

**Theological Reflection
based on experiences from the
Chaplaincy in a Casino**

Jenny Spouge

Theological Reflection for Workplace Matters based on experiences from the Chaplaincy in a Casino

Introduction

Built into the funding to Workplace Matters for the Chaplaincy Project at the Casino was 2 days for a piece of theological reflection. 16 hours work implies that this is not going to be a large thesis! Consequently I was unsure of the direction to take and debated a number of possibilities, such as undertaking the reflection on work-life balance or gambling. However an Amazon search shows myriad titles on the former topic, and various papers have already been produced on the latter, including Methodism's own 1992 statement on gambling and the joint 2007/9 paper "Against the odds...?" with the Salvation Army in response to the 2005 Gambling Act. If I were to consider this, I would first need to discover what had already been written by other Christian denominations, and possibly other faiths, then ascertain whether there was anything more to be said, and if so, for whom this would be of use. This seemed rather an academic exercise and not of great practical relevance to chaplains, or even really utilising any of my own experience as a chaplain in a casino.

In discussion with my Spiritual Director we realised that it is the stories that are important - people's lives, the impact of their circumstances, both personal and work-related - which they have shared with me. We therefore determined that I consider taking some stories that have made me think, and reflecting more deeply on these using some tools I have previously developed for potential use by theological students. The first is a learning journal adapted from the one used by Social Work students engaging in reflective practice on their own work experience during their degree programme with the University of Bedfordshire, and the second is based on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral that underpins the Methodist denomination (Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience). These tools appear as Appendices 1 and 2.

The second tool allows for the accumulating of a range of potentially useful resources for reflection - however the advice to Social Work students is to choose one theory for their reflection on their practice, when a number of different theories may be valid. I therefore have followed that advice - and chosen one of the identified pieces for further reading and reflection. I have then used a variety of art media to develop the reflections. For the first piece I used a method gleaned from a creative retreat and developed the reflection into a piece of art executed with my non-writing hand and painting with my fingers. For the second I used clay and set myself just 30mins to produce an image. The third was executed in textiles - my medium of choice, and a piece that took much longer and was adapted by discussions with others for this reflection - and the fourth utilised magazines for collage. I don't expect you, the reader, to necessarily 'get' anything from the artwork, the spiritual benefit is in the process: the feel of the materials, the blending of colours, the use of the other side of the brain and the total absorption in making something which frees some space for God to speak through the chosen words being used for reflection.

However, I do hope at least some of what follows may also create a model for use by others in different areas of ministry.

Jenny Spouge
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Story 1 - The Cycle of Life

Context

A young woman asked for a conversation. She was pregnant with their first child but was struggling with feelings of guilt and an inability to share the joy of that experience with her husband as he was preoccupied with his mother dying at home far away.

Initial Reflection

We explored understandings of life and death - and she shared having some faith and belief in "heaven" so that death is not the end. This is probably one of the most "religious" or "spiritual" conversations I have had in the casino.

Mostly I think she needed to talk it through, to be able to find a little of the joy again and let go of the feelings of guilt, but also to be prepared for supporting her husband (and his sister) in the forthcoming bereavement.

Sources of Insight for Reflection

<p>Tradition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words of hope in the funeral service (MWB p448-477) • An Act of Thanksgiving after the Birth of a Child (MWB p399-403) • Andrew T. Murphy's beautiful christening hymn (StF No 540) 	<p>Scripture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 139.1-18 • Luke 2.29-30 • Revelation 21.4 • Isaiah 25.6-8 • Ecclesiastes 3.1-8 • Ecclesiastes 7.1-2 (though I am not sure I could use this with others!)
<p>Reason</p> <p>Psychology of the bereavement process (and I did give her a booklet outlining that and with suitable resources)</p>	<p>Experience</p> <p>A previous reflection written during Advent with the preacher's emphasis on light and its safety when it occurred to me that for a baby the dark of the womb is safer than the act of being born into the light:</p> <p>News of a pending birth: A spark of new life forming in the dark of the womb. Warm darkness, safe darkness, holding the growing life-light. Ready, when the time has come to leave the darkness be birthed into the light of this world. Cold light, risky light, for a tiny child.</p> <p>Child, who carries the true light: challenge the false light, illuminate dangerous darkness and bring us all into the glorious everlasting day of the Kingdom. © Jenny Spouge (Advent 2011)</p>

Further Reflection



And now you enter this great story:
a work of art by God's own hand,
moulded from all creation's glory,
a life completely loved and planned.

