

# End the Week with CME - July 4, 2008 4th Jul 2008

Welcome to End the Week with CME! This weekly email is sent automatically to Clergy and Readers in the diocese (if you don't want to receive it, please send an email to [CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org](mailto:CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org)) but anyone is welcome to subscribe to the list, and we are especially keen to pass it on to any interested lay people, especially those who may have responsibility for preaching. To subscribe they simply need to email [CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org](mailto:CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org).

## Changes to my post

Last week, with the ordination, I laid down responsibility for working with curates in Coventry diocese. This means that I am now Adviser for CME, Local Ministry and Lay Development but no longer for IME 2 (Initial Ministerial Education, Phase 2). A new person will be appointed to work with curates, reflecting the approach of Ministry Division as it seeks to link pre- and post-ordination training more closely in a seamless whole.

So I shall continue to have responsibility for the further development of clergy and Readers after each have completed their initial training (which happens for Readers when they are admitted, and for clergy when they complete their curacy). Please keep requests for grants, sabbaticals, etc. coming!

## Offa House Vacancy

Offa House, the Coventry Diocesan Retreat House & Conference Centre, has an immediate vacancy for a part-time Cook / Chef to:

- Prepare, cook meals and bake, using mainly fresh ingredients,
- work efficiently and with high food hygiene standards,
- offer some flexibility in working hours, including weekends,
- fit in with a friendly and supportive team.

If you are keen to begin work in catering we can provide training.

For further information contact: Eleanor Godber, Offa House, Village Street, Offchurch, Leamington Spa CV33 9AS. Telephone 01926 423309 Email: [offahouse@btconnect.com](mailto:offahouse@btconnect.com)

# Coming Up

## Atonement

Wednesday 17 September 2008, 10am - 3pm at Offa House.

A study day on the recent film, looking at themes of forgiveness and reparation, and how far the film reflects a Christian understanding. It is not necessary to have seen the film before coming on the day!

With Vaughan Roberts and Richard Cooke. Cost: £30 (including lunch). Grants for half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through [sarah.palmer@covcofe.org](mailto:sarah.palmer@covcofe.org). (Please note that there will be no evening repeat for this study day.)

## One World, Many Faiths - engaging with global spirituality

Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 July 2008

9am - 5pm both days (with optional Saturday evening 6pm - 9pm with meal)

St George's School, 31 Calthorpe Road, Edgebaston, Birmingham B15 1RX

Looking at the following:

- Foundations - fears and questions; culture and worldviews
- Common Ground - shared valued between faiths
- Truth & Transformation - as understood in Animism and Judaism
- Peace & Conflict - as understood in Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism
- Power & Authority - as understood in Humanism, New Age and Nihilism
- Salvation & Destiny - as understood in Buddhism and Christianity
- Uniqueness of Jesus - exploring the claims of the New Testament

Price £80 (£40 for students and unwaged). For more information visit [www.workshop.org.uk](http://www.workshop.org.uk), email [admin@anvil.org.uk](mailto:admin@anvil.org.uk) or call 0114 288 8816.

## Ministry Where You Work?

Sunday 13 July 2008, 2 - 5pm at St John's Church Centre, Westwood Heath.

An invitation to all Readers, OLMs and NSMs in the Coventry Diocese. Come and discuss:

- Could you have a ministry at work?
- How might God be calling you to expand your ministry?
- An opportunity to explore possibilities beyond your parish role.

If you would like to attend, or find out more information, contact Felicity Smith (chair of the Coventry Ministers in Secular Employment group) on 01926 492452 or at [felicity@fandi.me.uk](mailto:felicity@fandi.me.uk).

## **Meeting with Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem**

Monday 14 July 2008, 7.30pm (venue to be confirmed)

Bishop Suheil Dawani (the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem) and his wife, Shafeeqa, will be visiting for the Lambeth Conference in July, and have offered to meet with people in the Coventry Diocese to share something of their experiences of life in Jerusalem. (Mrs Dawani is actively involved in reconciliation ministry herself.)

