

**The Report of the CARIS Sub-Committee on the Casual Caller**

# **Knocking at Heaven's Door**

*Challenges and opportunities presented by the Casual Caller in the  
Parish*

**1996**

**CARIS  
Christian Action & Response In Society**

*London Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility*

**Knocking at Heaven's Door**  
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# EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

August 1995

Anecdotal stories about casual callers at the vicarage abound. One theme which emerges is that the casual caller of the past was often a fairly amiable 'gentleman of the road' who wanted a 'cuppa' before continuing his journey. Sometimes he would offer to do a small gardening or sweeping job to earn a 'couple of bob'. These characters were well known and their demands were on the whole willingly met. The caller went away content and the carer had the warm feeling inside which comes from doing good. Times however have dramatically changed.

Today's caller is often an altogether more challenging proposition. It is not unusual in London to find at the vicarage or the church door young people asking for or even demanding money, sometimes drunk or on drugs; sometimes mentally ill, often with no-one else to turn to; and, still others homeless and asking for a bed. How does the carer respond? Indeed should they?

As a new vicar in North London, I found myself having to deal with some very difficult, abusive and aggressive callers at the vicarage door. I asked myself, what 'care' is involved in these encounters – in the first instance for the people who called, and secondly, for my family and myself? The expectations and nature of the casual caller were creating serious problems, and the need to address the issues was becoming urgent.

The wider implications were discussed with the Director of CARIS, the Revd Christopher Brice, and Mrs Gill Morrison, a clergy wife. This resulted in us organising a day conference in central London, where these concerns could be given an airing. The issues raised at this lively and well attended conference were reported back to the CARIS Board on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1994.

The CARIS Board decided to form a sub-committee to: 'examine the Church's response to the needs of the casual caller; to reflect upon the challenge this makes to theology and pastoral care; to evaluate and recommend steps to be taken, using as its starting point the practical guidelines which emerged from the day conference'.

I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to work with others whose faith, insights and commitment have helped to produce this report. It is offered to the Board, in the hope that this area of ministry might become more effectively supported. The recommendations also address the needs of those who care for callers, and these are equally important.

There is much good work presently going on and we have seen some of it at first hand. However, there is need for renewed attention to this neglected area of mission and ministry. This will help us see the prayer of our Lord realised, which is 'Thy kingdom come'

John Hall

## A. THE INTRODUCTION

### A1 Origin of this Report

*Early one evening Gary, recently out of prison, knocked on the vicarage door. It was teatime, the week before Christmas, and the family were all at home. The vicar was called from his table. The man standing there was a stranger. He was unsteady on his feet, and clearly under the influence of alcohol. Tall and muscular he started to demand money. But money would go straight on more drink, and besides it was the vicar's policy not to give money to callers. So the vicar asked why the money was needed. The young man became angry and said that it was for food. The vicar asked if he would like some food. It was agreed, and, closing the front door to leave the man safely outside, the vicar went to the kitchen to make sandwiches and a drink. When these were delivered a few moments later, the man became very abusive and aggressive. He threw the food at the vicarage and went down the road hitting the church railings and threatening the vicar not to call the police. The vicarage family was very frightened and one of the children didn't want to leave the house on his own for the next week or two. The vicar was shaken. It was this incident, which actually took place that initiated our work on the casual caller.*

Consequently the conference with the title "Knocking on Heaven's Door" took place at The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1994. It attracted interest from many right across the diocese, wanting to hear from the key speakers and share in the discussion.

The conference included a theological reflection by The Revd Chris Brice. He spoke from his past experience in parish ministry and present experience living in an ordinary house in Hackney. He said how little help he had received in training for ministry, to help him draw the boundaries between public and private life. The vicarage home was both an office open all hours, as well as the place for private space with the family. The vicarage was popularly perceived as a community repository for all social problems. This leaves clergy vulnerable, feeling guilty, and often out of their depth. "But didn't Jesus say", said Chris, "I stand at the door and knock", and were not the Old Testament people of God wandering in the wilderness, those upon whom God looked with mercy? There's the dilemma, there's the tension. "What", he asked "are the priorities at the door today?"

The Revd Brian Lee, Rector of St Botolph's, who heads a special project for London's homeless, addressed the conference next. The project has developed some expertise in working with homeless people, some 200-300 using their

evening centre each day, (40% of whom were mentally ill). Basic needs are met and callers helped through the welfare maze. In London as a whole, Brian reported: 2,800 sleeping rough, 16,000 in hostels, 7,000 in B&B, 7000 in squats, and a further 11,000 in short life housing. Government policy had much influence on their plight. Homeless people had many problems, some were aggressive, most harmless. Some would be doing the rounds calling on churches and vicarages. Brian challenged churches to work out local strategies. He found that he himself was much motivated by Jesus' washing the disciples feet (John 13).

