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What is Praxis?

See www.praxisworship.org.uk
Praxis was formed in 1990, sponsored by the Liturgical Commission, the Group for the Renewal of Worship (GROW) and the Alcuin Club to provide and support liturgical education in the Church of England.

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Affiliation

The work that Praxis does is supported mainly by affiliation. If you are not an affiliate, why not consider becoming one?

Talking Jesus: worshipping God

Freeing the Church for mission is what we are all challenged to do now, from the Archbishops down to the parishes. And professional research like *Talking Jesus* and *From Anecdote to Evidence* gives us lots of information about where we can play to our strengths and address our weaknesses. So where is our worship in all this?

Talking Jesus makes it clear that worship is one of our big strengths in mission – the second most important factor in someone becoming a Christian (after growing up in a Christian family) is ‘attending a church service(s), other than a wedding or funeral’: 28%. New forms of church – admittedly not around long enough to score large – scored 1%. Weddings and funerals, which have been around quite a long time, likewise scored 1%.

Lesson Number One: the Reform and Renewal Programme has to keep the Church’s worship central, not just as the reason why we’re here, but as an essential part of growing the Church in both numbers and discipleship. And while café church, Messy Church, fresh expressions are all important as new ventures for growth, that does not let ‘trad church’ off the hook – what happens in the average parish church every Sunday has the potential to build or bury the Church.

But there are other lessons to be drawn as well. *From Anecdote to Evidence* identifies one ingredient of growth as ‘being intentional in chosen style of worship’, and comments, ‘Style of worship and where a church places itself in terms of its theological tradition appear to have no significant link with growth, so long as there is consistency and clarity and the chosen style and tradition are wholeheartedly adopted’. Later on the report praises a willingness to change and adapt. ‘In relation to worship, researchers describe successful churches with a “let’s give it a go” mentality. These churches try different initiatives as experiments – if they work they invest in them, if they don’t they drop them.’

Sandra Millar in the Christening, Wedding and Funeral Projects, has emphasised from her research that it is actions and attitude that matter, and very few people seem to notice the words at all, though it is the words that Synods and commissions obsess over. Fair enough, but I suspect words do still matter, perhaps more in growing discipleship than in growing in numbers – a phrase sticks in someone’s mind and becomes part of their formation. To take an example I heard recently: a disabled person speaking on disability started with a quote from the baptism service: ‘as children of God we have a new dignity, and God calls us to fullness of life’. In action and in words, worship paints a picture of what Christianity is about.

So where should we go from here? Given the crucial importance of regular worship in mission, it needs to be a focus of attention at all levels in the Church. Renewal in worship is not going to happen by itself: it needs direction and equipping. A few get it intuitively but most need training and guidance, especially when they are asked to step outside their comfort zones, or when they are encouraged to see worship as action and object more than as words on a page. Sandra Millar has given the Church enormous resources with which to renew the occasional offices. But, for all that they are rightly seen as the Church’s shop window, weddings and funerals are cited by only 1% as factors in becoming a Christian. Perhaps it is now time for her to address the big influence, 28 times larger, with ‘The Sunday Project’. What in regular Sunday worship helps growth in numbers; and what helps growth in discipleship over a medium to long term? That is a big agenda for the Church, the Liturgical Commission, for training organisations and for parishes.

✠ Gordon Jeanes is Vicar of St Anne’s, Wandsworth

Events

Worship 4 Today's Church: nurturing local liturgical leadership

Tuesday 2 February 10 am - 4 pm
Sarum College, Salisbury
Speaker: Helen Bent

Inspiring worship 'glorifies God and edifies the people' (Canon B1.2); it draws people into God's presence and grows the Church. Using the *Worship 4 Today* course, the aim is to encourage, equip and resource worship leaders and those who train them. Contact courses@sarum.ac.uk

Hymn Books: fresh or fusty?

Thursday 25 February 7 pm
St Paul's, Sale, Cheshire
RSCM Chester Area with support of
Praxis Northwest

Speaker: Helen Bent, RSCM/Praxis Head of Ministerial Training

With so many hymn books out there, how do you choose the right one to suit your church, drawing on the best of the old and introducing inspired new material?

Contact srussell@rscm.com

Exploring New Vision: annual day for DLCs

Tuesday 1 March 10.30 am - 4 pm
Church House, Westminster

Join in shaping the way forward for worship education and development for congregations and clergy over the next five years. Mould thinking and explore the future with the Bishop of Exeter, Chair of the Liturgical Commission; Andrew Reid, Director of RSCM; Helen Bent, Head of Training for RSCM/Praxis and Matthew Salisbury, National Liturgy and Worship Adviser for the Church of England.

Contact sue.moore@churchofengland.org

Creating Uncommon Worship

Thursday 3 March 10 am - 3.30 pm
Dorchester Abbey OX10 7HH
Praxis and Oxford DLC

Speakers: Helen Bent, Tim Sledge, Jo Spreadbury

Hear from those at the forefront nationally of crafting uncommon worship and share good practice in selecting, editing and shaping material to meet particular needs and one-off civic and pastoral occasions.

