



ANGLICAN RENEWAL MINISTRIES WALES

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Prophecy to the Dry Bones.....

"There is work to be done My children but it is not your work, you are only to be the means whereby I can work, using your bodies, your eyes and ears, your hands and your voices. But beware your voices and prophesy only according to My Word."

That is how I believe God is calling His children into service today so what is His Word for us? I hear "Say unto the cities of Judah. 'Behold your God' ". Does this mean that I should rush out to Israel to proclaim the Gospel? I think not, rather I should be exhorting you, the church here in Wales to look at yourself and let what you should already know from your Christian teaching take root again and grow within you. You have the Holy Spirit within. Why do you quench Him? When will you acknowledge that God is within each one of us with all the power needed to transform the world? Friends look around you and see that God is already amongst us and not only with the bishops and clergy. We may be trapped by our attitudes to the hierarchical, highly organised church but God has given us permission via Bishop Saunders, and indirectly our Archbishop Rowan to look afresh at our church and cry out for the Renewal which must come to us all, from the top to the bottom, from the right to the left, so that we might be one.

It is interesting that Brian Favell's articles on the ministry gifts have reached Leadership this time. True Leaders do not "lord it over us" but come as servants and help each of us to see our role and our value in the Kingdom of God. But we need to look carefully at all scriptural references to leadership, pasturing and teaching. Who does the Church belong to, who body is it? When are we going to let the Head, Jesus the only true Leader, Shepherd and Teacher, take control? We have been given these ministry gifts and those who receive the gifts must be received in love by the rest of us. Brian has graciously pointed out not only the strengths of those possessing the gifts, but also their weaknesses and the dangers of taking on a position: a position held only by the grace of God and through which God can work. His is the Authority, the Power and the Glory, not ours and that takes us into a place of awe.....

How can God work through you and me? Only by the surrender of ourselves to God, for us to become the "Living Sacrifices" described by Saint Paul. (Romans 12:1-2).

I am normally reluctant to write Saint in front of a name because I believe that we are all equal in the sight of God. He loves us equally as His children and has no favourites. But saintliness or holiness is what He wants for us all, we have to work at this by allowing the Holy Spirit to change us and respond to His commands which come from a knowledge of Scripture and a maturing of the Love of God in us. Think of one another as saints and help one another on the journey so that God can be seen as leading the Church forward and standing up against the forces of darkness in the world.



I am writing this during the season of Passion-tide. It was last Sunday as I listened to the readings in the Communion Service that I realised we had to cooperate with God in Renewing, even Resurrecting the Church. Ezekiel saw the dry bones come back to life when he prophesied according to the Lord's command, this story recorded in Ezekiel 37, is often used by preachers of Renewal as it is so relevant to the churches of our land. The New Testament reading (Romans 8:6-11) tells us that we must live in the Spirit, indeed if we do not have the Spirit of Christ then we do not belong to Him. This is the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, if He dwells in us then there is no limit to what God can do through our submission. Alone we can do nothing but He has given the Church all the power she needs..... let us not prevent Him from doing what He wants in His Church and through the Church let Him Love the world.

The Gospel (John 11:1-45) is the wonderful story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, God's plan for His Glory to be seen by the Jews and for them to recognise and believe in Christ Jesus. I love the fact that it is the normally active Martha who goes first to meet Jesus, both sisters are certain that Lazarus would not have died if Christ had been there, he himself was grieving because it was so necessary for him to stay away. Is it like that in our churches today? Like Mary and Martha some have faith, they truly believe in Jesus but is it going to be necessary for the churches to die before He comes to resurrect the true Church?

This issue continues to look at our church we have much to consider, we have much need of prayer, not so much petition or even intercession unless the Lord leads us that way but into the silent prayer of resting in the presence of God. Here God will transform us and speak to us, here we will experience His love for the Church and the world, here we will share in His pain as He shows us the world for which Christ died. This is where we are strengthened and equipped. But the Church in Wales is considering our future and I'm glad that we have an interview with Chris Webb the Renewal Officer. The Council for Mission and Ministry has undertaken a mammoth task and deserves our support. I would like to have been at the Llangasty meeting though but Chris seems willing to consider us a part of the team if we respond to the challenge. In particular I like this "We're fostering an ambitious vision - but, we believe, a realistic one - for a considerable culture change in our churches that brings spiritual experience and formation to the forefront of everything we do." Praise God that the Church in Wales is willing to change.....to be Renewed.

