

## Briefing Paper on the Westcott House Mission 2006

### *'Mission as Process'*

In November of 2005 a group of students and staff from Westcott House travelled to Manchester to spend a weekend with the PCC of St.Clement's Church, Chorlton-cum-Hardy. The aim of the weekend was to begin exploring what 'mission' might mean to this congregation and discussing the possibility of collaborating on a week of activities to articulate this vision. It was both a challenging and rewarding weekend. There was a sense of palpable nervousness and fear from all parties of what doing 'mission in the community' might look like.

Following this initial meeting there were two further weekend visits over the course of the academic year, where the team from Westcott and the PCC discussed the idea further and came up with firm plans for the week as a result of articulating a workable missiology for this context. At the second meeting in March 2006, the idea of the mission as being a holistic and celebratory event for body, mind and spirit emerged, and from this seed the 'Festival of Faith' began to grow. At the final meeting in June 2006 we spent time looking at the details of the week, how it would be managed and the arrangements for follow-up activities. The week itself took place on 17<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> September, 2006. A final debrief/reflection session has been arranged for the new year when Westcott House will host members of St.Clement's PCC and congregation. The House looks forward to welcoming the Reverend Hilary Barber, incumbent of St.Clement's, to preach at a special service of the Word on the eve of St.Clement, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006.



*Commissioning Liturgy* with Special Guest the Rt.Rev'd Michael Lewis, Bishop of Middleton (left) and *the Festival Banner*, inviting all around to participate in the Festival of Faith (below). Please take a look at the website [www.stclement-chorlton.org.uk/faith](http://www.stclement-chorlton.org.uk/faith) for more information about the weeks events.



### *Learning opportunities*

Because the Mission project was carried out as a collaborative process over a year, Students and staff from Westcott House were able to travel along side the community, reflecting with them on the whole issue of mission from concept to practical outcome.

This was a rich experience and provided a framework for students to independently reflect on the issues surrounding the contextualization of a liberal/catholic missiology in response to the report 'Mission Shaped Church' (CHP 2004). Working in such a way allowed both the parish and the students involved, to begin to articulate a response and a strategy to speak to current church thinking on mission. As a result, students and staff are hoping to write a formal paper describing the years events from process to praxis and discussing the wider implications for mission and evangelism in the Church of England.

During the week, students had moving faith encounters with members of the public, primary and secondary school children and members of the congregation and parish. There were also practical opportunities for working collaboratively, leading schools work, work with the elderly, exploring social justice issues, engaging with the public and local media, discussing multi-faith issues and topical concerns and being immersed in a focused parish based activity for one week.

### Spotlight Festival activity

Amongst their involvement in all festival activities, students from Westcott produced a programme of schools work in collaboration with local teachers and engaged with primary and secondary schools in Chorlton during the festival. Children from reception to Year 6 were invited into church to explore the theme of angels and then work was carried out in class spanning the subject areas of information technology, art and design, english, numeracy and music. Meanwhile the labyrinth was taken into a local high school and used as the basis for RE lessons with each year group (7-11). The Labyrinth was also taken out into the community and set up in public spaces (the local shopping precinct) to encourage discussion. Ordinands were able to talk and reflect with pupils and the public on their experience.



The Labyrinth, at Chorlton High School (above) and the final assembly at the end of the week for Chorlton CofE Primary School (below)



'Pints of view', (to the right) a topical discussion evening with (from left to right) Rabbi Brian Fox, Bishop Michael Lewis, Chair, Dr Sharon Jones (Ordinand), Imam, Abu Essa and Michael, a Christian Aid expert on the Middle East



*'One of the most moving experiences for me during the mission week was talking with a year 8 (12 year old) girl called Sally, at Chorlton High.*

*We had taken the Labyrinth for some of the pupils to experience, and were chatting to them individually as they came out at the end. I asked Sally how the experience had been for her, whether she'd got anything out of it, whether there was anything she'd found particularly helpful.*

*She paused, thinking for a moment, as if she couldn't quite find the words to articulate her experience. Then she said, "well, it's made me realise that there is a God, that God's there, that he exists."*

*I was both taken aback and really quite moved by this direct, yet profound response. The final station in the labyrinth, which invited you to plant your footprints in some sand, had been particularly significant for Sally. She spoke of how she'd never thought about what impression of her life would remain after she had died, and how in the Labyrinth she'd suddenly realised how important it was.*

*It had clearly been a transforming experience for her, and I realised afterwards that sharing in her reflections had been a transforming experience for me too.'*

Kate Stowe, Ordinand

Many thanks must be expressed to the staff team at St.Clement's, Reverend Hilary Barber (incumbent), Captain Phillip Gay (Church Army), Reverend Ian Dellinger (curate) and members of the PCC and congregation. Special mention must be given to Katy Leese, Festival administrator and co-ordinator, and those members of the congregation who acted as hosts for the week. Thanks must also be expressed to Reverend Tom Clammer, who acted as an external consultant and the team from Westcott who gave of their own time to participate in this project throughout the year, namely Jan Ashton, Nigel Dawkins, Paul Dominiak, Vicky Johnson, Sharon Jones, Janet MacKenzie, Robert Stanier, Kate Stowe, Simon Tibbs and Rev. Dr Michael Beasley (Chaplain) without whose enthusiasm this project could not have happened.

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