Contact sheila.townsend@oxford.anglican.org

Reader Ministry: 150 years of worship, theology, and mission

Saturday 5 March 2016 10 am - 3 pm
Bar Hill Church Centre, Cambridge
Praxis East

Speaker: Arnold Browne
Celebrating 2016 marks 150 years of Reader ministry in the Church of England, an opportunity for Readers, and those who work with them, to consider and develop responses to the needs of the contemporary Church in its worship and mission.
Contact gill.ambrose@happyserver.co.uk, 07855513506

Liturgical Change: fresh perspectives

Thursday 17 March 2016 10 am - 4 pm
William Temple Church, Wythenshawe, M22 0DU
Praxis Northwest

Speakers: James Steven and Tim Harle
Proposed changes to liturgy, whether forms of service or liturgical space, provoke strong reactions. Fresh insights from psychology enable us to understand how different people find security in times of uncertainty. This day explores ways to encourage positive communal engagement with liturgical change.

Contact Michael Gisbourne, vicar@stpauls-scotforth.org, 01524 32106

Sounding God's Praise: music, mission and ministry

Saturday 23 April 10.30 am - 3.45 pm
Oxford Place Methodist Church, Leeds, LS1 3AU
Praxis Yorkshire

Speakers: Helen Bent, Head of Ministerial Training, RSCM, in partnership with Praxis, together with Robb Sutherland, Vicar of Mixenden and Illingworth and founder member of the Rock Mass, and Rachel Firth, Vicar of Lindley, stage singer and pianist

A day exploring the interface between music and mission in the worship, ministry and outreach of the church. Workshops will give opportunities to explore new ways of using music in worship, especially in churches with limited resources.

Contact helen@thebents.co.uk, hbent@rscm.com

Worship in Changing Times: freedom and tradition in conversation

Saturday 23 April
Praxis Southwest
Cullompton Community Centre, Devon

Speaker: Tim Lomax
Contact gillbehenna@me.com

Empowering Children as Ministers

Thursday 12 May 10 am - 3 pm
Bar Hill Church Centre, Cambridge
Praxis East

Facilitators: Ally Barrett and Gill Ambrose
From 1 October children may be authorized to administer the chalice at Holy Communion. But children have been ministers in worship for centuries, particularly as musicians. A day to reflect on the value of the ministry of children for congregations and for the children, and consider building on good practice to empower children in a variety of ministries.
Contact gill.ambrose@happyserver.co.uk, 07855513506

Hitting the Right Note: a day on music and worship.

Thursday 19 May 10.30 am - 3.30 pm
Southwark Cathedral Praxis South

Speaker: Helen Bent

A day with the new Head of Ministerial Training for RSCM and Praxis, together with other facilitators to be announced, exploring the changing role of music in worship.

Contact peter@furber.me.uk, 01202 296886

Inspiration

Tuesday 7 June 10.30 am - 3.30 pm
Birmingham Cathedral
Praxis Midlands

Speaker: Michael Perham

A day in the newly-refurbished St Philip's Cathedral about the inspiration of worship, which will inspire and enthuse those who strive to create and lead inspiring worship. Our speaker, Bishop Michael Perham, author of many liturgical books including *New Handbook of Pastoral Liturgy*, was one of that inspired group of people who founded Praxis 25 years ago. Those who arrive by train will walk through the inspiring halls of the re-vamped New Street Station. Come and join the inspiration!
Contact jayne.crooks@blueyonder.co.uk

Celtic Worship for Today

Thursday 10 November
10.30 am - 3.30 pm
Southwark Cathedral Praxis South

A day exploring styles of Celtic worship and how they may enhance and deepen our worship today.

Contact peter@furber.me.uk, 01202 296886

Cantor-led singing

'Speak to one another with the words of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs: sing hymns and psalms to the Lord with praise in your hearts (Ephesians 5.19).'

An increasing number of parishes are finding it difficult to recruit music leadership or find a competent musician to play for services. Many have turned to the solution offered by hymn accompaniment CDs. But is there a way to keep music 'live' in all situations? Could one person be found to lead congregational participation? Jon Payne from Church Music Future explores what churches with limited – or no – musical resources can do.

To karaoke or not?

That is indeed the question. Perhaps a choir has dwindled to single figures or disappeared altogether? Perhaps the organist has retired and no replacement can be found? Perhaps there is little money to invest in music? Perhaps a congregation is disheartened and unenthusiastic about singing? In such circumstances, the advent of the hymn accompaniment CD might seem like a blessing in disguise. But it can, and often does, have the effect of destroying, rather than building, good congregational singing.

