



F4

A local preachers' workshop

Local preachers and worship leaders, as part of their commitment to the Church, agree to undertake a programme of continuing development which hones and refreshes their skills. This workshop, set up in conjunction with the circuit local preachers/worship leaders' secretary, can contribute to that process either as part of a local preachers' meeting or on a separate occasion. [See CPD standing order 561(v).]

Purpose

To encourage local preachers/worship leaders to reflect on their own experience of workplace issues. To spur them on to engage with themes relevant to faith and work in the services which they conduct.

Content

1) *Introduction* Right from the early days of Methodism, local preachers have been important. As John Wesley began to travel widely and the movement began to spread, it became clear that the work could not continue to expand if it were entrusted only to ordained clergymen. There were many lay people among Wesley's helpers. Methodism has a great tradition in which the insights of the ordinary working man and woman are valued.

In their working lives, local preachers are on the 'front line'. They should well understand the everyday concerns and pressures which people face. Thus, they are ideally placed to reflect theologically on their experience and to develop themes related to daily life of immediate relevance to the lives of the congregation.

Sometimes when preparing services, it is easy to fall victim to tunnel vision which only engages with the biblical exposition of lectionary passages. However, local preachers have both the opportunity and responsibility to relate worship to experience, especially the working lives of the congregation. [It is important to note that whenever 'work' is mentioned in this paper, it refers to paid or voluntary work.]

2) A short clip from the 'Christian Life and Work' course DVD/video could be shown.

3) Ask one or two local preachers to reflect for a few minutes about issues which have been raised for them in the context of their daily work.

4) Divide the meeting into buzz groups of no more than four people and discuss some of the following matters.

- What are the issues, in the context of daily work, which are of most importance to you?
- What does Christian faith have to say that is of relevance to such issues?

Make a list of possible worship themes to help the congregation reflect on how Christian faith and work can inform and enrich each other.

- What Bible passages throw light on these themes?
- What experiences from your work or workplace might be used to develop such themes?

5) Report back at the end of the discussion. In reporting back first offer a list of work related themes.

Then suggest bible passages which illustrate them. Only if there is time, address the other questions.

Discerning the gifts of the kingdom community

Faith & work Faith & work Faith and work

- 6) *Close with prayers which relate faith and work.* Prayers from the Celtic tradition can be particularly helpful here.
- 7) *Circulate the themes.* Collect up the themes and Bible passages suggested at the meeting and circulate them, with any minutes of the meeting, so that all local preachers and worship leaders may be inspired and encouraged.
- 8) *For 'homework'* Develop one of the themes and use it in a service during the next quarter. Make notes as to what helped or hindered the conduct of the service and how it was received.
- 9) *A follow-up meeting* This could include people sharing ideas they had tried, and small groups could work on prayers for the world of work.

Preparation for the meeting

- Interview a couple of fellow local preachers or worship leaders to discover how they think their Christian faith relates to their working situation.
- Design a worship focus on the theme of work and display it at the meeting. For example, bring a coloured piece of fabric on which you can set out and reflect on items which relate to different jobs and activities [eg a laptop, a diary, tools of various kinds, a cookery book, cleaning equipment, paper and pens]. Or prepare some power point slides and handouts to circulate on the theme of faith and work.

Points to note

- Remember to include and affirm those who are retired, home-makers, students or unemployed. Their experiences of and encounters in daily life are just as important as those of others.
- The issue of unemployment is a painful one for many people. In our culture great stress is placed on productivity, achievement and success. We tend to value people for what they do rather than who they are. Christians have a tremendous message of hope in that we are all valued by a God who created us and delights in us. In the Methodist Covenant Prayer we say, "Let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you".

Resources

(DVD) *Christian Life and Work*, London, London Bible College Productions and Scripture Unionm, 2000 (available from www.liicc.org.uk/bookshop) (A video version is also available on request.)
The Northumbria Community, *Celtic Daily Prayer*, London, Collins, 2005 (See in particular the Canticle in Midday Prayer and the Expressions of Faith in Evening Prayer)

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