Mrs Rosemary Lethem, Senior Registrar in Psychology, at U.C.H., spoke on 'Community Care'. She said "the sad, mad, glad, dull, and demented...the clergy get them all!". Community Care had found expression in the deliberate closure of mental hospitals since the 1950s, a process which was continuing in the 1990s. The question was whether the intended support in the community for such people was actually available to them. Clearly, for some it was not. Churches are targets for such people.

The final speaker was Canon Michael Saward, whose family had suffered much trauma as a result of the 'Ealing Vicarage Rape Case'. Michael asked, "Why should clergy help?" In favour of helping could be found such biblical mandates as Is.58, Heb. 13, Matt. 25 and Acts 3. But on the other side there was 2 Thess. 3:10, "if a man will not work, he shall not eat". He had experienced many con-men calling. He said that from his long experience, he judged the social problems of society to be closer to the vicarage door now than they have ever been. Meeting the needs of the casual caller today was not what it used to be. The local vicar was not geared up to meet the needs of those who called at his door today.

Perhaps what was most interesting was the shared experience of those who attended the conference. Many echoed the views of our guest speakers. Many had very disturbing stories to tell. Certainly at least three people had had to face a knife, another had faced prisoners on the run; drink or drug influenced callers and aggressive callers were not unusual. More commonly manipulative callers seeking money, con-men, the homeless, the mentally ill, beggars, the hungry, the thirsty, the lonely, the spiritually needy: all seem to come to the church or vicarage door. The callers made carers feel vulnerable and inadequate. Fear, stress, and guilt were often the result. Carers wondered whether they could trust God. Important safety issues were raised, and the need to look at the boundary between work and home begged significant questions of the traditional vicarage. The first tentative ideas as to how the church should actively manage the caller were mooted. Clearly this was going to have wider implications than simply caller management at the door.

The sub-committee met on 10 occasions before working directly on this Report. All our meetings began with a period of reflection, reading and prayer. These times were important, not only because of their spiritual focus, but also

because they were often moments of profound prayerful awareness of the sanctity of the caller's and the carers' lives. We became aware that the Lord Jesus Christ stood with us. Intercessions became part of our praying, and was often deeply personal. (The outline material used, though not the shared personal concerns, appears as an appendix to the report.)

Our work began with a series of consultations and visits. We are particularly indebted to Sister Bridie (The Passage); Mrs Molly Dow (Clergy Wives); The Revd Dr Kevin Eastell (Training); Mrs Prudence Fay (Church Times); the Revd Roger Hills (Parsonages); the Revd Elaine Jones (St Botolph's); Miss Elizabeth Shedden (Lay Ministry); The Venerable Timothy Raphael (Archdeacon of Middlesex); and The Revd John Wheeler (Upper Room) for their help.

Once the sub-committee was appointed and set about its task, it became clear that it would be producing a far-reaching set of recommendations. Detailed recommendations appear in section F of the report.

## **AII Purpose of this Report**

When set up by the CARIS Board the sub-committee was given the following terms of reference:

"The 'Heaven's Door' sub-committee of CARIS will examine the Church's response to the needs of the Casual Caller, reflect upon the challenge this makes to theology and pastoral care; evaluate and recommend steps to be taken, using as its starting point the practical guidelines which emerged from the Day Conference.

The sub-committee will include its work within two years"

Accordingly, the purpose of this report is to:

- (1) Help the Church recognise that the needs the callers of today present is a different and more difficult proposition for those whose duty it is to care.
- (2) Help the Church address the question, "Should the Church still be offering care to the casual caller? If so, then how? and by whom?"
- (3) Help the Church address the question, "How best can the needs of today's caller be met whilst safeguarding the carer?"

This raises the issues at every level of the Church – from the theological training of the clergy to the role of today's vicarage.

### **B. POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS**

*"Jesus, Saviour of the world, come to us in your mercy; we look to you to save and help us."*

## **BI Examples of the Churches' current good work**

The very fact that those in need call upon the Church for help indicated that the Church is still seen as a place where help can be found. Indeed, we were given many instances of where the local church and vicarage provide a ready source of help to many people. Sometimes the help given is a listening ear, at other times the provision of food, simple guidance or a prayer.

Our telephone survey in the London diocese confirmed our experience that a significant number of casual callers come to the church or vicarage door for help each month. (Every seventh incumbent named in the Diocesan Handbook was contacted to ensure the sample faithfully reflected the diocese as a whole.) About half of those approached said they were receiving upwards of 15 callers a month, some over 60 callers a month.

Most callers came to ask for money (77%), although they were rarely likely to receive any (13%). A substantial number came who were hungry and thirsty (48%), and they were very likely to receive food and/or a cup of tea (100%). The church appears to be very good at offering this kind of help. Counselling, or simply time for a chat was another request (29%). Occasional requests for clothing, accommodation furnishings, and even a bath were also made, and help was often given in response to these requests. A full report of the telephone survey can be found in the appendix.