Many church PA systems were designed primarily with speech in mind: speakers lack a good 'bass response', and music played through them can sound 'tinny'. Maybe you have invested in good PA equipment precisely so you can use accompaniment CDs. If so, other problems arise: speakers are, to one extent or another, directional – so a congregation gets no sense (as they would with an organ or other instrumental backing) of being enveloped or surrounded by sound. It can be hard to pinpoint the source, and it doesn't feel terribly reassuring to sing to. Getting volume levels right is also notoriously tricky. Too loud, and it overwhelms the congregation so they cannot hear each other, and that all-important sense of worshipping together in community is lost. Too soft, and the congregation sings down to the level of the backing track, with results that sound lacklustre.

Even supposing you manage to get all these factors right, there is then the problem that a backing CD is 'mechanical' – it cannot breathe with the congregation, nor take account of the nuances or habits of their singing. It cannot vary the speed according to the size of the congregation or the acoustical properties of your building. It encourages congregations to focus not

on one another, but to become slaves to the CD. Moreover, on the Sunday when the PA system breaks down or there's a power cut, their musical 'crutch' will have disappeared and they will not know what to do.

Having read this, perhaps you are now shouting, 'Well, what choice do I have?! I live in the middle of nowhere, we've advertised for a musician three times and had no applications, and there's nothing else we can do!' But there is a choice, which we are all too quick to overlook, and that is to harness what Church Music Future describes, simply, as 'The Power of One'.

What is a cantor?

Imagine you're in a crowded restaurant with friends. The group at the next table strikes up a rousing chorus of 'Happy Birthday' for one of their number. You know what is about to happen and, sure enough, it does. 'Happy birthday to you...' So far, so good. 'Happy birthday to you...' Brace yourself. 'Happy BIIIIIRRRTHHHH – oh it's too high – we need to change key'. The pitch at which a hymn or song begins may not be where it ends! At its simplest, a 'cantor' is someone who can start your hymn singing off with some recognition of the melodic shape of the tune, and know whether to begin 'low', 'medium', or 'high' in the voice. That skill is the first to be covered in almost all cantor training – because it is a skill, simply taught, simply learned, that can make all the difference to unaccompanied singing.

A cantor does not have to read music to be able to look at the music for a hymn and see roughly where it starts, and where it goes melodically after that. If, as with 'Happy Birthday', the third line is higher in the voice than the other lines, perhaps it needs to start quite low in the voice.

There are widely varying definitions of what a cantor is and does, depending on church tradition and worship style. At its most basic, a cantor is someone with the skills to initiate and lead a congregation in song. Training cantors in these skills is perhaps one of the most straightforward, yet valuable ways, in which churches can be helped with their music today.

Who is the Cantor?

It might be the clergy person or lay minister leading the service, or it might be someone else. It doesn't matter. Is there someone in your congregation who sings confidently and reasonably tunefully? Might they be

willing to take up the offer of some cantor training so they can lead the singing in your church on Sundays?

Discerning whether to begin a hymn low, medium or high is just the starting point. The most able cantors are able to describe the shape of a melody with their hands, helping the congregation to learn new music visually as well as aurally. And there is much music in the Iona, Taizé, Gouzes, and other similar styles that is designed primarily for unaccompanied singing – so it is simple in form, easily learnable by congregations, and can greatly enhance worship.

If you have no musical resources at present, the prospect even of singing hymns can seem daunting. But with a cantor, new possibilities are opened up: liturgical texts, prayer responses, meditative chants, and much more. 'Simple, sung beautifully' is the mantra here, rather than 'complex, done badly'.

Our faith is a living, breathing, hopeful tradition. Recorded music has its place, so long as we remember it reflects someone else's experience of worship, recorded at a different time and in a different place to the one where we are presently worshipping. Developing a congregation's singing can be a challenge, but it is well worth the effort, despite the fact that it might initially be a struggle. A congregation united together in and by song can be a profound and moving expression of faith. Indeed, we forget that in over 90% of Christian churches around the world, there is no form of musical accompaniment – just human voices raised together in joyful song.

Where can I find out more?

Church Music Future is a new organisation, launched in September 2015 at the national gathering of Anglican Catholic Future. CMF is formed of professional church musicians, with wide experience of working at 'grass roots' level with individual churches, clergy, and musicians. During 2016, Church Music Future will be offering a number of cantor-training opportunities through its programme of 'The Power of One' events. The first will be on Saturday 7 May at St Mary-le-Strand, London. You can find out more via www.churchmusicfuture.com.

✉ Jon Payne is an adviser for Church Music Future.

Leading worship well

The art of liturgical presidency

We all have a passion for liturgy and worship among God's people. That is what motivates us to be members of Praxis. Many, if not most of us, whether lay or ordained, are practitioners, involved in some way in leading services in our local churches. The recent Praxis Southwest day in Exeter with Bishop Michael Perham, *Leading Worship Well*, gave us all much food for thought and a chance to review and improve what we do.

Bishop Michael took us back to first principles, the distinction between liturgy and worship, the purpose of liturgy, and the basic skills needed to be an effective worship leader. Perhaps the most striking of these was a reminder that the task of a worship leader within the assembly is to make it easier for heaven to break through. It is a task as awesome as it is inspiring, when we realise that the depth of prayer that others around us will be able to offer may be directly affected by how we lead.