© Andrew T Murphy ¹

Ecclesiastes 3.1-8

The Good News version begins this passage: "Everything that happens in this world happens at the time God chooses"², but I have great difficulties with that way of expressing it. That to me sounds like it is all pre-destined and too readily leads to a sort of resigned acceptance: there is nothing we can do that will make any difference. It's all going to happen anyway whether we like it or not!

For me that does not tie in with the image of God that gels with my experience to date. While at times I may feel I am being 'booted' into things I would prefer to avoid, generally my experience of being totally loved chimes with that of Francis Spufford when arguing against the theodicy that we suffer because God has a plan in which our suffering is necessary: "If love is love, it can't manipulate. If love is love, it can't treat those it loves as means to an end, even a beneficial one. Love is love because it

¹ Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, (2011) *Singing the Faith*, London: Hymns Ancient and Modern Ltd (v5)

² (1976) Good News Bible. Swindon: United Bible Societies

sees its loved ones as ends in themselves, not tools or instruments to achieve some further goal.”³

The NIV puts it: “There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven”⁴ and I find it easier to accept that sense of appropriateness: high summer is not the time for snowdrops to be in bloom, babies do not walk as soon as they are born - not human ones at least, even if most antelope have to get up pretty fast! We do all die in due course - so is it right for medical science to preserve life “at all costs”? And perhaps more debatable: Is it right for people to have plastic surgery to keep an appearance of youth, and other scientific interventions to extend life artificially, especially when such options are only open to the wealthy while the poor die of easily (and often cheaply) preventable diseases?

Should Christians be working to ensure everyone has the chance of “things happening in the right time”, rather than some dying prematurely from childhood disease which have been eradicated in other parts of the world for example?

I pray we may tear down the structures that imprison peoples and build new ones based on Kingdom values, so that those who currently mourn will have a time to dance. There will be a time when we all dance together.

³ Spufford, F. (2012) *Unapologetic*. London: Faber and Faber (p99)

⁴ (1979) Holy Bible, New International Version. London: Hodder and Stoughton

Story 2 - Breaking the Chains

Context

There are three issues of work practice for this reflection, all of which seem to have some commonality in terms of the ensuing reflection.

1. Many staff are struggling to cope with the new shift rota system 'imposed from on high', which has required the managers to consider the flow of customers from previous weeks and apportion staff accordingly. However it has meant people have been starting at different times, working different length shifts, hence ending at different times, and getting different lengths of time in between shifts for sleep. They are struggling to even remember the shift pattern they are working, let alone getting their bodies to cope.
2. A staff room discussion began when Channel 4 did a report on zero-hours contracts which have risen hugely in UK in the last 5 years (and which are being used by Rank). One staff member queried whether these are being used to massage unemployment figures as they count as 'employed' and certainly the figures do seem to show that is the case. A general discussion followed of unfairness on people with bills to pay etc of such an arrangement which is also seen as management getting out of responsibilities to workers.
3. Letters were received by staff just before Christmas informing them that they would not be getting a pay rise this year, as the company had not met targets (though someone thought they had made £3million profit), and that the life assurance would drop to twice final salary rather than thrice unless staff wanted to make it up themselves.

Initial Reflections

1. While I can see the underpinning logic for the shift rota arrangement there is not always a match from one week to the next in terms of customer throughput anyway, and I am seriously concerned as to what this is doing to staff, physically with the lack of sleep and emotionally too. Does the latter impact on their relationships, at home and at work? And what about their ability to provide good customer service - is one business requirement jeopardising another?
2. It may help the organisation to 'try staff out' before awarding them a better contract of employment, but that trial could also be achieved by a probationary period. If an individual is having to juggle a variety of zero-hour contracts to gain even a half-decent wage, it can be very stressful - and throughly mess up any attempts to claim benefits, as the system is insufficiently flexible.
3. Staff members were highly demoralised by this news, and its timing - though others did query when was a good time. After Christmas would be even worse as they faced the 'long month' due to receiving December's pay early. There were suggestions that the company could choose to set its targets unrealistically high to avoid ever giving staff a pay rise, and even those who are generally more positive seemed defeated. One member did look at the company's results and agreed this year's profits were lower than the last two - but suggested those may have been abnormally high as the current year was then similar to years previous to the 'good two'.