At various places, rather more is on offer to callers. There are a number of 'flagship' projects such as St Botolph's work with the city homeless; The Passage's work with people 'off the street' in Victoria; and, the work of Upper Room based at St Saviour's Church in Hammersmith Deanery. Skilled and professional help of various kinds is available to help tackle some of the very complex and difficult social problems callers face. Some churches offer a drop-in type of facility.

Local carers, both ordained and lay often felt ill-trained and ill-equipped to help, and appreciated having the 'specialised' projects available. The projects have learned to set clear boundaries for caller and carer alike, and are clear about what help can be offered. They ensure all carers are themselves properly supported. All the projects require and receive a high level of commitment from their helpers.

The Passage, in Victoria, has an open door policy for people over 25 years of age. When they are closed other centres run by the church are open in the central London area (e.g. St Martin in the Fields, West London Mission and North London Mission. They hope in time to provide somewhere for 16-24 year olds too. Open from 7 a.m. they provide a big breakfast for 50 p. The Passage can cope with people who are waiting to receive D.S.S. giro. There are no 'charity handouts'. Parishes within reach of The Passage can use their luncheon voucher system and refer

callers on. A wide variety of services are available at The Passage, these include medical help, mental health help, an alcohol and drugs worker, a housing resettlement team, 'listening' work, a pastor/priest, and a job club. Special worship services are offered when, for example, someone on the street is bereaved.

The Passage have their own support systems for carers. The building is well equipped with panic buttons, staff have beepers, and there are secure areas to which callers have no access. They persuasively argue that members of clergy families should not get involved with callers. In their experience they have found the majority of homeless people carry knives, and growing numbers are violent. They may be on drugs. They may be mentally ill. As Sister Bridie (in charge of The Passage) told the sub-committee: from her experience working with the casual caller is very specialist work.

## **BII The Response of the Sub-Committee**

- (1) The sub-committee affirms the local church as having responsibility to care; and recognises that "the vicarage" will continue to be the first port of call for casual callers in the foreseeable future. It is a place where much help is given. We recommend local churches continue to develop and do what they do best, namely provide simple practical care such as food and drink, and a caring, listening ear. Some churches will be able to offer more, such as a drop-in facility. The wealth of experience already existing can be drawn on here.
- (2) Every church needs to have its own strategy for dealing with callers. Guidelines should be agreed, written down and followed.
- (3) We recommend that each local church assesses the service it can offer. There are many factors to take into account. For example, the level of demand made; the personnel available; the security of personnel and buildings; resources to hand, etc.  
  
Many local churches have worked out their own guidelines: e.g. never to give money; never to let someone in; never to leave a person alone to deal with callers; carrying a stock of vouchers or ready-to-give meals and canned drinks; carrying a list of helpful names and addresses ready to give out, etc
- (4) The sub-committee recommends the gathering of expertise into such centres of skilled good practice where callers could safely be referred, and carers feel properly supported. Presently the availability of such centres does not always match local requirements. Strategic thinking and planning is needed at each level of the church structure from Diocese to P.C.C. in order to address this need. Planning for provision at a deanery or borough

level, based on natural local community groupings, has much to commend it.

- (5) There needs to be an established and comprehensive network of caring organisations. These would include statutory, voluntary and specialist church-based care agencies. The network would need to be London-wide, with local facilities to which churches can refer callers. Perhaps CARIS can help with this.
- (6) Support for carers, as seen in specialist projects such as The Passage, should be extended to local church carers (and where appropriate their families) who may be in great difficulty.
- (7) We recommend that the kind of attention given to practical health, safety and security matters, which is normal practice at The Passage [see below: section CII, on page 6] be routinely considered in each local church situation.

## **C. THE SOCIAL CONTEXT**

### **CI The World of the Caller**

*“I got kicked out. Just the way it is. My family always kick out their kids at 18.”*

*“To stop asking for money I’d need more money from the social. A lot more...I’m struggling now on £44 per week.”*

People who call at the church or vicarage door for help include many asking for money. Their expectation is that the church is a place of help for people in need. In 1994 CRISIS, which is a charity best known for its Christian Shelter, published a study [\*1 see page 26] of people who beg in Central London, (15% of those interviewed actually begged outside the central London area). St Botolph’s assisted in the survey design, and a representative total of 145 people who were begging were seen. The main findings of the research were:

- > People begging are of all ages, and most are men. Most money they get goes on food.
- > There is a very real link between begging and homelessness. (80% were homeless the previous night.)
- > For almost all, neither begging nor homelessness were a chosen way of life. Four in five had previously had a home, and the loss of a partner was the most common reason for losing that home.
- > Nearly half had been in care, and a quarter had slept rough before the age of 16.
- > People begging were often very isolated from their families.
- > A third had mental health problems.
- > A third had a recognisable substance abuse problem, mostly alcohol.
- > Most had little structure to their everyday lives, feel very isolated. and 1 in 4 has no-one to confide in.
- > 90% have had jobs in the past, employment is their second greatest wish after finding somewhere to live.
- > Most have been abused by the public, a third physically assaulted.