Niall and Gerry Griffin sent me an article as soon as they saw our last issue, because God was also speaking to them on unity, so we move forward together. Peter Lawrence gives us some wonderful encouragement to increase our faith and set us on Fire, and Pam Worsey gives us a new poem which points to God's desire for us to come into His presence so that He can speak. Enjoy this issue.

Mary Newsom



A Letter from the Chairman Phil Rees

Dear Friends

This time I wanted to speak about the necessity of listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit as we seek to go forward, particularly as it is shown in the contrast between Elisha and the “sons of the Prophets”.

THE NATURAL MIND OR THE SPIRITUAL?

Elisha sees Elijah taken up to heaven, (2 Kings 2)

Elisha's one request of his master, or spiritual father, (cf. Kings 2:12) soon to be taken away, is for a double por-tion of his spirit. Elisha's longing therefore was to be a first--born son, (2 Kings 2:9), not just any son, but the son who assumed the priestly role, took on the leadership of the family from his father and received a double portion of the inheritance. This was not a lust for power by Elisha; he had been widely recognised as a servant, (2 Kings 3:11). Servanthood is the only ground for any true service, he was the one who 'poured water on Elijah's hands' So his desire for a double portion is from entirely pure mo-tives, and born out of humility, submission and obedi-ence.

We, too, are called to be first-born sons, the church of the first-born; unfortunately we have not always taken up our inheritance to the degree that God intended. Our choice is to become mature sons of our Father with priestly, intercessory and prophetic responsibility, authority and resources, or to stay as babies that are al-ways carried by God. The call to us is to receive from the 'God who is Lord' (Elijah) and is all that is necessary so that we can be people who demonstrate that 'God saves (Elisha).

Elijah's response to Elisha's request for a double por-tion is somewhat cautionary, you have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if not, it shall not be so', (2 Kings 2:10)

It's the same for us as we desire to be the church of the first-born. We must see the Lord in his ascension and enthronement in heaven. Our focus must be his present work, ruling, reigning and interceding, and not only his past work on the cross. Our longing, our consuming passion must be to know Christ the crucified one yet alive, much as Elisha's longing was to follow Elijah in his last journey and not to leave him, but to keep his eyes open in case he should be taken.

In contrast, the sons of the prophets have a more earthbound focus: true, they know that Elijah has been taken, but their concern. is to scour the surrounding coun-tryside to see where God has dropped him! They are ac-tivists, using their strength and reason, to organise and tie up all the loose ends. They pressurise Elisha, and he reluctantly lets them undertake their fruitless search. He seems rather too tolerant of them, but what else could he do?

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The sons of the prophets are spiritually aware, but in a fleshly way. They see the spirit of Elijah resting on Elisha, they are aware of the earthly signs of God's activity as are many today, but not their heavenly source value, and significance. They resemble Jesus' twelve disciples during his earthly ministry; a mixture of natural and spiritual, so often getting the wrong end of the stick, the spirit being willing but the flesh weak.

The difference that separated Elisha from the sons of the prophets is that Elisha had been through the Jordan twice, (2 Kings 2.8,14). This river speaks of death, death to self, death to sin and the flesh, and death to human ambitions - a radical and deep encounter with the life of God. Even the way Elisha responds to Elijah's call is hallmarked by death; in 1 Kings 19:19 Elisha kills the oxen and burns his ploughing equipment, investing his whole life into following Elijah. The sons of the prophets had never faced the ultimate challenge - confronting the Jordan, looking, as it were, death in the face and demanding that resurrection should come: Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?

The contrast between the natural mind (looking in the hills for Elijah) and the spiritual mind (seeing the Lord ascend) is not in the realm of reason and unreason as some seem to think. Human reason is important, we must use our minds, but they get us only so far if we are not filled with the Spirit.

Our only hope is that to human reason must be added revelation, an unveiling, a disclosing that God is personal and can be known personally and experientially. This is precisely what Paul prayed for the Ephesians (1:17), that God will give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge (epignosis) of him. Our minds, then, are enlightened by an encounter with the living God. So, rather than going around asking questions of all the data of the universe, God himself approaches us and asks us a question saying 'Who do men say that I am?', or 'What do you think of Christ? Whose son is he?' That God the creator can step into his universe and interrogate it is an affront to western intellectual pride, which would rather ask questions forever than answer one for eternal life.

So to be first-born sons we need to focus on the crucified, risen and ascended Lord in the heavens, and to ask for a Spirit of wisdom and revelation because it is the Spirit that leads us into all truth. This is not unbribed subjectivity because we use the data, the Scriptures, and we ask the Spirit to teach us and reveal Jesus to us out of them.

