**Equipping Workplace Christians**

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**Church Models: Attractional, Missional, Community-centred**

*Which best describes your church?*

In an article in *Leadership Journal* in February 2014, Tom Nelson wrote that he had confessed to his congregation:

Against a backdrop of pindrop silence, I asked the congregation I served to forgive me. Not for sexual impropriety or financial misconduct, but for pastoral malpractice. I confessed I had spent the minority of my time equipping them for what they were called to do for the majority of their week.

I wanted to confess that because of my stunted theology, individual parishioners in my congregation were hindered in their spiritual formation, and ill-equipped in their God-given vocations. Our collective mission had suffered as well. I had failed to see, from Genesis to Revelation, the high importance of vocation and the vital connections between faith, work, and economics. Somehow, I had missed how the gospel speaks into every nook and cranny of life, connecting Sunday worship with Monday work in a seamless fabric of Holy Spirit-empowered faithfulness.

In this workshop we will look at some specific equipping activities within church services:

* Sermons
* Church Services
* Interviews

Equipping activities within church communities:

* Visiting workers
* Training workplace Christians
* Mentoring workers

Finally, equipping activities beyond the church walls:

* Chaplaincy in the workplace
* Church presence in the workplace

**Sermons**

*What has your church done?*

The problem

The solution:

* Beware sacred/secular divide: including ‘ministry’, hierarchy of professions, spiritualising work in Scripture, go or send, work as evil
* Preach on work: as good, as evil, as able to be redeemed, in the New Creation
* Become familiar with the workplace: visit workplaces, read business section of news services, address work issues: stress, work-life, ambition, bullying…
* Have a group of people to workshop sermon passages = “what this Bible passage mean in your context?”
* Think: how will my congregation apply this on Monday?

**In church services**

Setting up the church

Leading the service

Songs/hymns

Psalms

Prayers

Benedictions

**Interviews**

*Does your church ever do these? What questions are asked?*

A pastor who has experienced the transformative impact of interviews of workers is Jim Mullins, from Redemption Church in Arizona. He reports that, over time, “These interviews have slowly helped all of us to understand that ‘vocation is integral, not incidental, to the mission of God in the world,’ as Steve Garber says. We have noticed increased theological depth and gospel intentionality in our congregants and their work. This is the work of the Spirit, but we are delighted that he is using the interviews as an instrument of his grace.”

Four questions:

* How would you describe your work?
* As an image-bearer of God, how does your work reflect some aspect of God’s work?
* How does your work give you a unique vantage point into the brokenness of the world?
* Jesus commands us to “love our neighbours as ourselves.” How does your work function as an opportunity to love and serve others?

**Visiting workers**

Benefits

*Does this happen in your church? Have you ever been visited?*

R. Paul Stevens in his book *Work Matters* says that 122 out of 132 public appearances by Jesus were in the marketplace. Jesus spent the majority of his life humbly working in an ordinary job. He demonstrated his awareness of the workplace through his parables with 45 of 52 parables set in the marketplace: “fields, sheepfolds, vineyards, kitchens, palaces, courts, fisheries, and more.”

**Training workplace Christians**

Questions workplace Christians ask

Options

Wesley Methodist Church, Singapore

*Other examples?*

Tom Nelson, writing for the Center for Faith & Work at LeTourneau University has written a series of questions that congregation members who work would like to explore with their pastors:

* Is the work I do outside church important to God?
* What’s the biblical purpose of business?
* What does a robust Monday-morning faith look like?
* What are the ethical dimensions for a Christian in business?
* What kind of corporate culture should I help create as a follower of Christ?
* How should I treat employees as a Christian boss?
* What products and services can, should, and shouldn’t be offered?
* How should I talk about my faith in the workplace?
* How can a business contribute to human flourishing and God’s kingdom?

**Mentoring workers**

*How would you define mentoring?*

Fresh expressions

Different types of mentoring

Depending on the needs of the mentoree, there may be different types of mentoring they are seeking. You may even move between these different kinds of mentoring with the same mentoree.

* Structured Bible studies
* Dealing with a particular issue
* Skills development
* Exploring spiritual practices
* Open-ended
* Accountability
* Prayer focus
* All of life

**Chaplaincy in the workplace**

Formal and informal

* Chaplains are **pastors**: they need to be able to listen care and attention, empathise, understand, maintain confidentiality, and seek to be available to those in need.
* Chaplains are **interpreters**: they try to identify, understand and share in issues affecting the culture of a particular context and what God is doing there and to help the people there to understand God. This means winning the right to be heard and sometimes being in the role of critical friend, mediator, reconciler, speaking truth to power.
* Chaplains are **ambassadors**: they represent the Church, and they also report back to the Church about the new insights they have gained.
* Chaplains are **pray-ers**: they pray for the places where they work and when it is appropriate they pray with the people who are there sometimes creating new forms of worship for their context.
* Chaplains are **midwives**: enabling the birth of awareness of God in the place where they serve.
* Chaplains are **connectors**: they connect their faith with their context by being chaplains to all and demonstrate gospel values such as compassion and concern for social justice.
* Chaplains are **guests** in the contexts they serve, but often work by acting as hosts crossing bridges to provide hospitality, welcome and interaction with others.

**Church presence in the workplace**

Some ideas: adoption, clean-up, Christmas party, chaplaincy on-site, church in the marketplace, business as church

*Other examples?*

**Conclusion**

Church of England, Setting God’s People Free

*Other examples?*

Setting God's People Free (SGPF) is a programme of change to enable the whole people of God to live out the Good News of Jesus confidently in all of life, Sunday to Saturday.

Our focus is to facilitate a shift in culture, not a narrow, centrally driven strategy. The programme seeks to implement proposals from the [Setting God’s People Free report](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/GS%20Misc%202056%20Setting%20God%27s%20People%20Free.pdf) presented to General Synod in 2017. These proposals seek effective ways to build up the whole people of God, with a confident faith and vision for the Kingdom of God, which is lived out in homes, schools, communities and places of work.

* SGPF **looks beyond and outside** Church structures to the whole people of God at work in communities and wider society - *not to 'fixing' the institutional Church*.
* SGPF **challenges**a culture that over-emphasises a **distinction between sacred and secular** to a fuller vision of calling within the all-encompassing scope of the Gospel – *not to limit vocation to church-based roles.*
* SGPF seeks to **affirm and enable**the complementary roles and vocations of **clergy and of lay people**, grounded in our common baptism - *not to blur or undermine these distinctions.*
* SGPF proposes **imaginative steps** to nourish, illuminate and connect what is working already in and through parishes and communities of faith *- not to institute a top-down approach*.

Tom Nelson on the rewards of his new approach:

We are still learning and unlearning as we go, doing our best to navigate what it means to narrow the Sunday to Monday gap. But I'm encouraged when I receive an email from a CEO or a stay-at-home mum or a student or a retiree in my congregation who now see their Monday lives through the transforming lens of a biblical theology of vocation. I find increasing joy in seeing congregants embrace their paid and non-paid work as an offering to God and a contribution to the common good. Many of my parishioners have a bounce in their step and a new excitement about all of life. For them, the gospel has become coherent and more compelling. They look forward to sharing it with others in various vocational settings and spheres of influence throughout the week.