These characteristics are arguably very similar to those of people calling upon the Church for help. Some of the people interviewed are very likely to have been callers. The problems identified certainly resonate with those of today’s

callers. The telephone survey we undertook showed that by far the majority of callers asked for money or food. Though a significant number also wanted someone to be a listening ear, like a counsellor.

The outcome of the CRISIS research was a series of recommendations to the government, police, local authorities not-for-profit sector agencies, and the general public. These were as follows:

- > Changes to the benefit system – levels, eligibility and delivery.
- > Housing – improved access, all ages and special needs, and support.
- > Homelessness to be tackled through local authority-led regional strategies, and involving the local community.
- > Extended daytime and evening services for homeless people.
- > Repeal of The Vagrancy Act, which criminalises the homeless and destitute.

The streets of London were never paved with gold. People in London, as in other major cities, cannot fail to notice the destitute and the begging. It is an uncomfortable encounter in our ‘affluent’ and ‘developed’ country. Those who come to the church door need help, not only in the short-term to see the day through, but also they need long-term assistance. That is, if they are to have a future approaching an acceptable standard of life. In their need they have the expectation that the church is still a place to receive help.

The uncomfortable encounters at the vicarage door, when asked for money, are not understood by some in affluent Britain. Their style of life avoids the raw edge of life on the street or in the Underground. It is not an encounter anyone can cope with. There are many polarities in our society today, and the caller may be poles apart from the carer who opens the door.

## **CII The World of the Carer**

In the Church things have also changed. There are now many churches which are locked or closed. Sometimes there is no longer worship regularly taking place there, or because clergy work across more than one site.

In some places there is no longer a recognisable vicarage or rectory. In other places there has been large scale redevelopment leaving the vicarage or church isolated and exposed. Some churches operate a parish office and expect to deal with parish business there and not at the clergy home. More clergy today are living in ordinary houses not identifiable as ‘the church’ from the street.

Clergy working at home may be on their own more because, for example, their spouse is out at work. There are also more female clergy, and clergy as a whole feel more vulnerable than in the past. The fear of violence today is greater than it was and this factor coupled with the erosion of the traditional respect for the church and ‘the cloth’ create added strain to the doorstep encounter.

The fact that the person who calls today is more than likely to be a total stranger, that there have been notorious vicarage assaults reported in the press; and that the caller is likely to be young and male, means that there is an understandable ambivalence felt by carers when they go to answer the door.

The carer in the church today may be forgiven for thinking that the social security, the housing department and the mental hospital provide for people in need. But the reality is that there are still people who fall outside the welfare safety net. When such callers come to the door, the carer may feel it is neither within their role or ability to provide help.

From their considerable experience, workers at The Passage gave this advice to those meeting callers at the vicarage or church door.

- > Do not engage with callers on the doorstep
- > Do give information
- > Do not invite the caller inside
- > Do not undertake a pastoral engagement
- < Do work with other local churches to provide care cover
- > Do campaign and lobby (e.g. it is very difficult for homeless people to get benefits)
- > Do not engage with callers on your own
- > Do ensure that any carer has supervision support
- > Do ensure that the ground rules are consistently applied
- > Do hold on to the ‘stories’ people tell you
- > Do not look for thanks
- > Do limit the exposure of carers to callers

When there is a night shelter, drop-in facility, or some other dedicated locally available help for callers to which the local church or vicarage can refer people, then the kind of strategy developed by a department at London Diocesan House to deal with callers from a nearby shelter might be considered:

- > All requests for tea, coffee, food, money, toilet facilities should always be met with a polite, firm refusal.
- > Always make sure you have closed the outside door.
- > When letting people in by the entry-phone, make sure you know who they are and who they have come to see.
- > Evening meetings in the building or working late should

be considered very carefully or avoided altogether. Ideally no member of staff should be alone and you should know who is coming to see you..

> The key words must be ‘consistency and security’

Caring agencies, other than the Church, have in recent years worked out guidelines to help and protect the health and safety of their personnel. Camden Borough Housing Department’s Code of Care’, for example, sets out clearly the borough’s responsibilities to support its staff at the ‘sharp end’ in dealing with difficult people. Recognising the increasing prevalence of violence against employees in the medical profession, the B.M.A., along with other professional medical bodies, have also issued guidelines for good practice. These are written into contracts of employment so that both employer and employee are obligated to observe good practice.

There is a great deal of good practice information which we have obtained from a wide variety of organisations. But we have not come across any similar guidelines developed by and adopted by the church. Given the different social context today, and the vulnerability of church personnel (which includes not only paid employees and their families, but also volunteers), there is a matter of concern. The present lack of guidelines for good practice is both detrimental to those who call and those who care..