The purpose of the church is to bring Jesus to the nations and the nations to Jesus. Our destiny is to be the church of the first-born, knowing a double portion of the Spirit. Let's keep focused on Jesus, seated at God's right hand, interceding for us; as he fills our vision and our gaze, we will not wander off his track onto our own or others.

Phil



Together in Unity by Niall & Geraldine Griffin

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!
It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD commands a blessing. (Psalm 133 NIV & KJV)

More and more it seems, people in the Body of Christ are recognising the growing need for unity in the Church as a whole. This desire for unity has been brought about or strengthened in different ways. For some it might have come through being inspired by a book, an article, a speech or through television. For me it came through cancer.

Prior to an emergency operation on Easter Sunday, 1999, as I waited in a ward in Daisy Hill hospital in Newry, the Senior Consultant who was performing the operation came to see me. As we talked he said something that really seared itself into my memory. He said, "We're a team here". He also gave me the privilege of praying for the 'team' of theatre staff who took part in the operation. When I finally 'came to' after a life and death crisis which lasted several hours during which Gerry and her Roman Catholic prayer partner and intercessor Bernie prayed the 23rd psalm in a personalised way ("Niall, the Lord is your Shepherd you shall not want even though you are walking through the valley of the shadow of death you shall not fear...") I remember saying "Gerry, it's a whole new life". As I lay in the Recovery Room those words of the surgeon came back to me, "We're a team here". I realised that everyone in the hospital from consultant to those who make cups of tea have one goal... that those who come into hospital sick should go out well. It was as if I suddenly had a whole new understanding of the power of unity. As I was being wheeled from the Recovery Room to the High Dependency Ward I found myself saying to the theatre Sister, "Why can't the Church be like that?" Why can't we work together? Our divisions are a cancer in the Body of Christ. We need healing. We need to be made well so that the world may believe in the One whom the Father sent. Instead we have divisions, denominations, suspicion, sectarianism and sin. The Body of Christ is suffering from cancer. If that hospital had the same divisions as does the Church, I would not be here now. How many people over the years, because of our divisions, have not been made spiritually whole?

Last December Gerry and I took a SOMA team (SOMA stands for Sharing of Ministries Abroad, which is an Anglican based short term Mission Agency which encourages clergy and lay leaders to work in the power of the Holy Spirit) to N.W. Uganda to Nebbi diocese under Bishop Henry Orombi. He had arranged for us (there were 5 on the team, 3 Church of Ireland and 2 Roman Catholic) to meet his clergy, lay leaders and leaders from other churches in the 4 archdeaconries. There were representatives from the Baptist, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic churches at each gathering as well as Anglican leaders.

At each meeting our RC team members Mrs Denise Robinson from Glengormley, and Miss Dora South, a member of the community at the Christian Renewal Centre, Rostrevor, shared

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their experiences of praying, learning and worshipping together with people of other denominations. We also spoke on the criteria which encourage communities to be transformed..... that is united fervent prayer and persevering leadership. On each occasion the leaders (up to 40) stood in a circle, hand in hand, and made a covenant before God that they would meet together, pray for one another, work together, support each other and not criticise one another.

This happened at the end of each of the 4 days that we were together and on the last day in particular, we actually 'saw' Ps. 133 in action. As the leaders, the heads of the churches, stood together in unity, so the oil of God's blessing was flowing down over them and into the whole group so that the Lord's commanded blessing was touching people and actually healing them of pain and sickness, without anyone laying hands on them, as they stood there.

On our return to N. Ireland just before Christmas we learned more about Ps.133 when we met again Angela, a woman who had attended the inter-church Alpha course (Glengormley) co-ordinated by Denise Robinson and which involved some 80 people and their leaders including clergy. We ourselves had spoken at the evening on "Does God heal today?" just before going to Uganda, and that was when we met Angela. She had been suffering from pain in her neck and back after a car accident. After the talk (we all sat at different tables because a meal was also provided) there was time for people to pray for one another. Angela didn't ask for prayer because she felt that there were too many other big' things being prayed for at her table. On her way out she stopped to speak to Gerry, just to say "hello" and how much she was enjoying the Alpha course (in fact she had committed her life to Jesus during the course) and Gerry put her hand on her shoulder and said "God bless you". As we said we met her on our return from Uganda and she was overjoyed because from the moment the words "God bless you" had been said to her she had felt no more pain in her neck and back. It struck us straightaway, that here was Ps. 133 in action again..... the brothers, the church leaders working in unity in the Alpha course, and in other ways today too, had released the commanded blessing of healing to the whole body of Christ present so that Angela, even as she was leaving and without specific personal prayer, was healed..... the oil of blessing had reached the hem of the garment.