If you would like to attend the meeting, please contact Warwick House by Tuesday 24 June. If numbers are small, the meeting will be held at Warwick House, but otherwise, a larger venue will be needed. If you are able to offer the use of a church hall, please let Warwick House know. Telephone 024 7641 2627 or email [Bishop.Warwick@CovCofE.org](mailto:Bishop.Warwick@CovCofE.org).

## **Unity in Diversity: celebrating the breadth of Reader Ministry**

The Central Readers' Council National Conference will be held Friday 12 - Sunday 14 September 2008 at the University of North Wales, Bangor.

The keynote speaker will be Canon Dr Christina Baxter CBE, and the Principal of St Johns College, Nottingham will be leading an exploration of 1 Corinthians 12. There will also be a number of seminars, led by Readers who are involved in different aspects of ministry outside the church, such as prisons, hospices, bereavement, education etc.

A core part of the weekend will be worship and fellowship, and throughout the weekend there will be an exhibition of various resources relevant to Reader Ministry.

Cost: £170 per head if you book before 30 June / £180 per head for bookings after 30 June.

For more information, contact Heidi Cartledge at [hcartledge@fightingclose.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:hcartledge@fightingclose.freeserve.co.uk) or on 01926 641751. If you are planning to attend, or have already booked, please let Chris Haines (Warden of Readers) know at [chris@haines.uk.com](mailto:chris@haines.uk.com) or on 01788 576279.

[www.readers.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.readers.cofe.anglican.org)

## Mission Shaped Church Training Course

This course is sponsored by Coventry Diocesan Cursillo Community and aims to help church leaders become more mission-focussed and effective in making disciples.

The sessions will take place monthly on Wednesday evenings, 7.30 - 9.30pm, at Offa House. The cost is £6 per session.

- 24 September 2008: **Mission Shaped Church**  
**Exploring 'big picture thinking' about national and local changes, and what we can learn and do ourselves.**
- 29 October 2008: **Collaborative Leadership and Teamwork**  
**Led by Revd Dr Richard Cooke, diocesan lay training officer.**
- 3 December 2008: **Being a Mission Shaped Leader**  
**Led by James Lawrence, CPAS.**
- 27 January 2009: **Mission and Managing Change**  
**Led by John Briffet, chair of an international charity.**
- 4 March 2009: **Shaping the Church for Mission in the Power of the Holy Spirit**  
**Led by Canon Peter Watkins.**
- 1 April 2009: **A Mission Shaped Diocese** Led by the Rt Revd Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry

To book, send your name, address, telephone number and email address to:

Jenny Walsh, The Cottage, North Street, Marton, Rugby CV23 9RJ

including the details of the sessions you wish to attend, and a cheque for the appropriate amount (£6 per session) made payable to 'Coventry Cursillo'.

There are only 20 places available per session, so book early to avoid disappointment.

## Notes on the Gospel Readings for Trinity 8 (Sunday July 13, 2008) Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23

# The Parable of the Sower

I was sitting in a restaurant a couple of years ago when a girl of about eight, at the next table, asked her dad a riddle: 'What goes on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon, and three legs in the evening?'

It's one of the oldest riddles in the world, supposedly asked by the Sphinx of Oedipus in ancient Greece.

Thousands of years later, this girl was still fascinated by it. She was a bit put out when her dad got the answer straight away (he might have played along a bit, I thought): 'A human being.' 'Oh Dad' she said, 'You've heard it before!'

Try this one:

*Into this world I came hanging,*

*But when from the same I was ganging,*

*I was cruelly battered and squeezed,*

*And men with my blood were pleased.*

(The answer is at the end of this email.)

Like the girl's father, you probably knew the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx. But the other riddle is harder to crack. That's because, by and large, riddles operate like one-way codes: they're easy once you know the answer, but without the answer they could mean many things.

Jesus taught 'in parables' (Matt. 13.3). Behind the New Testament's Greek word *parabole*, lies a Hebrew word, *mashal*, which primarily means 'proverb' or wise saying, but was also used more popularly for any saying that was deliberately puzzling, such as a riddle, and even for allegorical stories and prophetic oracles. 'Parable' represents not so much a genre of saying as an observation about its content: Jesus' sayings were usually difficult to interpret.