### **CIII The Response of the Sub-Committee**

(1) We recommend the Church really listens to the ‘stories’ of callers. These should be recorded and, within bounds of proper confidentiality, shared and used to form policies for social change.

There is a vast source of social information here to which the Church has access; and which is presently not being utilised to the full.

(2) We are concerned that many callers are falling through the welfare net. The state system fails to deliver care to those on the margins of society, many of whom end up looking for help from the Church. The state needs to resolve how to get benefits to those who need them; and to be more aware of the extent to which the problems of homelessness, unemployment and mental illness are being brought to the vicarage door.

(3) We recommend that the Diocese needs to recognise the point of care may not always, these days, be most appropriately focused on the vicarage/rectory door, and that the introduction of more parish office-based places of work in ministry may need to be encouraged.

(4) We recommend the Diocese draw up a ‘code of care’ for its personnel, along the lines of those drawn up by the more enlightened secular employers.

## **D. THE PROBLEMS**

### **D1 The Problem of the Caller**

*“I was hungry, I was cold, I had nowhere to live.”*

*“at 8a.m. – it was Mabel. She suffers from a range of problems:.....Mabel called again tonight at 10.30 pm.”*

The lives of callers are beset with often intractable problems. Their quality of life and health is often poor, and their life expectancy is low. They are themselves the victims of abuse, violence exploitation and rejection. They are often unloved, and live on the very margins of society. Jesus Christ knows that place, understands, and wills to respond in love and prays that his kingdom might come.

The Revd Elaine Jones (St Botolph’s crypt) reported that the biggest need callers have is for food. She saw other significant needs too – housing problems, alcohol and drugs, mental illness, the young homeless, broken marriages, to name but a few. She said that the rules which govern the way St Botolph’s deals with its callers have been devised by the callers themselves. Clear rules are important to callers, and they need to know clearly and quickly where they stand when they come to the local church or the vicarage door.

### **DII The Problems of the Carer**

Elaine related her experience of some callers who like to be able to say a prayer or sit in quiet in church. Churches however were very often closed. She argued that the parish as a whole and not just the clergy should carry a joint responsibility for what is available to callers locally. Local groups of churches, of all denominations should learn to work together to help. Finally, she added, records of all callers should be kept.

Clergy and clergy spouses have submitted evidence to the sub-committee which describe the intolerable circumstances under which some live and work. The demands at the door, were described as creating feelings not only of compassion, love and warmth, which one naturally might expect, but equally feelings of fear, anger, guilt, terror, isolation, loss and sometimes even panic.

Yet, perhaps surprisingly, responding to the needs of the casual caller is not part of present day training for ministry. Kevin Eastell reported that students at Kelham Theological had always been expected to answer the door, and this was called time with angels – a part of the monastic institution’s interpretation of Benedictine ‘hospitality’, where one is taught that one could be “entertaining angels unawares”; and this was also an essential part of a student’s personal spiritual formation. This raises the question, ‘Is this part of parish ministry? Is it what the vicar is for?’

Kevin argued that times had changed since those days, and the vicarage is seen much more as a home today. The view is somewhat reinforced by the fact there are now many women in ministry and sometimes they are living alone.

This raised in the sub-committee's mind a second basic question which needed to be addressed, "What is the vicarage for?" And is today's venue for work the church office rather than the vicarage?

Kevin believes clergy are trained today to think more in terms of managing their working week, than in being pastorally available 24 hours a day. Beside the lack of training in this area, there is a dearth of good information available to hand on the resources available. Also he thought it was probably more difficult for callers to get hold of the incumbent today than in the past. Finally, he expressed the view that with the general decline in respect for the church, and for the clergy in particular, clergy should no longer consider themselves to be immune from violence against themselves or their property.

One clergy family wrote to the sub-committee to describe how, after 13 burglaries to their home, they felt unsupported by their diocese. Nor was there any compensation or help when on the last occasion their children's musical instruments and toys were taken. They now find it impossible to get insurance cover. Another clergy wife wrote describing how she has been threatened. Another described how when her husband was out, the outside vicarage floodlights were left on, alarms set and she kept the phone numbers of the churchwarden and police by her bedside. She regretted that they could not afford to keep security lights on all the time. The entryphone, and in one case we came across, a video/entryphone, were becoming essential features of the vicarage or church front door security.

On one occasion a man asked to use the vicarage toilet, the young man locked himself in, and the young wife ran out of the house clutching her baby in panic.

An example was cited of a clergyman having given away his life savings to a man at the door (whether out of fear or compassion it wasn't clear). Many callers arrive at the door during unsocial hours and when the normal statutory agencies are closed. At 5 a.m. the son of one vicar, unknown to his sleeping parents, went to answer the ring at the door, to be confronted by a man asking for a drink of water.