GIFTS OF MINISTRY Part 6- LEADING by Brian Favell

(see Romans 12.4 - 8)

As with some other motivational gifts, we can be led right up the garden about Leading if we let ourselves absorb conventional ideas about leaders. If we think of a leader as a dynamic personality, an inspiring speaker, a glutton for work, a human dynamo..... then we are on the wrong track!

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Business and industry have been finding out the truth of this the hard way. They are full of men and women who have been promoted one step too far; people whose drive and initiative in a particular job has been wholly admirable and who have therefore been promoted to the boss's job. They were so good at directing their own work that they were a natural choice for directing other people - but they flop because their talent is ONLY for directing their own work: they are not leaders.

There is only one quality essential to a Leader: the gift of leadership. A one-man-band - the sort of man who not only can but DOES do everything - is not a Leader; he is more likely to be a Servant. The man who cannot trust anyone else to do a job properly is not a Leader; he has not learned to delegate. A real Leader may not be able to do anything really well himself, but he DOES know exactly what has to be done and why..... and he knows exactly the right person to do it!

So if we are looking for a Leader and we must not expect to find him among the pushers, the go-getters, the gluttons for work and the one-man-bands..... then where WILL we find him?

Answer: standing at the side and patiently waiting to be called and used. Probably disguised as a Servant.

Because according to Christ's way of doing things, he who would lead his fellows must be their servant. That's the lesson that he tried to drive home by washing his friends' feet.

Indeed there is a real danger of confusing Servants and Leaders. Neither actively seek power and glory: both know themselves to be called to serve. But there are important differences. A Servant is happiest with short-term projects and immediate answers. "The light in the vestry's giving trouble? No problem: I'll come and fix it right away!"

A Leader, on the other hand, has the sort of vision that sees the whole picture rather than just the bit of it that is the immediate problem. His response to the failing light might be, "Right: I know just the man to fix that; I'll have word with him. But we won't waste too much time on it - we're due to rewire the while building in six weeks' time."

And suppose the Servant found the whole light fitting must be replaced, he'd just go out and buy another and say, "Don't bother about the bill: I'll pay and we'll sort it out later." The Leader confronted by the same situation would say, "Just make a temporary job - we're buying a batch of new fittings for the rewiring job. No point in paying over the odds for a single fitting now."

In one sentence, the Leader has the ability to co-ordinate the actions of others for the achievement of a common goal. This holds good for any task and in any situation, but in the matter of building God's Kingdom a Leader has the vision to see a task from God's viewpoint: to see the overall picture and the relationship of its various parts. And as I have said, he can see the long term picture, not just the immediate need. His drive is to organise others, not to do everything himself: he not only knows how to delegate but knows no other way of doing

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things. It is as natural and right for him to match up tasks with the abilities of other people as it is for most of us to take our coats off and try to do them ourselves.

The fact that he sees things in the long term does not mean he lets them drag on: quite the opposite. He knows which particular time slot a particular task must be fitted into if the whole pattern is not to be upset. He knows the resources at hand: he knows what he can do and others must do, and he would regard it as a personal failure if the task were done badly or too late.

He will not just barge into a situation and try to take it over, even when he is nearly out of his mind with frustration at the way things are NOT being done - he has too much respect for patterns of authority. Hence as I said earlier, he is likely to be found standing on the sidelines waiting to be called. Nevertheless if he happens to be in a group where there is no structure of authority, his will be the voice making the quiet suggestion that, when adopted, will set things moving the right way.

Where others experience the joy of creation as something solid grows under their hands, the Leader finds it in their accurate fitting together of all the parts of a project, in proper matching of task with ability and in the enjoyment others have in the finished work. For the sake of that joy (and in the knowledge that he is doing God's work) he will endure criticism and abuse from others - even his workers - who can only see part of the picture. And when a task is completed he will not (if he can by any means avoid it) be on the platform having his back slapped, hearing the speeches and drinking in the praise; he will be back on the sidelines quietly waiting for the next task.....

