

End The Week with CME

- July 18, 2008

18th 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) 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.

This will be the last 'End the Week' for the Summer. We'll be back in September in a slightly different form.

Prayer Request

Joshua Walker, the son of Peter and Ruth Walker at Keresley, has a septic arthritic hip, a rare and serious condition which seems to affect teenage boys. He is now out of hospital, but please pray for him as he has to cope with the medication which is in liquid form, and difficult to take, and his movements will be severely restricted for 6 weeks. Please pray also for Peter and Ruth as they look after him and his sister Joanna.

Changing Roles and The Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship

Some changes have taken place in my role recently, so that I have relinquished responsibility for Initial Ministerial Education (Phase 2) – what was once upon a time known as Post-Ordination Training. This means that I no longer have responsibility for supporting and supervising the overall training of curates and their training incumbents. A new half-time post has been created for IME2, though it has not yet been filled.

This frees me to give more time to Local Ministry and Lay Development, which have been my responsibility since last September, alongside Continuing Ministerial Education (which is now defined as supporting clergy and Readers once their initial training is completed).

Local Ministry, which has largely comprised the support and development of MLTs, has been reviewed and

the review is available at:

<http://www.coventrydiocese.org/upload/file/finalreport020308.pdf>.

There will be more discussion about the way forward for MLTs through the Autumn.

The Lay Development programme is, at the moment, largely focused on developing the new Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship (BCD). The official launch will be in late September, when we hope to have a full year's programme fixed and available. Clergy will receive a mailing with the details in mid September, but information will be available on the Training pages of the diocesan website at <http://www.coventry.anglican.org/ministry/learning/trainingstudy/>. The introductory leaflet, answers to frequently asked questions, and a booking form for the module on Jesus and the Gospels are already accessible there. If you wish to know more please email Sarah at cme@covcofe.org.

One of the effects of the introduction of BCD is a major change to the format of Reader training in the diocese. A new Reader training course will begin in September 2009, and will last approximately fourteen months instead of the current two years. Candidates will have to complete the BCD before embarking on Reader training as such. Therefore anyone who might be looking for selection to train as a Reader can begin by taking part in some BCD modules in preparation, though of course completing the BCD so does not automatically imply that someone will be selected for Reader ministry.

Elizabeth Dyke, who has been Director of Initial Training for Readers for the last six years, is stepping down from that post; this is a good opportunity to say thank you for the hard work, common sense and efficiency which have made Elizabeth such a valuable member of the team. She remains vicar of Dunchurch and Thurlaston, so we shall still see plenty of her! No successor to Elizabeth has yet been appointed, so queries about Reader training are best addressed for the time being to Chris Haines (email: chris@haines.uk.com), the Warden of Readers.

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. (Please note that there will be no evening repeat for this study day.)

Rites on the Way Out: exploring the mystery of death

Thursday 9 October 2008, 10.30am - 3.00pm at Birmingham Cathedral

Speakers: Canon Anne Horton (parish priest) & Hilary Al Rasheed (funeral director)

As well as the Funeral Service, Common Worship provides us with a number of other liturgies and services to use with the dying and the bereaved. But do we actually use these services to the full?

This day is an opportunity to explore the vision behind the Common Worship provision, and then to restructure our thinking about the way we celebrate dying and death, so that we can use the full provision in ways which help us all live and support each other more helpfully through the mystery of death.

Cost is £15 (full), £12 (Praxis Members). Registration and refreshments from 9.45am. Clergy and Readers from the Coventry Diocese may ask Praxis to claim against their CME allowance. See www.midlands-praxis.org.uk.

To book, contact Revd Peter Furber, The Vicarage, 8 Christ Church Road, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 3BE. You can email Peter at peter@furber.me.uk or call him on 01684 574106.

Mission Shaped Church Training Course

The purpose of this course is to resource church leaders in transitioning to becoming more mission-focussed and effective in disciple-making, and it is being sponsored by the Coventry Diocesan Cursillo Community.

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 10 (Sunday July 27, 2008) Matthew 13. 31-33, 44-52

The man who planted his fields with mustard

Who on earth plants weeds in a garden? This is the riddle at the heart of Jesus' parable of the mustard seed. We've heard this parable so many times before that it can easily lapse into the hackneyed cliché of our own proverb 'great oaks from little acorns grow'. But something much more quirky is going on here.