Problems reported were legion. A sad but typical case was reported where an elderly couple, new to the parish, had turned up at the vicarage door at almost midnight. The vicar had retired to bed early with a busy day ahead of him. The couple, he discovered, had simply walked to their local fish and chip shop, become disoriented, got lost, and then wandered for hours. Finally, seeing a vicarage, they felt they might get directions to their new home. A night search with the help of the vicar then followed, and the couple were duly re-united with their home about an hour later.

The sub-committee came across many thoughtful and innovative ways clergy and church workers had established themselves to deal with the problems that arose when a

caller arrived at the door. There were ways to safeguard themselves and their families, ways to sift out the genuine from the con-man, ways to be able to respond immediately to cases requiring immediate help.

Strategies included spy holes in the door, door chains, arrangements with a local care to provide food and tea on production of a voucher, the keeping by of a suitable harvest thanksgiving produce, ready to hand out, having drinks cans with ring pulls to hand out, to save having to make tea; setting times and boundaries when help is available and not making knee-jerk responses 'on demand'; having a policy never to hand over money; helping callers with a long story to get to the point; knowing who to refer people on to; photographing callers to deter repeat calls, keeping a list of useful contacts to hand; never seeing callers alone, never letting strangers in, giving priority attention to one's own and others' personal security and that of the building; and receiving training in how to deal with violent and aggressive callers, etc.

It was suggested to the sub-committee that one reason for the present low morale of some clergy was that they did not feel cared for. Another person reported the general lack of awareness by the diocese of its responsibilities to the whole vicarage family. It became apparent that one diocese will take a different view to another, and funding for what was regarded as essential security work varied from place to place.

In the London Diocese there is no policy whether, for example, to make front doors/porches more secure, to provide window locks, or to provide a grant towards a burglar alarm. How important are security matters when the quinquennial inspections are made? Concern was expressed that diocesan decisions were being taken (e.g. to sell traditional vicarages) out of financial considerations.

The sub-committee was very concerned to learn that the diocese did not assume any responsibility for the "security of the vicar's antiques and valuables". Most clergy would feel their spouses and children were the most valuable things in the vicarage, and that the diocese did bear some responsibility for their security! From the sub-committee's own experience, to meet modest security measures (burglar alarm, lights etc.) one clergy family had been referred to a charity, another had met the costs from their own pocket, and a third had had theirs paid for after a "whip round" at the local pub! Guidance in the latest London Diocesan "Parsonages Handbook" (June 1995), under 'Improvement Works' could be more positive. It states as follows: "Pressures on the Diocesan Parsonages budget mean that improvements are not normally carried out between vacancies. If occupiers feel, however, that they have a particularly acute need, they are to contact their Archdeacon in the first instance. The following works are not normally carried out by the Parsonages Committee: security installations, e.g. burglar alarms, security bars or lighting,

video entry systems, double- secondary glazing....”(page 7, paragraph 6)

The police Crime Prevention Officers could be routinely called in, P.C.C.’s asked to consider improvements to outside lighting, how back up help could be made available e.g. through issuing a bleep or installing an intercom). How aware were P.C.C.s of the number of callers, the needs they bring, the response given in their name, or the security and support of their personnel?

One member of the sub-committee, Sue Hobson, gave her particular attention to the production of a paper with the title, ‘Behind Heaven’s Door’ which looked at the importance of establishing clear ‘boundaries’:

- > Physical boundaries need to be considered – the size, position, accessibility, and security of the house.
- > Logistical boundaries, the setting of strategies for dealing with callers needs to be set out for each household.
- > Emotional boundaries need to be considered, and here we need to consider what God is really calling each person to be doing.

Once having considered all these areas, each carer and his/her household will need to keep them under review and receive appropriate support themselves.

Perhaps the carer’s situation is no better summarised than by this comment by a person who had recently moved into a ‘normal’ home after many years in parish ministry.

“The change in our circumstances has led my wife to speculate if I ever really looked back on the vicarage as my home, or ever really relaxed in it. She has also observed that, looking back, it seems as if every time I embarked upon an activity with the children in the vicarage – cricket, football, reading, helping with homework, playing a game – the activity would invariably be interrupted as I was called away to the vicarage door, or to the phone. The children became inured to it, but it left its mark – up would go the eyebrows and down would come the look of resignation. Their daddy’s priorities were once again confirmed by the ringing of the door bell. Move out of the vicarage and into an ordinary house and the problem vanishes overnight.”

### **D III The Response of the Sub-Committee**

- (1) The provision of food and drink, the most common request, deserves attention. We recommend that each church works out how it can safely and appropriately meet this request.
- (2) The lack of clear rules, consistently applied at the door is a cause for concern.
- (3) It is unreasonable to expect the vicar’s family or those who live in the vicarage to minister to the needs of the casual caller in the absence of the vicar.