AS ALWAYS, there are problems. Others may see his ability to delegate as merely an ability to dodge work. His faithfulness to the overall vision that he sees may lead others to feel he is neglecting their insights and even their complaints. The things that are blindingly obvious to him are often not so to others, and if he sees no need to explain then those others may feel misused or exploited.

His drive for speed and efficiency in the tasks he has delegated may seem inconsiderate - even unrealistic - to those who are doing them. Even when they see that he is doing a good job those who work with him will curse him from time to time, while he will have lots of opportunity to practice Jesus' command to 'bless those that curse you!' His pleasure in the completed work will be greater than theirs, just as the director of a play (if he is a good one) will get more pleasure out of it than any actor; consequently he must do all he can to help them gain satisfaction from what they are doing.

The dangers that a Leader is exposed to are pretty obvious: first of course pride; pride in the power he wields and pride in his achievements, as if they were all his own work and not God working through him.

He must be on his guard against using people to satisfy his ego and meet his needs; and there is a more subtle danger that he must watch for. He may be so eager and determined to finish the work he has been given that he delegates part of it to someone who is not really big enough.



The result is likely to be disaster both for worker and work, and the Leader knows this in his heart of hearts but may be tempted to take a chance 'for the sake of the work'.

CATCH THE FIRE by Peter H Lawrence

I have always hated the thought of having a bald head and so far I still have something through which to put a comb. But I think if I did look like a billiard ball I would struggle to find enough faith within myself to believe that Jesus could heal me. Unless. I suppose. I was sitting next to three bald-headed men whose hair suddenly grew at the laying-on of hands. Then, I reckon, I might believe.

I've often thought this was the scenario in Mark I & 2. Jesus leaves Nazareth and builds a house by the sea in Capernaum. Good idea. The local beauty spot where crowds would go on their day off not to mention those who used the water in a hot land to help make a living. Much more a centre of commerce than Nazareth with many more people. Anointed by the Holy Spirit Jesus speaks in their church soon after he's arrived and heals a demonised man with unusual authority.

So - when the Sabbath is over - everyone who is sick - well everyone who is sick who can walk - comes to his door. "The whole town gathered at the door". Now I wouldn't be first in the queue with my bald head but I'd definitely be there. Curious to start with but after a few blind eyes opened, lepers cleansed and more demons cast out I really do think hope and maybe even faith would rise inside me.

Jesus is then out of town for a day or two but when he returns, guess what? You got it. More crowds and this time some important people too. So four friends carry unsuspecting crippled Charlie up on the roof - smash a hole in it so that all the debris falls on the important guys below - and then lower him down. If I'd been Jesus I'd have.....

Now where do they get that kind of faith from? Come to think of it where does crippled Charlie - cast out of home, town and especially synagogue for being a sinner - get his friends from? Obvious. He was a member of the sick colony who couldn't get to Jesus the first time round because he couldn't walk. But his sick friends, blind Bert.. leper Larry, coughing Claude and Arthur-ritis made it and came back rejoicing. That's where you get that kind of faith from.

Admittedly faith can be a spiritual gift dropped from on high at the will of God, but in my experience even that can be caught. From 1973-76 I went to St. Margaret's Aspley where a mini-revival was taking place. I'd never seen anything like it. And while I was there I too received words of knowledge, led people to Christ and laid hands on the sick who recovered.

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But - full of faith and a little bit of experience I moved to Birmingham in 1976 and saw virtually nothing like this happen at all. Same hands, same belief system but not a sausage. In 1985 I went to a John Wimber Conference and there it all was again only more so. I raced home with my hands still burning and for five years we saw all kinds of extraordinary things taking place. I wrote several books about it which I'd be happy to sell to you any time you like.

I then moved to Dorset and saw very little until 1994 when I went to Toronto. And there - bless my soul - God was at it again - this time with a touch more humour to help us in not taking ourselves too seriously. We brought it back but keeping the fire going was difficult. Those who had not been and not experienced it provided some enormously powerful wet blankets.

In 2000, some people came to our church from Portsmouth who have seen God produce gold dust out of nothing. (Failed alchemists and Harry Potter addicts eat your heart out, this was the real thing). And occasionally since then, whenever God chooses, one or two from our congregation have experienced the same phenomenon, which is glorious to behold.

Why do we need to go to Anaheim and Toronto or Portsmouth? Why did Smith Wigglesworth have to go to Sunderland to receive tongues? Why did the guys in Capernaum see more healings than those in Nazareth? The answer is quite simple. In the area of faith the horizontal dimension can be as important as the vertical. In heaven we'll all believe but here on earth we need help - from one another as well as God. May I suggest if we want to see things happen in our own church we put ourselves about a bit. Get where the action is. Try and catch the fire wherever it is as well as talking and singing about it.