Liturgy, and the way it is led, also expresses the hospitality of God. Bishop Michael suggested that 'hospitality' was a better word than 'welcome' here. Welcome is too easily seen as something that has been completed once the books have been given out. Hospitality is more than coffee after the Sunday morning service, important though that is. Hospitality is enabling all members of the assembly to feel comfortable, liberating them to pray so that they catch a glimpse of heaven and experience an encounter with the Risen Christ.

The day included some highly practical guidance on making the best of both the president and liturgical deacon at the Eucharist. Part of liturgical hospitality involves keeping an eye on the assembly's response and knowing when to make changes to the tone of worship if fellow worshippers turn out to be very different from those for whom you had planned! We were also encouraged to consider why we do particular things and to be prepared to let go of habits that have no real meaning. Nevertheless, pastoral considerations should not be forgotten: those who prefer, for example, not to prop up the burse on the altar might need to remember that if it has been 'given by Mrs Jones,' there might not be a choice!

The day concluded with a celebration of the Eucharist at which Bishop Michael presided and Margi Campbell acted as deacon, with music led by Andrew Maries, and a chance to worship 'in the round' with the twin foci of lectern and altar, word and sacrament. It was an example of good practice and a prayerful way to conclude a most enjoyable and inspiring day.

✉ *Robin Lodge is Chair of Praxis Southwest.*

Making a difference: worship and response

We all know in theory that worship can provide occasions for an encounter with the God present among us, and occasionally for life-changing encounters. It concerns me, though, that neither the liturgy, nor many of those who lead it, seems quite to know how to handle them. The expectation of the eucharistic shape is that having heard God's Word read, expounded and applied, people will want nothing more than to leap to their feet and recite the Creed. What might we do in order to facilitate some kind of response to what is offered in worship and in preaching?

Expectation

Expectation is the first key. What am I expecting people to get from this service: how will the teaching or praying challenge or comfort them? When planning worship do we think about what we might expect to happen for people as a result of their participation? Provision follows. For example, if we expect people to give us their money, we provide a time for this to happen, little bags for it to happen in, and a big brass plate to collect it. So if we expect people to make some kind of response in our worship, what will they need to do so? Candles to light? Time, space and people for prayer ministry? Silence before things rush on?

Culture

Behind all this, though, is culture. We need to begin to work on a culture which seems to expect that people will emerge from worship unchanged. Congregations need gradually to get hold of the idea that if God is present, we might want to respond to him. This can be as simple as allowing space and silence after readings to listen to the Spirit, or the offer of a simple

prayer at the communion rail for any who have been affected by the issues raised. If the BBC can do it, we should be able to!

Silence

I once attended a cathedral service where I was amused that in the service book a rubric announced that there would be 'a profound silence'. We know, of course, what this means. Silence and stillness are rare commodities in our busy world, and we're not always very good either at leading or participating in silence.

So what does silence do? Silences within liturgy function like commas, to give us a pause, to allow us to stop, settle down and go more deeply into what is happening and what God might be saying to us through it.

There are occasional rubrics which allow for silence, and different points in worship will suggest different kinds. Before confession we might want to dwell on the day or week past and allow the Spirit to bring to our minds things that might particularly need attention. After readings and the sermon it might be to think more deeply, to listen to what questions or issues rise up in our minds, or to seek the 'Word within the word' – that particular part which the Spirit is, as it were, underlining for me today. Silence during intercessions might be used for us to bring to God either our own private needs or prayers for those particularly on our hearts. And of course there are other places where it might be appropriate.

Leading silence can be done badly, when we allow people too short a time, or fill the space with instructions without leaving time for the instructions to be followed. It can also be left merely as silence with no indication that it is happening or why, leading people to wonder if the leader has dropped off. Having silence at all needs work, and making silences 'profound' requires skill and commitment. Maybe worship leaders could give some thought to this area.

✉ *John Leach is Developing Discipleship Adviser in the Diocese of Lincoln.*

Leading worship well

The way we read

How should the Bible be read aloud in worship? Father George Guiver, Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, describes some of their engagement with this question.

Our Community has benefited immensely from sustained use of speech trainers over the last dozen or so years. The two main places where we need help are in church and with reading during meals in the refectory. Sometimes a brother can read in a lively, even racy manner in the refectory but be unable to transpose this into the church, where it can be difficult to move on from a style that is reverent, reflective, and, dare I say it, dead. This may partly reflect the difference between the intimacy of the refectory and our huge church with its long echo.

It is difficult for speech trainers who come in for a couple of hours a week to pick up some of the difficulties – they would need to become resident for a while, and to hear the brethren reading when they aren't self-consciously reading to a speech trainer! The trainers have been of the highest calibre and have engaged the Community's enthusiasm with experience and verve, and there have been real benefits. It is difficult however to achieve sustained improvement once a certain level of proficiency has been reached – the Community can only take so much of this work and then needs a break. So the practice tends to be stop-go – perhaps three months on, three months off. After a gap we begin to sense the trainer is needed again to pull our socks up as standards, especially enunciation, begin to flag.