This was undoubtedly deliberate. In the context of first-century Galilee and Judea, the wise man who offered deliberately coded sayings could keep himself safe. John the Baptist, whose fate we shall hear about in Matthew 14, spoke much more openly in denouncing others, especially Herod, and paid the price. Jesus' strategy was subtler. The parable of the Mustard Seed ((Matt. 13.31-32), for example, could be read as a threat to Herod's rule in Galilee (more on this in two weeks' time). But on the other hand, it's just a story about a mustard seed...

The rather puzzling passage about Jesus deliberately keeping his parables obscure, which has been cut out

of the lectionary passage for this week (Matt. 13.10-17), is in fact crucial to understanding them: 'to you the secret of the Kingdom of Heaven has been given, but to those on the outside it has not been given' (Matt. 13.11). Tom Thatcher, in a fascinating and creative recent book notes that 'The ability to answer a riddle, especially riddles that seem vague, is a mark of membership...[of] a community of knowledge' (Jesus the Riddler - the power of ambiguity in the gospels WJKP 2006, p.24). And that is what the disciples are becoming, a community of knowledge who will pass on the teaching of Jesus.

Matthew 13 is the third of the five discourses which Matthew has added to Mark's gospel. Its theme is the Kingdom of Heaven, and it is all in parables. How, after all, can the Kingdom be explained? The language will always be elusive, for humans cannot grasp the full implications of what life is like if God is in their midst. These parables were designed to liberate imagination and encourage people to see how Jesus' actions demonstrated the new order of the Kingdom: 'what the world would be if God were directly and immediately in charge' ( J.D.Crossan Jesus: a revolutionary biography HarperCollins,1994, p.55).

How does the parable of the sower do this? It is, if you will forgive the pun, a kind of 'root' parable, and all three synoptic gospels use it and its explanation as a kind of key to all the others. The important point is that Jesus explains this parable, and given the form of riddles discussed above, perhaps we can be more confident than many interpreters of the past have been that the interpretation originated with Jesus and was not simply the later invention of the church. The setting of the disciples later gathering round Jesus and asking, 'What does it really mean?' (Matt. 13.10) seems realistic. Jesus is inducting them into a new way of seeing, where the riddles have answers and a new perspective on the Kingdom is opened up.

At first sight this is a story about land. Land itself and its productivity was literally a matter of life and death. If the land didn't produce a crop, hunger and even famine would soon follow. But if the land did not yield a harvest, then the Old Testament suggested that it was a sign of God withholding his blessing. The people had to co-operate with God though, to bring out the harvest. If you sowed on rock or amongst thorns, there wasn't a lot God could do to help you. But investing the seed in the good soil would lead to a bumper crop, and the blessing of God would be shared with rejoicing.

So are they co-operating with God, or going against him? As so often there is a political edge to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom. If you are struggling to raise a crop because Herod and others in authority take so much of it away, or seize your land for their own purposes, what has happened to the Kingdom God wants, where no-one should be poor or hungry, as the ancient law of Israel proclaims? In God's Kingdom the crops will flourish and there will be enough for all. Following the word of God (both the Old Testament and the words of Jesus, a big claim) will lead to fruitfulness in the future. But to do so may mean going against the norms of the society around. 'If you have an ear - hear!' (Matt. 13.9).

Once you know the answer, the riddle is open to your understanding. But if you have the secret of the Kingdom given to you then responsibility comes too. For you must share the secret with others, so that they may blossom and flourish too. There is no room for complacency in this Kingdom.

## **And Finally... some riddles**

1. What goes up and down stairs without moving?
2. Give it food and it will live; give it water and it will die.

3. What can you catch but not throw?
4. I run, yet I have no legs. What am I?
5. Take one out and scratch my head, I am now black but once was red.
6. Remove the outside, cook the inside, eat the outside, throw away the inside.
7. What goes around the world and stays in a corner?
8. What gets wetter the more it dries?
9. The more there is, the less you see.
10. They come at night without being called and are lost in the day without being stolen.

*Answers:*

1. Carpet
2. Fire
3. A cold
4. A nose
5. A match
6. Sweetcorn
7. A stamp
8. Towel
9. Darkness
10. Stars

(If you didn't get the one earlier, the answer is a grape.)

**That's all folks!**

**Richard**

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