'Readers at work', and focuses on ways in which insights and perspectives from the world of work can be contributed by a lay minister, particularly Readers.

Called to New Life – Church of England Board of Education, 1999, CHP Subtitled 'The World of Lay Discipleship', this report recognized that for many people their daily lives are the main arena of their 'discipleship living'. It looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the Church "in its attempts to enable lay people to increase their confidence in their faith understanding and to put it into action"." The suggested strategies for development are addressed to churches wanting to encourage such discipleship. http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/product.asp?id=5281

Web based resources

About our Father's Business - A Faith and Work Resources Toolkit

This downloadable 'toolkit' includes a wide range of ideas. Some are for use in a workplace context, and many are suggested practices that can be employed in congregational settings. The resource was produced at the request of the Bishop of Birmingham by St Peter's Saltley Trust and the Churches' Industrial Group Birmingham. In addition to the practical tools, many resources and links are suggested -. http://www.saltleytrust.org.uk/publications.htm

The 'After Sunday' project offers support to churches and individuals to help in "Making sense of daily work and life in God". It often includes new links and resource information. See http://www.aftersunday.org.uk/

Engaging with work: London Institute Contemporary Christianity

The LICC offer many resources and publications encouraging churches to recognise and bridge a sacred secular divide. A range of suggestions for church leaders and workers relating to engaging with the world of work are available at http://www.licc.org.uk/engaging-with-work/

ICF - Industrial Christian Fellowship

ICF has a long history of supporting Christians in the workplace and developing resources that help churches relate to the world of work. The website includes downloadable material, including articles on faith and work issues designed for use in parish magazines and newsletters. http://www.icf-online.org/

Methodist Diaconal Order Faith and Work group

The numerous downloadable sheets and reflections include a section (F) specifically looking at engaging the church with faith and work concerns. Though these are written for use in Methodist ecclesiastical structures, principals can be adapted. One sheet looks at a 'Community at work' celebration. http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/F&A complete.pdf

Education Division

Mission and Public Affairs Division

January 2011