Human beings and their habits are intractable, the further you dig down into them, and perhaps what I have described is the approach that works best with us. No-one in the Community would doubt the ways we have gained from this training, or wish to discontinue it, but an audience that goes to church four times a day seven days a week will be particularly difficult to please.

✉ *George Guiver*

Space and time

'Oh my goodness, I'm about to tell a Godly Play story!' These silent words in my head suddenly hit me as the server gave me the elements for the Eucharist from the credence table.

It was about 15 years ago on a Sunday morning in Leominster Priory,

Herefordshire. I'd already been introduced to Godly Play, had led training sessions and was one of the first UK trainers alongside Rebecca Nye. We had often talked about how Godly Play had influenced our thinking and practice but this was the first time I had applied it to celebrating the Eucharist.

Godly Play stories use objects to help focus the listeners, and the objects are kept in order on shelves around the room. When the group is ready, the storyteller will usually go to the shelves and say something like: 'Watch carefully where I go, so that if you need this story at any time you'll be able to find it for yourself.' This is not only about a practical showing: underneath is a wider message about spirituality... Faith is something that has to be owned. You can't 'faith' for someone else... You can show how it might work, but ultimately each person must do it for him or herself.

On that Sunday morning, as the bread and wine were handed to me, I wanted to say aloud that Godly Play introduction. Instead I said it to myself and then things started to happen internally...

Another feature of Godly Play stories is that they often use a piece of cloth as an underlay. The cloth is placed carefully in the centre of the circle of listeners, inviting them to be ready for the story to begin. Suddenly, that day, as I was laying out the white cloth on the altar, and placing the chalice and paten on it, time began to slow down. Contrary to popular advice about maintaining eye contact and speaking up as a way of engaging people, the Godly Play storytelling style, keeping the eyes focused on the storytelling objects and slowing down spoken words, has been found to help people concentrate and remember.

Godly Play practice also relies heavily on the language of gesture, and that Sunday, when I stood at the altar, I found myself using all the techniques that I would use when telling a Godly Play story. The experience has stayed with me and still shapes the way I celebrate the Eucharist: placing and unfolding the white cloth makes the table a place where we all gather, a focus on the bread and wine draws everyone to the gifts, given for all, and the gentle, reflective speaking of the words makes this story the prayer of all who are gathered.

✉ *Peter Privett is associate priest at St Andrew's, Rugby and a Director of Godly Play UK.*

RSCM Strengthen for Service course

Strengthen for Service is designed for all those involved in leading church worship, both ordained and lay, to hone their understanding and practical skills especially in the area of church music and working with church musicians. The course complements prior learning. Significant biblical and historical insights are included together with very practical information on repertoire right across the spectrum of styles and traditions. There is opportunity to explore the best choices of hymn books/worship song sources and the related copyright issues. Worship in a variety of different styles is modelled and engaged in throughout the course. Feedback from the participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Elaine Wykes writes: 'As an ordinand, I felt that the course delivered vital elements that all ordinands and readers in training should bring with them to their ministry. I highly recommend that it be taught as part of ordination training, or at the very least, a compulsory diocesan course, simply because it covered not only church and music history, but also essential information all clergy and readers should know, such as Canon Law on an incumbents' relationship with their musicians. I came away with a greater knowledge of church music and a better understanding of how the way in which we select music can drastically affect the outcome or feel of worship. This should be very carefully considered.' Kirsten Scott went further, suggesting: 'This course should be compulsory for ordinands, established clergy, and church musicians in leadership positions.'

The next course

The next *Strengthen for Service* course will be at Edenham House, near Grantham from Tues 16-18 February 2016 led by Helen Bent, who is both a priest and a musician. *Strengthen for Service Lite* is a day version of the course (10am-4pm), which can be arranged locally.

✉ *Helen Bent is Head of Ministerial Training for the RSCM in partnership with Praxis.*

The new National Liturgy and Worship Adviser for the Church of England

I am delighted to have been appointed National Liturgy and Worship Adviser for the Church of England, and for the opportunity to work with Praxis and many others who feel that good worship is essential for the life and mission of the Church. I will be working part-time from Church House, Westminster, and from Oxford University, where I am a lecturer specialising in liturgical music, and where I have the privilege of training early-career church musicians.

I am lucky to have experienced and knowledgeable colleagues in Sue Moore, who has taken on new responsibilities as Administrative Secretary to the Liturgical Commission, and in Bishop Robert Atwell, who has made me feel very welcome. I am also looking forward to a close working partnership with the new RSCM/Praxis Head of Ministerial Training, Helen Bent. Please pray for us and for those who will soon be appointed to the new Liturgical Commission.

My academic background in historical forms of liturgy and music reminds me that the Church today has opportunities for coming before God in worship in many different ways. We have a great inheritance in church buildings, art, and music, all of which help to tell the story of Christianity as it has been lived in this nation, and all of which point to the ways we can live our part of the story in our own time.