Sources of Insight for Reflection

<p>Tradition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Methodism has had a long involvement in workplace chaplaincy, trade union movements and fighting for fair and just working conditions, see www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk• Martin Leckebusch's hymn: 'In an age of twisted values' (StF No 703, particularly verses 1 & 2)• Verse 2 of Delores Dufner's hymn: 'In labour all creation groans' (StF 704)• Verse 1 of Martin Leckebusch's hymn: 'Show me how to stand for justice' (StF 713)• Verse 2 of Douglas Galbraith's hymn: 'The God who sings' (StF 714)• Verse 2 of Anna Briggs' hymn: 'We lay our broken world' (StF 718)	<p>Scripture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job 7.1-4• Matthew 11.28• Proverbs 14.23• Isaiah 58.3-4• Luke 4.16-20• Luke 1.51-3• Luke 6.24-26
<p>Reason</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACAS booklet 'Changing Patterns of Work' www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/q/4/B09_1.pdf suggests easing the negative effects by allowing time to plan and introduce changes and to consider setting up an inter-disciplinary working party with management and employee representatives to plan, implement and monitor the changes.• Insomniacs article 'Effect of Shift work on Sleep' www.insomniacs.co.uk/EffectOfShiftWork.html• PCS Union policy on shift working http://pcs.org.uk/en/resources/health_and_safety/hazardsatoz/shift-working.cfm states that workers should be actively involved in decisions on the shift patterns to be worked and trained in management of lifestyle issues related to shift work.• Figures for deprivation in the Anglican parish in which the Casino is situated are available at: http://www.cuf.org.uk/2013F-320360 and show that the parish is amongst the most deprived in the country.• Greater detail of deprivation figures for Luton are available at: http://www.luton.gov.uk/Environment/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Planning/Observatory/2010%20Indices%20of%20Deprivation%20Luton%20Report.pdf	<p>Experience</p> <p>There was talk of more sick leave being taken if people feel a bit under the weather, rather than remaining committed to work. I have a previous experience for working in an organisation where we expected to be 'all-accommodating' to unemployed people with a range of special needs but in which senior management's treatment of staff did not match their expectation of our treatment of service-users. Thus I have some sympathy with staff querying whether Rank's 'Hearts and Minds' philosophy encouraging teamwork is taken really seriously by those who apparently promulgate it from head office.</p> <p>See article: http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/hro/features/1020733/rank-group-employment-value-proposition-win-hearts-minds</p>

Further Reflection

For whom is the theological reflection? I was taught as a preacher that I should comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable (in fact a phrase attributed to humorist and journalist FP Dunne writing about the power of newspapers as his fictional character, Mr Dooley⁵). So in this case is there something to say both to those staff members who are struggling and to those who form the management of organisations?

Proverbs 14.23a “All hard work brings a profit” but who for? Does the hard work of the staff bring a profit for the company (and its shareholders) and therefore kudos for its senior managers? On the other hand, does hard work actually profit the staff when their sleep-patterns are disrupted or when they live with the uncertainty of variable hours? For financial profit isn't all that matters for well-being.

Proverbs 14.23b “... but mere talk leads only to poverty”. If the ‘Hearts and Minds’ philosophy of one team “where everyone counts” is seen as only talk then staff members will see through it and they will not ‘buy in’. The possible results of this are that they are seen not to be towing the company line or working towards the targets so they will lose their jobs risking their own poverty, or alternatively if their dissatisfaction means their customer service delivery is not sufficiently enthusiastic to retain high levels of customer visits then the company income goes down, and ultimately may still lead to job losses or greater pressure on staff who remain.

The Bible underlines the importance of the Sabbath or day of rest for the well-being of people - rotas that do not allow sufficient time between each period of work leave staff less able to function fully. There have been occasions with 8 hours or less in between. This is hardly sufficient for sleep - “when I lie down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’” (Job 7.4a⁶) - let alone travel-time and any other personal/house-hold requirements.

Isaiah points out God is not in favour of those who exploit their workers (58.3), and that those who do cannot expect their voices “to be heard on high”; and Jesus promises that woe lies ahead for those who are rich and well fed now, “for you will go hungry” (Luke 6.25). However his offer to those in need is different: “come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11.28) and he informs those who will listen that he is bringing in the time when the oppressed are released and the poor hear good news (Luke 4.18).

How do we make that a reality in this world and time for those who are struggling? And how does a chaplain assist when they have no control over employment issues within the host company? And so I pray:

Show me how to stand for justice:
how to work for what is right,
how to challenge false assumptions,
how to walk within the light.