Looking at the parable of the sower a couple of weeks ago, we saw how Jesus' parables often have the character of riddles or puzzles. They take the familiar but give it an unfamiliar – often absurd – twist. And the twist in the tale here is that the Kingdom of heaven can somehow be like this crazy farmer, who introduces mustard into his field (13.31). The main characters in Jesus' stories are often crazy people, ripe for ridicule. Think of the prodigal father, hitching up his skirts and running down the street to greet his runaway son in a most undignified way. Or the vineyard owner we shall meet in a few weeks who gives all his workers the same wage, regardless of how many hours they've worked. You can almost hear the muttering on the edge of the crowd: 'And the Kingdom of Heaven is like this?' No wonder they sometimes thought Jesus was out of his mind (Mark 3.21, one of the few verses from Mark that Matthew does not incorporate in his own).

Middle Eastern mustard is only distantly related to its English namesake. It is a small seed with two important qualities: it grows big and it grows fast. Within eight weeks or so it can be three metres tall. No wonder birds like to make their nests in it (13.32). The Roman writer, Pliny the Elder, emphasised its medicinal benefits, but also that, once you have planted it, you can't get rid of it. Its tiny seeds get absolutely everywhere and they sprout at once (Natural History 19.170).

So it's not what you want in your fields. Our vegetable patch is festooned with unwanted CDs to deter the pigeons (which are fatter at Warmington than I have ever seen them before – it's a wonder some of them can get off the ground!). Whatever the first century equivalent was, no farmer wanted a mustard tree in the middle of his carefully cultivated crops to entice the birds and encourage them to pick at the seeds and nibble at the new growth.

Yet this farmer apparently deliberately introduces mustard into his field. For one thing, mustard was regarded in rabbinic law as a violation of purity if it was planted in a garden: in other words, it was seen as a pernicious weed connected with sin, an odd choice to make as an example of the Kingdom of Heaven. For another, it simply isn't common sense to act as the farmer apparently does. If he does it deliberately he must be mad, if he does it accidentally he's incompetent.

Some have speculated that the quiriness of Jesus' parables may derive from them being drawn from the everyday gossip of the market places of the towns and villages of Galilee. You can imagine the foolish farmer who plants mustard (by mistake?) in his field being the talk of the towns for some time. 'Can you believe it?' 'You'll never guess what Jacob bar-Joseph of Cana did...' But somehow, Jesus points out that there is heavenly truth in the absurdity of the man who planted his fields with mustard.

First of all the story picks out the secret activity of the kingdom. It arrives mysteriously, and before you know it, it's all around you. The tiny mustard seeds, spreading as if by magic, suggest a Kingdom that arrives by stealth. As someone said to me the other day about this parable, it's a bit like Jack and the Beanstalk. A few small things can make all the difference. Second, the story presents the Kingdom as something subversive and not wanted. Galilee in particular was seen as a garden to be cultivated, offering rich crops and harvests from which the ruler, Herod Antipas, took his great wealth. Maybe Jesus saw himself as the mustard sower in Herod's fields, jeopardising in the name of God's Kingdom the carefully maintained economic balance from which Herod profited and others suffered.

It's often been pointed out that the 'right' comparison for the Kingdom of Heaven would have been the majestic cedar of Lebanon (see Ezekiel 17.22-24, for example). A grand and dignified image, many have seen the imagery of birds nesting as foreshadowing the gathering of the Gentiles, and this may be in view in Jesus' version of the parable too. But they are being gathered into a mustard tree, not a cedar of Lebanon, and as so often the audience would have been left scratching their heads. Did the choice of the mustard seed for his parable suggest that Jesus saw his proclamation of the Kingdom as disreputable and unexpected, as in fact it was criticised for being? Jesus did not bring the kind of Kingdom anyone expected, but could it be the real thing after all? More like mustard than cedar? Jesus gives no straight answer. Go and work it out for yourselves, he enigmatically implies.

And Finally...

Sub-prime Crisis in Japan

Following the problems in the sub-prime lending market in America and the run on Northern Rock in the UK, uncertainty has now hit Japan.

In the last 7 days Origami Bank has folded, Sumo Bank has gone belly up and Bonsai Bank announced plans to cut some of its branches.

Yesterday, it was announced that Karaoke Bank is up for sale and will likely go for a song while today shares in Kamikaze Bank were suspended after they nose-dived.

While Samurai Bank are soldiering on following sharp cutbacks, Ninja Bank are reported to have taken a hit, but they remain in the black.

Furthermore, 500 staff at Karate Bank got the chop and analysts report that there is something fishy going on at Sushi Bank where it is feared that staff may get a raw deal.

(Thanks to www.grovebooks.co.uk.)

That's all folks!

Richard

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