It is vital that laypeople and clergy alike feel prepared and able to lead worship that transforms lives. Praxis is a key partner in encouraging the Church to aspire to beautiful worship that is truly 'prayed'. I look forward to working with you all with this vision in mind.

✉ *Matthew Salisbury*

Chaplain to General Synod

'Are you mad?' said a friend. 'You are going to take responsibility for worship? With 50 bishops, over 200 clergy and over 200 lay people after they have debated some of the hot topics of the day?' 'Yes!' I replied, 'And I can't wait!'

This conversation with a friend took place in June as the news broke that I had been appointed Chaplain to the

General Synod of the Church of England. Previous chaplains have been Synod members, but it had become increasingly clear that combining worship preparation with debating was not sustainable. Being responsible for the worship of the Synod is a challenging but exciting opportunity. There will be the variety of expectations that come from any gathered community spanning the traditions that make Church of England what it is. I will no doubt meet some of those expectations, but there will be many other expectations that I will not meet!

At the root of what I see this role entailing is to help this decision-making body of the Church of England to have an encounter with the living God in the person of Jesus Christ through worship. These encounters can help to remind Synod members of the reason for the task that lies before them.

Worship has always been divisive. 'I didn't like that setting of the *Gloria*, vicar', may be a familiar refrain to some. This maybe especially true amongst those who also facilitate worship on a regular basis in cathedrals and parish churches, and I shall expect a wide variety of responses to what will be offered. My prayer though, is that worship, whether in General Synod or in a midweek communion in a parish church, will enable worshippers to encounter the living God.

✉ *Michael Gisbourne is Vicar of St Paul's Scotforth and Chaplain to the General Synod.*

The Enthronement of the Bishop of Gloucester

When Bishop Rachel entered Gloucester Cathedral on 19 September it was less to be enthroned, and more to recognise a pilgrim joining the diocese on our journey as 'the fellowship of the baptized'. In a simple white alb, she was greeted with the baptismal welcome, and after the Prayer over the Water in the font, was heartily sprinkled by newly-baptised and confirmed young Christians.

In this Celebration of Ministry in the Diocese, action and text from baptismal liturgy and affirmations from the Ordinal wound through the service. Bishop Rachel preached on 'trailing wet footprints from baptismal drenching wherever we go' (quoting Michael Jinkins in *The Church*

Faces Death).

The sense of liturgical movement from baptismal affirmation though the Eucharist to our sending out for mission and ministry at the west door was imaginative and compelling, and symbolism played such a significant part: from alb to cope; from senior staff sprinkling the congregation with water to Bishop Rachel's anointing with oil by the bishops of the south west; and from movement west to east and back again.

The liturgy was the work of John Paul Hoskins, the Bishop's Chaplain, who explained that 'most people wouldn't have been able to see much most of the time, but everyone would have been close to the action at some point'.

I was particularly moved by the juxtapositions of the day: Bishop Rachel kneeling at the high altar to pray the Collect of St Kyneburga, Anglo Saxon abbess of the first religious community on the site of Gloucester Cathedral; a child reminding our new Bishop that she is first a child of God; and the pomp of the Cathedral service with its four choirs and gilded processions, followed by ice cream and fizzy elderflower cordial in the grounds.

✉ *Dana Delap is Team Vicar in the Benefice of Vale and Cotswold Edge.*

Six Months In

My first six months in the post of Head of Ministerial Training have proved busy and demanding, vibrant and challenging. Initially I have concentrated on fact-finding and research, prioritising Praxis Regional Committees, Diocesan Training Teams, and Theological Education Institutes (TEIs) alongside input from RSCM Area Committees. This has involved careful listening to draw out common themes, so that training can be matched effectively to genuine needs. The experience has underlined again for me the dangers of silo working within and between dioceses, which can lead to unnecessary duplication or leave unaddressed gaps in training.

Immediately apparent is the diversity of training paths across the dioceses and TEIs. Basic foundational skills in worship leading and spirituality are often side-lined in favour of mission and management, whether in Common Awards module choices or IME Phase 2, CMD and lay

People

training programmes. And, although Common Awards modules carry specific guidelines regarding content and learning outcomes, these are open to varied interpretation, with some worship modules clearly more robust than others. As a result, curates and new incumbents can come into post with vital elements missing from their training. These omissions must therefore be addressed. Training on enabling mixed economy worship at multiple times in multiple venues is now increasingly necessary.

I am passionate about mission and church growth, but I am deeply concerned about the superficiality of worship training that many of the ordinands and curates receive when this is one of their essential key skills and the one part of church life that we will carry with us into eternity. Key areas are points of transition: IME Phase 1 and 2; the move to first incumbency; a move to a new parish; a move from single church to multi-benefice; a move to a church plant or fresh expression; and regular clergy MDR. Strategic Mission Action Planning must also include appropriate training support to manage the worship needs of parishes particularly within multi-benefices as well as those with inherited models of church sitting alongside fresh expressions and emerging pioneer projects.