© *Martin Leckebusch*⁷

⁵ from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finlay_Peter_Dunne, though others endorse this

⁶ (1979) Holy Bible, New International Version. London: Hodder and Stoughton

⁷ Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, (2011) *Singing the Faith*, London: Hymns Ancient and Modern Ltd (v1)



The God who shouts
in fury when the powerful shame the poor
will break the chains, and those who hide in fear
he will restore.

© *Douglas Galbraith*⁸

⁸ Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, (2011) *Singing the Faith*, London: Hymns Ancient and Modern Ltd (v2)

Story 3 - Glorifying in the Grey

Context

Early in my time at the Casino, I was asked to be involved in a meeting/tour with local councillors from the Licensing Committee. During their visit and our conversations, I was surprised to find myself, a Methodist Minister, advocating the casino as a responsible employer of local benefit. More recently I, as the Casino Chaplain, have appeared as an 'asset' in the submission to the Local Authority for the awarding of a 2005 Act Gaming Licence in the town - two operators are currently being considered, Rank and another.

Initial Reflection

Methodism is against gambling, virtually without any exception. Even the permission for raffles at church fetes is within my life-time and bound by rules for prizes that surprise members of the Catholic church. However the Grosvenor G-Casino was not a bad place to work - regular breaks (dealers need them when concentrating on adding up money in their heads during each game), provision of meals and an approachable General Manager who actively demonstrates good management practice etc. The company also has some policies that help mitigate risk to the public - membership is a requirement with credit rating being checked from ID before people are admitted and responsible gambling training is mandatory for all staff to aid them to spot changes in behaviour that might mean someone should be flagged up to management to be offered links to appropriate support. However I was able through Methodist links to facilitate the Southlands Trust to fund a piece of research by the University of Roehampton which, although generally quite positive, did highlight that the Rank group "should continue to question the definition and management of problem gambling beyond observing 'changes in behaviour'".⁹

I do not think there is sufficient demand for two casinos in the town so do believe the sensible option for the local authority is to extend the current one rather than award the new licence to a competitor. However the other operator wishes to build on the site of a former petrol station which might link into and assist the redevelopment of a rundown area of the town and the whole station interchange.

⁹ Dr Guy Bohane & Prof Yvonne Guerrier (2012) *A case study exploration of the social impacts of a UK local, provincial casino on key stakeholder groups*, London: University of Roehampton & Southlands Methodist Trust

Sources of Insight for Reflection

<p>Tradition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Methodist Statement on Gambling adopted by the Conference of 1992 considers both recreational gambling and stock market speculation, and the legalisation/regulation of many forms of recreational gambling since the paper of 1936 (which firmly condemned gambling as a personal vice. and linked it equally firmly to the evil of speculative greed). http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/pi_gamblingstatement_92.pdf • In Sermon XLIV on the use of money, John Wesley sums up the implicit Christian view when he counts gambling as a means of gain inconsistent with love of neighbour. • In Sermon LII he refers to Gamblers “who made a trade of seizing on young and inexperienced men, and tricking them out of all their money...not a few of these (were constrained) honestly to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, and the labour of their hands.” • An ecumenical statement ‘Against the Odds’ was produced following the 2005 Gaming Act which helpfully defines the areas of gaming, the issues of problem gambling and tabulates the policies of Christian organisations. http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/pi_againsttheodds_1009.pdf 	<p>Scripture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bible - very little! Numerous passages on casting lots but mostly for decision-making, though the soldiers did cast lots for Jesus cloak (John 19.24, apparently in fulfilment of Psalm 22.18), There is more on good stewardship and the right use of money (and not taking it from people), but what of those who choose to utilise disposable income by indulging in occasional gaming as part of social activity? • The Qur’an is more explicitly anti-gambling - see Surah 2.219 and 5.90, 91 & 92 • See ‘How different religions view gambling’ for consideration of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. “Conclusion: Clearly, all the world’s great religious faiths hold gambling to be wasteful at the least, and at the worst to be an action that harms human society and offends God, i.e., a sin.” http://www.gambleonline.co/religious-views-of-gambling/
<p>Reason</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘A case study exploration of the social impacts of a UK local provincial casino on key stakeholder groups’ by Dr Guy Bohane and Professor Yvonne Guerrier of the University of Roehampton Business School • Grosvenor’s ‘responsible gambling’ policy: http://www.rank.com/responsibility/index.jsp • The dangers of internet gambling: http://him.uk.msn.com/in-the-know/the-dangers-of-internet-gambling 	<p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have had a variety of reactions from different people to my being in a casino, particularly as a Methodist minister. • I have undertaken a number of talks in the Circuit which have led to people admitting their assumptions were different from the reality. • I was sorry I was unable to persuade a member of the Methodist Church closest to the casino to take part in the Roehampton research even though she was vehemently opposed to the casino. • The good employment practice has diminished more recently due to a number of factors, see Story 2