And when you have done this may I recommend the following activity which we tried the other day with remarkable consequences.

Get all the O.T. T 's from your church, the raving charismatics, to line up in pairs 'oranges and lemons style' to form a tunnel. Then persuade all the doubters and cynics to pass through the tunnel of fire, pausing at each pair to receive prayer. A lot of ours went round a second and third time while some never reached the end at all.

It may not put hairs on your head or on your chest, but if tackled with fasting, prayer and proper preparations it may put fire in your belly. We had a great time doing it

Little saucepans to you all and may God bless your rugby team. Keep buying the books.



MORE POWER? By Pam Worsey

“More power Lord, more power” is heard from human lips and heart
The Still, Small Voice doth whisper low, “In weakness it will start”
“More power Lord, again more power” as man demands from God
Who points to Jesus bowing low beneath the painful rod.

“More drama Lord, more miracles to show mankind Your might,”
“Be still and know that I AM God,” puts all these cries to flight.
Again we cry for miracles, we know they are Your will,
“Behold My Son upon the Cross and let your hearts be still”.

“More wonders – signs, You promised Lord”, persists our childish plea;
“My Son went all the way to death to set the prisoners free”.
Weakened, but pleading still for power, - “Lord, will we never learn?”
“Children it’s HOLINESS I seek, other desires must burn”.

“I will reveal My power, My might, compassion and strong love
Through vessels pure, refined and weak – I pour these from above;
Allow My Spirit have free sway to do His work in you
The Cross afresh He will apply, your deepest self renew”.

"Oh Lord, this hurts!" our flesh screams out, with wave on wave of pain,
“But child, you asked Me for more power, were all your cries just vain?”
Oh Lord, we’re learning now – forgive – those self-exalting pleas;
It’s all of You, it’s none of us, we sink down on our knees.

Prostrated now before Your Throne, we plead for holiness;
Have Thine own way Lord, have Thy way, this our desire – no less;
Apply the Cross to heart, mind, soul; refine, burn out the dross;
We glimpse it now, Your Power revealed – through weakness at the Cross!

Pam Worsey

We Need you Lord by Saunders Davies @ Bangor

God can change lives. He has the capacity to transform the world. It is that discovery that has made the renewal movement an agent of change and new life in so many churches. Miracles of transformation still happen by the Spirit of God, which flowed so freely in Christ’s earthly life.

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This came home to me anew as I read the Archbishop of Wales' Lent book for this year. The author, Jeffrey John, has written about *The Meaning in the Miracles* (Canterbury Press, £7.99). He is convinced that all the miracle stories in the Gospels contain profound teaching that is highly relevant to Christians and the Church today. In his book he analyses almost all the miracles by investigating their scriptural roots and literary origins, their theological purpose, their religious and social content, and the various levels of meaning they convey. He aims to help the reader to 'read the language' of the miracles. After the commentary on each miracle, he has a section on its meaning for today, and ends with material for prayer and meditation gathered from various sources.

In commending this book I give as an example Jeffrey John's own meditation at the end of his reflections on the cursing of the withered fig tree in the context of the cleansing of the temple.

Lord, do something about your Church.

It is so awful, it is hard not to feel ashamed of belonging to it.
Most of the time it seems to be all the things you condemned:

hierarchical, conventional, judgemental, hypocritical,
respectable, comfortable, moralising, compromising,
clinging to its privileges and worldly securities,
and when not positively objectionable, merely absurd.
Lord we need your whip of cords.

Judge us and cleanse us,
challenge and change us,
break and remake us.

Help us to be what you called us to be.
Help us to embody you on earth.
Help us to make you real down here,
and to feed your people bread instead of stones.
And start with me.

We can use this prayer as a means of preparing for the Flames of Fire conference in August or indeed for our own parish, diocese and province. We all need to be touched by God's renewing power.



Catching Glimpses of God - the new CMM Renewal Team

In December 2000 the new Council for Mission and Ministry appointed a Renewal Officer, Chris Webb. We caught up with Chris on a late train from Bangor to Cardiff, and whiled away the hours finding out more about the new Renewal Team.

So, the Renewal Team - firstly, what is it?