The findings of the Church Growth Research Programme, *From Anecdote to Evidence*, highlighted two important issues: growing congregations constantly engage in reflection; and growing churches are intentional about their chosen style of worship. Styles of worship and theological tradition are not the issue. Important factors are consistency, clarity and wholehearted commitment to doing your chosen worship well. Although we may differ in how we define 'good' worship, we will all agree that effort is required and we cannot rely on autopilot. Praxis continues to offer training days across the regions, and together with the RSCM, we are beginning to develop new training resources to support and encourage clergy and lay worship leaders.

✉ *Helen Bent is Head of Ministerial Training for the RSCM in partnership with Praxis.*

Book review

Starting Rite: Spiritual nurture for babies and their parents,

Jenny Paddison, Church House Publishing, 2015, £19.99

Starting Rite developed when Jenny Paddison recognised that new parents are offered "baby everything under the sun" but nothing particularly spiritual, nothing about faith'. Drawing on her own experience of high-quality courses offered by children's centres when her own children were born, she developed a five-session spiritual nurture course for new babies and their parents. The book describes how to run the course and opens with a thorough review of the literature that undergirds its focus on relationship, play and symbol.

The middle session of the course focuses on the symbols of baptism, and it will make for excellent baptism preparation. Indeed Jenny Paddison was encouraged to publish what she had developed by Sandra Millar, Head of the Archbishops' Council Christenings Project. This resulting book is much bigger than preparation for the rite, however, despite its name. Here we have a carefully researched and considered discipleship programme designed to support parents and children at a critical juncture in their lives. In addition to being grounded in high quality practice across a variety of disciplines, the author's attention to practical details is outstanding. Every session is described in clearly-ordered detail, with kit lists, safety notes and timetables, complimenting an opening theological reflection. A concluding chapter describes an evening preparation session developed for 'graduates' of the course who decide to bring their children for baptism.

Using the *Starting Rite* course will not be an easy option, the kind of magic bullet to 'bring in young families' that many churches seem to long for. It requires thoughtful and meticulous preparation and the commitment of several reliable people to make it work, as well as serious financial investment in high quality equipment. But for those who decide to 'go for it', I am confident that the plunge will be worth taking and the rewards considerable.

✉ *Gill Ambrose is Editor of Praxis News of Worship and Chair of Godly Play UK.*

MAPs

The concept of Mission Action Planning was first developed in the diocese of London by Bishop David Hope in the 1990s. Now, some 20 years on, MAPs are encouraged – or required – in more than half the dioceses of the Church of England. But is this leading to growth?

The Bishop of Liverpool said recently that statistics shake us, while stories move us; and as a Church we need to be both shaken and moved. The Bishop of Burnley used to say, with disarming frankness, that as a parish priest he felt depressed for the entire week if on Sunday he had fewer people in church than the previous Sunday. (Many will identify with this experience, I'm sure). Statistics matter, statistics can be really helpful: and the statistics show that we are not seeing signs of growth as a result of Mission Action Planning.

The official 2012 CofE Statistics for Mission showed that the proportion of churches that showed signs of decline was slightly greater than the proportion that showed signs of growth (23% compared to 20%). In 2013 the proportion showing signs of growth had worsened to 19%, with signs of decline remaining at 23%. As the Report's footnotes say, the trend for churches isn't always a beautifully straight line, so the figures across 6 years have been taken into account to be sure that churches were not just experiencing 'wobbles in their figures'. It is interesting that the latest statistics no longer give the maps of the Church of England by diocese that used to be featured, coloured in according to which dioceses are growing and which are in decline. One can imagine the extent of episcopal depression caused by these in the past, perhaps lasting for weeks from the time the statistics were published each year!

Some correlations seem to be apparent: the Diocese of London, where Mission Action Planning was first introduced, is consistently among those dioceses showing significant signs of growth. Yet the Bishop of London in his Lambeth Lecture, delivered this September, on the Diocese of London's journey from decline to growth over the last 25 years, did not mention MAPs as having played any part in this.

• *Continued on next page*

MAPs cont.

The 2013 figures showed that the average weekly attendances in the dioceses of Ely, Guildford, Leicester, Manchester and Newcastle were also growing, while attendances in Coventry and Ripon and Leeds were stable. Diocesan websites are notoriously unreliable, but there is no obvious indication that MAPs are influencing these figures for growth (with the range of implementation across the dioceses in question ranging from almost non-existent to having a whole-time MAP officer in post). In the meantime, the metrics are changing, with new questions being asked in annual parish returns, to the regular consternation of incumbents and administrators who have to wrestle with providing the required information. As the statistics show that numbers are declining in terms of Sunday attendance, so more and more ways are being found to measure other aspects of church life, in the apparent hope that the picture will appear more encouraging.