Further Reflection

“They ask you (O Muhammad pbuh) concerning alcoholic drink and gambling. Say: “In them is a great sin, and (some) benefits for men, but the sin of them is greater than their benefit.””¹⁰

“Let’s be clear – there is no commandment that reads ‘Thou shalt not gamble’. However, it would be wrong to say that the Bible offers no insight into the issue. There are over 2000 verses in the Bible that make reference to poverty. These verses implore followers of God to oppose injustice and to stand up for the poor and oppressed. While there are so many people in need in the world, each of us must consider our spending in every area of life very carefully. Spending money and time on gambling, just like all other forms of expenditure, must be considered in the light of the requirement of good stewardship of resources. With few exceptions, gambling is built upon the premise that many must lose in order for a few to win. It therefore appeals to two of humanity’s least appealing characteristics – selfishness and greed. The gambler not only desires to win but in doing so, knowingly or unknowingly, desires that others lose. This does not sit well with Jesus’ words; ‘Do to others as you would have them do to you.’ (Luke 6:31).”¹¹

These reasons probably underline why I personally do not approve of gambling, however I am concerned that it would probably just 'go underground' if casinos did not exist and that it is maybe better in a controlled environment. And maybe a casino is better than online gaming which is far less controlled and available to people in their own home where no-one may pick up on possible addictive behaviour.

Methodism was birthed in an era where problem drinking caused much harm in families and initially Methodist ministers were required to ‘sign the pledge’ and abstain. Still today it is illegal to have alcohol on Methodist premises, other than manses which are viewed as the private homes of ministers or venues which are residential or considered to be conference centres. Some might suggest that if we have relaxed our attitude on this maybe we should also do so in relation to gambling if it is in moderation for the leisure of an individual and not exploiting anyone else.

“In the nineteenth century, Methodists ranked gambling alongside alcohol as a threat to the moral, financial and spiritual well-being of the poor. At a time when many people lived on the margins of poverty, an ill-advised or unlucky gamble could mean the difference for a family between food and starvation, survival and the workhouse. Gambling was a spiritual issue for nineteenth century Methodists.”¹² This is still true for many Muslims though others happily drink and/or frequent the casino: “*Shaitān* (Satan) wants only to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants (alcoholic drinks) and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allāh and from *As-Salāt* (the prayer). So, will you not then abstain?”¹³

I took the issue of 'living in the grey', as opposed to issues being 'black or white' to a staff meeting of the Methodist ministers in the South Bedfordshire Circuit for

¹⁰ Dr Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali & Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan (2001) Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qu’ran, Riyadh: Darussalam, (the first part of Surah 2.219)