- (4) What are reasonable expectations, and what might be appropriate boundaries, needs to be established – e.g. for a day off each week, personal time, family time, holidays at home, and uninterrupted time for other things. The setting of appropriate boundaries is a subject in its own right worthy of full discussion.
- (5) How might the vicar be assisted in setting and then in keeping such boundaries? Here the question of what is taught in theological college, in post ordination training, and in Continuing Ministerial Education has some bearing. One might also ask what the bishop, and those who act on his behalf can do to support clergy and clergy families and households, for example by offering regular independent consultancy and supervision to help maintain agreed boundaries.
- (6) Churches have traditionally seen callers in need as the responsibility of the clergy. Times have changed, but perhaps not attitudes. Churches should discuss whether meeting the needs of callers is something to be undertaken by clergy and/or laity.
- (7) Churches are often closed, and callers appreciate making use of them for quiet, for prayer, for rest, for refreshment. How often is the local church open?
- (8) Those seeing callers should keep simple records, which might be shared with colleagues.
- (9) So far as possible callers should never leave feeling rejected, unloved and in a worse state than when they arrived. Even when unable to give the help requested, something positive can be offered.
- (10) Some clergy families live intolerable lives – because of where they live, the level of demand made of them, and their ability to cope. The diocese needs to identify and list those locations where ministry has a history of placing clergy and their families under unusual stress. Once identified, decisions to change the practice of locating personnel there, and re-locating the vicarage, should then be considered. This should take regard for the sort of clergy/clergy family to be located there, along with a re-assessment of the level of material and personnel support provided.
- (11) The sub-committee identified a gap in clergy training, both before and after ordination. This should include training on how to deal with the caller whilst caring for oneself and one’s household. Behind this lie deep questions which property belong not only with those responsible for training, but for the wider church. These questions

are: ‘What is ministry?’ ‘What is the vicar for?’ and ‘What is the role of the vicarage today?’

- (12) Within the Diocese of London there is a dearth of useful information. We recommend:
- (a) the collection, collation and dissemination of London-wide information relating to the needs of and care available to the casual caller, and,
  - (b) Deaneries, or groups of deaneries work together to produce local resources sheets for local church use. (The health authority may have already done some of this work..)
- (13) Deaneries need to assess the locally accessible provision of services for callers, and work out a strategy to develop and improve that provision where it is inadequate.

## **E. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AND IMPLICATIONS**

*“Saviour and friend, how wonderful art Thou!  
My companion upon the changeful way.  
The comforter of its weariness.  
My guide to the eternal town.  
The welcome at its gate. “ Alistair Maclean*

Members of the sub-committee approached their theological understanding of the caller/carer situation from different starting places. Though all have wrestled in pastoral practice with how best to respond to the casual caller, this in turn led to our theological reflection, asking ‘Where do we start ‘doing theology’ and where ultimately does this lead us? Under the title, ‘Knocking at Heaven’s Door – Pastoral care at the Vicarage’ the following section was prepared and discussed.

### **E 1 Called to be ‘Warm and Caring Neighbours’**

Salvation history is about the redemption of fallen people, both now in this life and eternally. Pastoral care is a sign of salvation won. Pastoral care also reflects the love of God, making known the presence of Jesus Christ amongst his people, and meditating through his Holy Spirit the love of God to people, one to another. Christians are called to follow the way of love exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ.

Pastoral care has been defined as ‘helping acts done by representative Christian persons, directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns’ [\*2]. Frank Wright [\*3] thinks the word ‘pastoral’, unfortunately carries with it patronising and paternalistic overtones. Derek Tidball in his book ‘Skillful Shepherds’ [\*4] calls the one who pastors the ‘warm caring neighbour’. In his summary of the Ten Commandments,

Jesus himself said that his followers were both to love God and love their neighbour (Luke 10:27). There is, then, a clear mandate for Christians to care for callers.

## **E II Pastoral Care is Informed by Faith**

The Bible is full of stories which commend a pattern of unconditional love, supremely shown in the life and death of Jesus himself. In the Old Testament God showed this love to his covenant people, the Jews, and in the New Testament the barriers between all people are broken down as God reveals his love for all in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The Old Testament shows a dignified provision was made for the poor. There was the year of the Jubilee, there was the provision for gleaning at the field’s edge, and so forth. Arguably, because of these legal provisions, the poor were less marginalised in Old Testament times than they are today.

The early church, following the pattern set by Jesus, is noted for its pastoral care of those in need – the hungry (Acts 2:7-30), the widows, the orphans, and in fact ‘all who were in need’ (Acts 2: 4-5). Michael Taylor, one time Director of Christian Aid, says, “What makes pastoral care distinctively Christian is that we have taken faith deliberately into account...and faith needs to shape pastoral care” [\*5]. Care comes out from the well-spring of our faith.

### **E 111 Not ‘Care on Demand’**

But care need not be always care on demand. In the early Church, care was often provided at the time of need or that same day, but not always. Jesus himself took time out from directly caring for people – to rest (Mark 4:38), to be refreshed (Luke 7: 36), and to pray (Luke 5:15-16). There is no mandate which requires Christians to care on demand.