But a focus on worship, and especially Sunday worship, is essential if the figures for Sunday attendance continue to be counted and continue to have any meaning in the mixed economy of CofE church life. Attendance at worship is also one of the areas where spiritual growth can be inferred alongside numerical growth – as this is achieved. Otherwise spiritual growth has been undeniably the poor relation in the challenge of ‘spiritual and numerical growth’ that was set for the new General Synod quinquennium back in 2010. In the General Synod debate on Mission Action Planning in July 2011, the clause which referred to worship (‘growing the number of worshipping Anglicans’) was replaced by an amendment which only mentioned growth ‘in faith, in numbers and in service to their community’. All this begs the question anyway whether the Church of England, in Professor Linda Woodhead’s terms should be more ‘societal’ or more ‘congregational’. The difference is that societal churches go out into society; congregational ones try to bring society into church. Historically, the Church ‘of England’ has always been a bit of both, but its centre of gravity has been societal. (A new book by Linda Woodhead and Andrew Brown is to be published in February on ‘the decline of the church since Robert Runcie’ entitled *That Was the Church That Was: how the Church of England lost the people of England.*)

The report *From Anecdote to Evidence* has now been followed by the parish study guide and toolkit *From Evidence to Action*, and the Church Growth Research programme is still publishing *Resourcing Mission* bulletins. These include significant comments about the way the featured churches look at the pattern and style of their Sunday and weekday worship, and whether this needs adapting or adjusting. Individual dioceses also are suggesting ‘service audits for evaluating the Sunday experience’ and sample questionnaires have been devised by the dioceses of Southwark and Peterborough among others. At the end of one of these (from Peterborough), these telling questions are asked:

To help you reflect further on your church’s worship, ask yourself:

- What do the congregation think about the worship?
- What do those outside the church think about our worship?
- What does God think about our worship?

✍ *Jo Spreadbury is the Precentor of Portsmouth and the Chair of Praxis.*

Colin’s Column

In the last issue I wrote about eucharistic ceremonial. This time I revert to eucharistic text. It is 50 years this month since the first official proposals for new eucharistic texts (as opposed to variants on 1662, such as the ‘interim rite’ (*Series 1*)) were first published. *Series 2* went from a first draft in December 1965 to the final authorized booklet in September 1967.

It is the anamnesis of the Eucharistic Prayer that I now address. The Prayer itself ran through *Series 3* (draft in 1971, authorized in 1973 – the first text addressing God as ‘you’), to become the ‘First Eucharistic Prayer’ in the *ASB 1980*, and finally ‘Eucharistic Prayer A’ in *Common Worship*. I invite a close scrutiny of the successive texts of the anamnesis in this, the Prayer with prime place in the successive rites.

First came a compromise. The Liturgical Commission of the day proposed ‘...in remembrance of [Jesus’ mighty works] we offer unto thee this bread and this cup’ and ran into trouble. The compromise was 1549 ‘Wherefore, O Lord, with this bread and this cup we make the memorial of his saving passion, his resurrection ...’ I think that in 1549 a ‘memorial’ was actually protestant, but in the last 100 years it has gained ‘catholic’ credentials, partly because Anglo-Catholics were (until the time of Dix) convinced that 1549 embodied true catholic liturgical ideals, and partly because the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission treated ‘memorial’ as a kind of meeting place of the two theological teams. However, the Liturgical Commission viewed it as a temporary stopgap, and in *Series 3* got shot of it – with the new phraseology ‘we do this in remembrance of him; we celebrate and proclaim his perfect sacrifice made once for all upon the cross, his resurrection...’. And through the 1970s the Commission concluded not only that ‘memorial’ was theologically opaque and unhelpful, but also that on the street ‘memorial’ brought to mind a war memorial or suchlike, and thus rang unhelpfully in liturgy. And in 1980 the *ASB* polished the text to make the best use of ‘celebrate’: ‘...we remember his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, and proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension. As we look for his coming in glory we celebrate with this bread and this cup his one perfect sacrifice’.

But there was one snag. There people rallied to *Series 2* – but in modern language. So the *ASB*’s second eucharistic prayer retained the outmoded ‘make the memorial’. In the event that prayer was rarely used as, through Synod, the third prayer, by Hippolytus out of Rome, arrived and captured the Anglo-Catholic allegiance. ‘Ah’, said the Commission approaching 2000, ‘We can simplify by assimilating the second prayer to the first. I protested in Synod, but was seen off by the Steering Committee. The first Prayer (Prayer A) now had bits of the second stuck into it. We no longer look for Christ’s coming in glory, but only for his kingdom; and we do not celebrate his sacrifice (with a clear back-reference to his offering of himself upon the cross or, if folk wanted to broaden the sense, a reference to his death, resurrection and ascension) – instead we make the memorial of Christ. And so ‘memorial’, ditched from the leading prayer 30 years before, became the central verbal noun of the anamnesis. This echoes the old story – those who don’t know their history are likely to repeat it. And I cannot wholly restrain a minor groan as I articulate at the Eucharist the anamnesis of Prayer A.

✍ *Colin Buchanan is a former Bishop of Woolwich.*