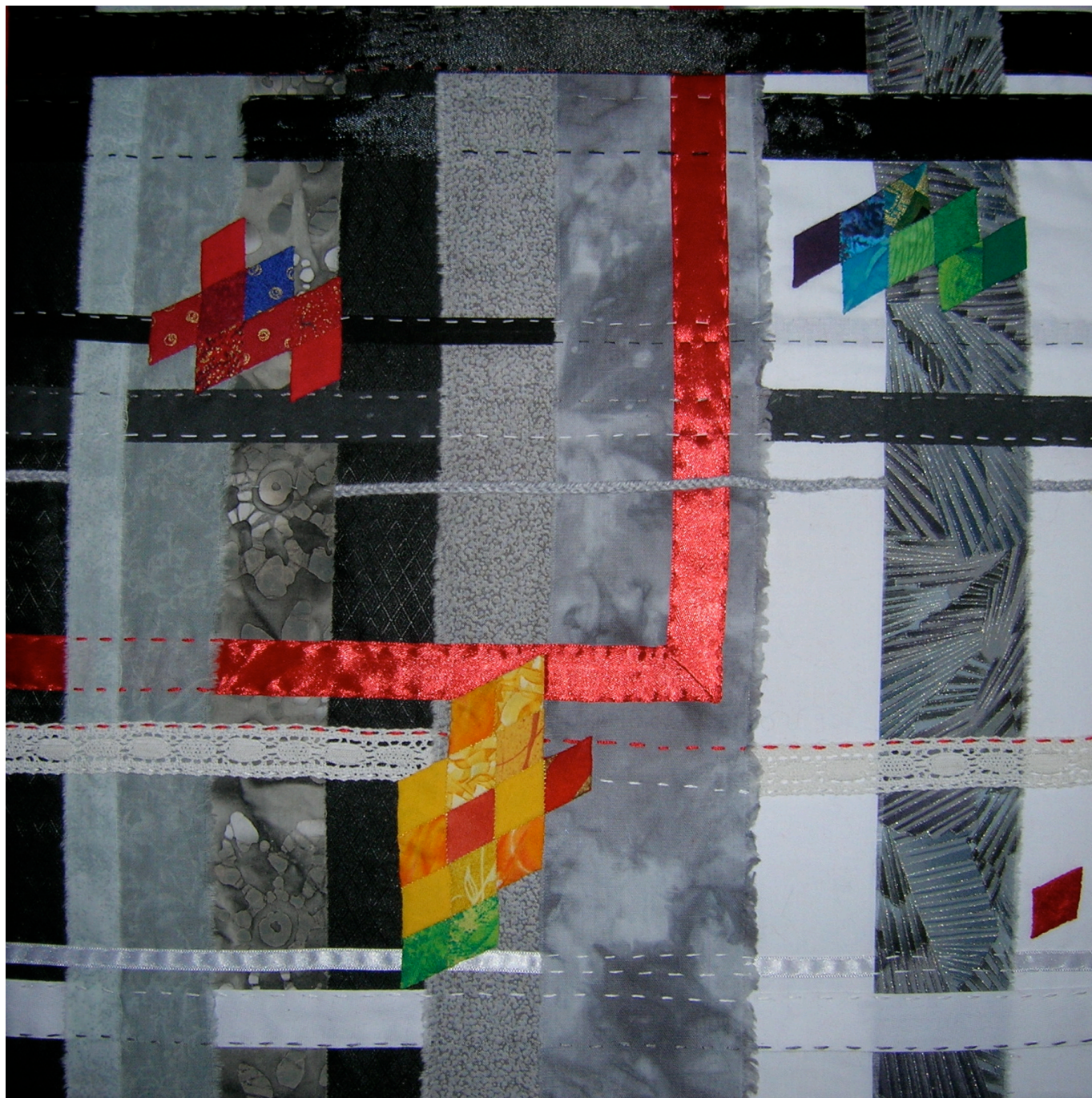
¹¹ The Methodist Church and the Salvation Army (updated September 2009) *Against the Odds*, London (p18)

¹² <http://www.methodist.org.uk/who-we-are/views-of-the-church/gambling>

¹³ *ibid* (Surah 5.91)

discussion, as I am sure I am not the only one who has to deal with concerns where there are not easy answers. We have recently had some discussion on the issue of gay marriage and do not all share the same view, yet we realise this is just one example of an issue which can cause polarisation between Christians, let alone other groups in society. So how do we discern a position on an issue or do we sometimes rather need to learn to live with the tension?

An interesting discussion ensued which probably raised more questions than it solved!



- Do we need to learn to glory in the grey or perhaps make the grey colourful rather than dull and bland?
- It is not long ago that television was black and white and now it is coloured - is it a natural human development to expand our options?
- Is a rainbow spectrum of views an example being tolerant of differences or going too far?

- How do we understand being human? But also how do we understand scripture?
- There are many inconsistencies in our world - for example there is plenty of gambling advertising while tobacco advertising is banned - should we take a stand rather than simply saying 'So what?'?
- Why are things that were once considered wrong now not? Are there matters that are now deemed socially acceptable but should remain not to us - and if so where do we take the lead as preachers of the Gospel and leaders of the church? And does this depend on the society and the cultural norms of the place in which we are situated or are there 'universal truths'?
- What is our primary purpose? What are we about? And therefore what do we preach?
- Are we now living in a society where people want to turn to something rather than away from - so should we be helping them find the positive rather than saying 'thou shalt not ...'? Is this the corollary to grace?

If we do not love God, then part of us is missing, we are not whole people as the relationship is a broken one. Christ came to earth, died and was raised to life that we might have "life in all its fullness".¹⁴ We are called to come home rather than to live in a cardboard box. We are called to live in the rich colour of a full life rather than in the greyness of a life without God.