Good question. I had a great time at Spring Harvest last Easter, just after I'd started this new job. Every so often, while chatting after some seminar or at the kids club, someone would ask what I do. "I work for the Church in Wales as a Renewal Officer," I'd say, and watch their eyes grow wide like saucers. "The Church in Wales has a Renewal Officer?" they'd ask, and I'd smile ruefully and say, "Well, yes - but it's not that kind of renewal ..."

Not "that kind of renewal"?

Well, I'm not the 'Wimber Officer'.

Then what kind of renewal is it? Oh, and you still haven't told us what the Team is.

It's renewal in the broader sense of the church being reshaped by God so it can better fulfil its calling, and engage in its ministry and mission. So that does include charismatic renewal - it also includes evangelical renewal, anglo-catholic renewal, liberal renewal, radical renewal ... well, you get the idea. In April 2001 the Bench of Bishops reformed the national church structures, bringing the work of the former Board of Mission and Board of Ministry to a conclusion and forming a new Council for Mission and Ministry - the 'CMM'. The Council is trying to discern a vision for the future of the Church in Wales, to see where God is leading us over the coming years, and the Officers of the Council have been appointed to help form that vision, and to help bring it into reality. As Renewal Officer I get to work on areas like mission, evangelism, spirituality, discipleship, stewardship, ecumenism, healing, vision and strategy.

Quite a list.

It would be, if I were doing it alone. Actually I'm working as part of a much wider Team.

The Renewal Team - we're still trying to find out what that is, by the way.

We're getting there. Actually, it's more like a 'virtual reality' team. If you came to our office, you'd only find my empty desk - I'm usually out on the road somewhere - and Fiona Gardner, our administrative genius. The rest of the Team is simply 'whoever we happen to be working with' on a particular project. That includes some fairly permanent members - people like diocesan missionaries and officers - and others who we work with on more specific projects - local clergy and churches, and groups like ARM (Wales). Depends what we're doing, really. It's less a fixed body, and more a description of the way we work.



Interesting idea. So what does this Team actually do?

The first - and most important - task of the Renewal Team is to assist the Bench of Bishops, the new Council, the Governing Body and the wider church in this process of discerning a vision for the future of the Church in Wales. Before we strike out in bold new directions, we'd better be sure we understand what God is calling us to become, and have some sense of how God is at work in Wales as a whole.

Easier said than done.

Of course. Look at the Bible. Ezekiel had the advantage of walking round the new temple, watching it being measured, describing the building materials and wading into the flowing river. But we've found ourselves more in the shoes of Zechariah, who saw fleeting and strange visions by night of coloured horses, women in baskets, olive trees and crowns, and came time and time again to find out from "the angel who spoke with me" what this might mean. We've caught similar glimpses of God at work, small fragments of possibility, and we're listening intently for the voice of our angel to make some sense of the pieces.

How do you do that?

Well, the main contribution of the CMM Renewal Team to this process has been the formation of a research group, the Renewal Strategy Team, to look specifically at ways in which Welsh society and culture are changing and how the Church might respond, particularly in its mission and evangelism. The group has been working since June 2001, drawing on expertise from every diocese, other Welsh denominations and beyond, and we'll present an interim report (alongside a report from a related group looking at ministry issues) as part of a major debate at the Governing Body in September 2002. By the way, we'd welcome any submissions to this group on the subjects of social change, postmodernism, evangelism and contemporary communication. I'll give you our contact details later.

OK. What else are you working on?

Mission and evangelism are the next priority.

Still? We just had a whole Decade of Evangelism.

And we learnt a lot during those ten years - it really helped put evangelism on the radar screen for our churches. But it didn't actually make much difference to the overall decline in attendance we've seen since the early 60's. We talked a lot about evangelism, and some churches really got stuck in. But on the whole we didn't actually do much, and we achieved even less.

I think some of us would be wary of playing the numbers game.



Rightly so, in my opinion. What we're aiming for is faithfulness and grace, not scalps. But numbers do matter. We're seeing churches shrink and close - that's not just a numbers issue, it's a tragedy. Besides, even if it makes no difference to the numbers, we could still do a much better job of sharing the 'amazing grace' of God, don't you think?

I won't argue with that. What are you doing, then?

Not direct evangelism - I'd better admit that up front. It's hard to share the grace of God with Evan Evans in Pwllheli when you're in an office in Cardiff - or even on a train from Bangor. So we're providing a support service for those who are involved more directly, and hopefully that'll lead to the generation of new resources which can be used in the local situation. Right now we're focusing on creating a good, effective network for diocesan missionaries and evangelism advisers, and a second network for church planters. We're also building links with missionaries in other denominations.