¹⁴ (1976) Good News Bible. Swindon: United Bible Societies

Story 4 - Being and Doing

Context

Much of my time during the chaplaincy shifts consist of sitting in the staff room so as to be able to chat to people in their breaks. I do wander around the gaming floor so staff know I am there but cannot talk to dealers while they are at work as they are adding up the bids in their heads and keeping an eye against any attempts to cheat or money-launder etc. I also visit the kitchen, restaurant and bar areas but it only take a few minutes to move around the business. While there are some highly significant conversations from time to time, my concern often is whether I am doing anything of value.

Initial Reflection

As an aside, the television is permanently on. If there are important football matches on that will be the general choice of viewing, sometimes I enjoy house building and design programmes but eternally what is on are soaps, in which I have no enjoyment! And worse, I fear programmes such as Hollyoaks are giving young people very poor role models for dealing with relationships and life in general!

But the issue here is whether there is any value in my sitting there for two four-hour shifts a week. I am by nature more of a doer, and so valued the time I assisted in the restaurant when they were in dire need. Just sitting is not my normal modus operandi! The chaplain who set up the operation suggested taking a book to read, but that is not a good idea for me as I get too engrossed to notice people - on one occasion I did not realise the book I had idly picked up was one that a staff member was avidly working through in her breaks until I surfaced from it and others told me of the hilarity to which I had been oblivious! Sometimes I do sew, including turning up trousers for staff, but the light is not really good enough for working with dark fabrics.

Sources of Insight for Reflection

Tradition	Scripture
The older version of the Methodist Covenant service says: "Let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you" or in the 1999 version: "I am no longer my own but yours. Your will, not mine, be done in all things, wherever you may place me, in all that I do and in all that it may endure; when there is work for me and where there is none; when I am troubled and when I am at peace. Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking; when I have all things, and when I have nothing." And then the bit I often struggle to say: "I willingly offer all that I have and am to serve you as and where you choose." (MWB p 288)	For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. (Ecclesiastes 3.1-8)

Reason	Experience
<p>The May 2014 review of the casino chaplaincy service by an independent consultant has been amazingly encouraging. The quote that is most pertinent to this reflection is "The fact that there was 'a happy face on break' was nice, 'I like to walk in a room and have someone smiling at me, her face is smiling and not just grumpy (like) faces at night (because of) unsociable hours'," (p10)</p>	<p>While taking a shorter sabbatical 2010/2011 I attended a training/retreat day when we were asked to write down what we wanted from Christ. I wrote "I want you to tell me what you want me to do" and during the day distinctly felt I heard God telling me "I don't want you to do, I want you to be."</p>

Further Reflection

It is interesting that I return to the same passage from Ecclesiastes¹⁵ as I used in Story 1 and reflecting now, while I might add: "a time to do and a time to refrain from doing" or "a time to do and a time to be", I do wonder if it helps us to realise we can't always be achieving what we would like to and that the purposes of life have an ebb and flow to them - and, as chaplains, we are called to walk alongside others in the ebb and flow of their lives: in their mourning and their dancing, in their weeping and in their laughing, as well as in our own.



The preamble in the Covenant Service to the prayer given above states "Christ has many services to be done some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests, others are contrary to both"¹⁶. Certainly 'sitting, being' is not my natural inclination.

¹⁵ (1997) The New Revised Standard Version. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

¹⁶ Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (1999) *The Methodist Worship Book*. Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House (p288)

Before completing this piece of reflection, I was able to see the review of the service undertaken by consultant Sue Howard on behalf of Workplace Matters¹⁷. This was hugely humbling in showing how much the chaplaincy service was valued by staff, even those who had not directly made use of me in any of my main roles: listener, advisor, signposter. One comment that made me review this 'story' was a comment about being a smiling face in the staff room when others were grumpy. This was perhaps the biggest eye-opener ... all those times when I have not been sure I have been 'achieving' anything have in fact been noticed as important by others.