You're right - that's not evangelism.

No, and I wouldn't pretend it is. It's a first step to improving the church's ability to engage in sharing its faith, and to understanding evangelism in the broader context of mission - a context that recognises that Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God reaches beyond evangelism into the whole way our faith is lived and experienced. We're bringing people together, and listening, and discerning how best to move forward. We've got a long way to go.

We'll keep an eye on that one, then.

Do. And let us know how we can do better.

Righto. What's next?

Well, the third area of the Team's work focuses on spirituality and discipleship.

Spirituality has become something of a 'buzzword' over the last few years.

Yes, people have become more open to mystery and transcendence, and more ready to seek a deeper experience of the spiritual life. The Church clearly has a role to play in nurturing and guiding people in the exploration of this new mysticism. It also needs to challenge it. Christian spirituality is not just about experiencing grace, but also being changed by grace. The call to die to ourselves, to devote ourselves to living a Christ-patterned life, is fundamental to an authentic 'spiritual life.'

What have you been doing, then?

In November 2001 the Team began exploring this by hosting a consultation on spirituality and discipleship at Llangasty retreat house; we wrote up the work of this residential conference in a new report Transforming Spirituality - it was sent to all clergy and GB members, and it's



available on our website. The clear consensus of the consultation was that the churches in Wales had gifts and resources in abundance for living and teaching spirituality, but we're not doing that very effectively at present, and there is scope for much improvement.

Maybe so. It seems a pretty nebulous area, though. What can you actually do?

Right now, following the recommendations in Transforming Spirituality, we're aiming to form a national, ecumenical group to work together on developing this ministry, while the Renewal Team will work in partnership with the dioceses to further existing diocesan and local projects, and create new ones. We're fostering an ambitious vision - but, we believe, a realistic one - for a considerable culture change in our churches that brings spiritual experience and formation to the forefront of everything we do. The process of learning and consultation, begun at Llangasty, is ongoing, and if your readers have something to contribute to that, we'd love to hear from them.

Mind if I make an observation?

Go ahead.

It sounds like lots of 'networks' and 'committees' and so on. Why are we throwing money at all this? Why not just get on with the job?

Ah yes. Strip away the useless bureaucracy and set the church free.

You agree?

Well, it's hard to argue without sounding self-interested. So let me give you my honest angle on the situation. I don't subscribe to the view that the DBFs and Cathedral Road are a waste of money - they don't do exciting, front-line church work, but what they do is vital to our church's life. At least, I think we value clergy getting paid, legal problems being resolved, ordinands' grants being sent, vicarages being maintained and so on.

Well ... I suppose so. But what about your job?

Indeed - I don't fix buildings or pay people. But my work, too, has to be justified on its merits. I don't think networks, meetings, reports and committees are always very exciting, but if they genuinely help us do mission, or spirituality, or healing, or stewardship better, then they may be worth doing. On the other hand, if in a few years time the church finds it doesn't need this level of support, co-ordination, challenge and initiative, it can fire me.

Is that a promise?



Hand on heart. All I ask - all the CMM can ask as a whole - is that we get a fair shot without being condemned out of hand.

We've gone off the point a bit. What else are you involved in?

A Provincial Stewardship Executive, working on resources and initiatives in stewardship - primarily looking at ways to encourage the church to move away from a 'paying for the church' mindset towards a 'giving to God' one. Also we're hoping to create a forum for developing the healing ministry, and we've done a little work in that area already. We're involved with Cytun and Enfys on the ecumenical front, and more broadly with ecumenical work across the UK. We're even doing some work for the Anglican Communion as a whole, since our sister churches overseas know they can learn a lot from us, just as we learn a lot from them.

Sounds good.

I think so - and it's just a small part of the overall work of the CMM. There are also officers working on Ministry, Inter-Church partnerships, Communications and Creative Resources, Education - schools, chaplaincies and young people - and Church and Society.

We're almost in Cardiff, and we've covered a lot of ground. Do you think we should let on that you've been interviewing yourself?

Probably not. People might worry. Mind you, there's not a lot else to do on these great long train rides, and it does mean I get helpful questions.

Perhaps you'd better just give us the contact details you promised.

Sure. If you're interested in finding out more, you could visit the website at www.churchinwales.org.uk.

You can write to the Renewal Team Office at 39 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9XF. My email is renewal.cmm@churchinwales.org.uk, or you can call Fiona the administrative genius on 029 2034 8254.