But my reaction would still be: "I am glad to find I have been doing something worthwhile even when I think I haven't", but there is that 'doing' word again! For me there is still learning to be done about the value of being a presence, showing care and attempting to share the love of God by 'just' being there. In the chapter on individual pastoral care in his book 'Creative Ministry' Henri Nouwen says:

"Nobody can minister to his fellow man (sic) when he is unwilling to deny himself in order to create the space where God can do his work. How can we really be of help to others if we keep concentrating on ourselves? . . . Only when a man can forget about himself for a while can he become really interested in another - that is, enter into the centre of his concerns." ¹⁸

and: "If a minister wants to be of real help in his contact with people, he has to be a professional with special information, special training, and special skills. But if he wants to break through the chains of our manipulative world, he has to move beyond professionalism, and through self-denial and contemplation, become a faithful witness of God's covenant." ¹⁹

It is not important how valuable I feel, but the fact that I was there demonstrated care; God's care, even if not named, and a sense that the staff members are worthy of that care. 'There is a time for every purpose' and this is their time: for me to 'be' with them; not my time to 'do' what I want.

¹⁷ Howard, S., (2014) *Luton G-Casino Valuing Chaplaincy - A Research Report*, St. Albans: Workplace Matters

¹⁸ Nouwen, H., (1978) *Creative Ministry*, New York: Image Books (p50)

¹⁹ *ibid* (p64)

Reflective Practice in Ministry

Reflection is an important skill that underpins ministerial practice and learning. As such, the Supervisor, Mentor or Spiritual Director should encourage the student or minister to reflect on new experiences and support them in completing a journal regularly. The purpose of a journal is to enable the individual to reflect continuously on:

- the life-long learning which takes place throughout ministry;
- their actions and the impact of their actions on others;
- their own value base and how this is reflected in practice
- to record their development in learning and reflective skills

There are as many ways of journaling as there are individuals - what is important is to find one that works for you. What follows is an example for a more structured piece of thinking - it is time consuming so may only want to be used when there is something that needs particular working through: either because it has gone well (and you need to analyse why), or because it hasn't!

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL - Basic guidance:

In the Reflective Journal you are asked to choose **one** significant event or activity that you have been involved in during that day, which has provided some learning for you, and to write it up in full, using the boxes as a guide to the sort of questions you should be answering.

It should be done at the time, or as soon as possible afterwards, otherwise your initial feelings and reactions become tempered by distance!

REFLECTION AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS - Specific guidance:

The following sets of questions may be helpful in helping you decide how to critically analyse the situation or incident. If they are not, ask some others!

Identity/difference:

- What aspects of my personal identity affect the way I relate to this person?
- How would I sum up the person's self-image and worldview, and how it contributes to the 'problems' presented.
- What prejudices did I bring to this situation that affected the work, and how did I deal with them?

Feelings/emotions:

- What are my feelings (not thoughts) towards this person/situation? How does this affect our relationship?
- What do I think are the person's feelings towards me? How might this affect our relationship?
- What were my feelings/thoughts while being in contact with the person?

The system:

- How does the attitude or morale of the team/colleagues affect this work?
- How does the style of management in the team or organisation affect this work?
- How does the political, local, social etc context of the church affect this work?
- How do money and resources affect this work, and what might be creative ways round the problems produced?
- How have policies/procedures helped or hindered the work?

Self-evaluation:

- If this piece of work went well, what skills/knowledge/abilities contributed to this success?
- If it didn't go well, what did I do that contributed to this and how could I do it better/differently next time?
- If the work involved a dilemma, explain the different sides of the dilemma and how you resolved it.

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

DATE:

THE CONTEXT: Describe the context of the event/activity/learning opportunity - what you did and how you did it.

REFLECTION/CRITICAL ANALYSIS: Use the suggested questions above, or more relevant others, to help you reflect and analyse what happened (or didn't).

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

The following questions might help guide your thinking:

- What ethic[s] are being practised in this situation - what is their implicit theology/ideology?
- What Biblical texts resonate or set up a challenge in this encounter/situation? Why these texts and not others?
- What has my church tradition said about the issues identified?
- What other theological resources can I bring to bear [theologians; liturgies; hymns; practices of the church]
- Are there any useful insights from other academic disciplines (sociology, psychology, history, science etc)

If you use any quotes, it is wise to include a reference in case you wonder where something useful came from when you look back later!

'FEEDBACK': Add any notes later of thoughts that have occurred to you or following reflection with others - colleagues, the individual concerned, mentor or supervisor etc.

Jenny's method based on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral!

<p>What does Tradition have to say about this issue/situation? (Could be your own cultural or religious tradition, could be what you know from the tradition of other groups)</p>	<p>What texts from the Bible bear on this issue/situation?</p>
<p>What does Reason have to say (as in science, philosophy, sociology and other such disciplines)?</p>	<p>What bearing does Experience have on this issue/situation? (your own and what you know from others)</p>