Also, a ‘ministry of care’ is not necessarily something required of all Christians. Early on in the history of the Church, the apostles found they could not cope with both the task of preaching the gospel and ministering to people’s material needs, and so organised a division of labour, recruiting extra helpers to help with the daily distribution (Acts 6: 1-3). Some Christians think they can be all things to all people, but the Bible teaches otherwise. The Bible talks about each being given different gifts. It follows that not all will be gifted in pastoral care, even though the person in need may present him or herself before them expecting them to provide help.

Clearly the calling to give pastoral care is for some people and not all – there is role differentiation here. For those for whom it is their calling, it is not always appropriate to provide care on demand. Caring helpers need to be free to take rest sometimes and set boundaries as best they can, as Jesus himself did.

## **E IV Models of Pastoral Care**

This brings us to ask what is an appropriate model of Christian care for us to adopt? There are two powerful images used in the New Testament to describe the nature of the Christian Church. The first is the image of Christians as part of God's 'building', 'living stones', as Peter calls us, (1 Peter 2: 4-8) a picture of independence and fellowship, each having a part to play with Christ as the 'cornerstone'. The second is the image of 'the body', a unity of different parts sharing a diversity of gifts and ministries.

Ministry then is not a one person affair, but exercised by the whole Church. And within the Church, individuals are called to exercise different roles and ministries. Some will be 'lay' and some ordained. The ordained person will have a role as a priest, pastor, teacher and leader, and because of the nature of Anglican ministry, they are very often the one full-time servant of the Church, and based in a vicarage or similar clergy house. But if we truly take on board the images of the church as building or body, then care of the caller should not automatically become the ministry of the incumbent alone.

One key reason for an un-systematic approach toward the casual caller at the vicarage is our very different understanding and perceptions of Jesus himself. People 'see' Jesus in different ways. There is no one role model here. This is a challenging exercise in hermeneutics. How we see Jesus may inform and shape how we see ministry. When we think about the person who gives the care, perhaps the first image that comes to mind is the image of the 'courageous good shepherd', and there are many endorsements of this particular role model in scripture. The result has been that much pastoral care has come to be seen from the shepherding perspective. The good shepherd, Jesus said, lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11).

Some would argue this is not the only model for the Christian – there is the 'wounded healer' too, a model that also carries the notion of self-sacrifice with it. This reflects the priestly sacrificial role of Jesus himself. Another model is 'the holy fool'. All three models endorse the ideal of a carer who will go to any lengths to care, and it is very easy to look, for example, at Jesus going to the cross, or St Paul recalling the suffering of his ministry, and think it is the last word on caring. It is easy to overlook other models which Christians can use to bring shape to their role as carer – e.g. the good steward, the good parent, and the good Samaritan.

Today, in our big cities, perhaps the shepherding imagery which relates to a particular rural way of life (from which we get the word 'pastoral') needs to be replaced by other images more relevant to the modern context. Christians as shrewd managers rather than brave shepherds might feel more in keeping with the modern age. Today's western world is also, arguably, more familiar with psychotherapists and counsellors than shepherds. The qualities that shepherds, managers and professional carers bring to the caring relationship may each resonate meaningfully with the

qualities and values which Jesus as a skilled and gifted saviour brought into the relationships he established with the people who came to him with their needs. Today's helper is rarely equipped to be all of these.

Sometimes the role model is the model of 'prophet', when the helper is called to admonish, warn or confront the person coming for help. This position is not without its dangers, and presupposes the helper fully understands the position of the one in need of help and has the boldness and skill to speak forth. If Biblical precedent is needed for a 'prophetic' approach, there are many in both Old and New Testaments (see for example Luke 4:18-19).

Roger Hurding in his book "Roots and Shoots" [\*6] develops a method for giving help. He calls his final chapter, 'The wonderful counsellor', and sees in Jesus a multi-faceted role model to reflect on. Jesus is prophet, pastor, priest and paraclete. All these and other roles, the Christian Church needs to be able to draw on when someone in need calls at the door. Rarely are they on tap immediately.

## **E V The Relationship between Helper and Helped**

Alistair Campbell [\*7] sees pastoral care as meaning that a certain kind of relationship is offered, a relationship which is marked by 'honesty, steadfastness, personal wholeness, mutuality, the courage of sacrificial love, vulnerability, folly, gracefulness, and a companionship which is more like being with people than doing things for them'. The relationship helper and helped is important in itself, and provides more than simply the context within which help is given. Paul Tournier [\*8] lays great stress on the mutuality of helper and helped, both being open to each other and to God.

## **E VI Soul and Body**

Jesus Christ is not only the one who atoned for the sins of the fallen, transcending the divide between a holy God and a sinful mankind – and opening the way to salvation, but he is also God incarnate – the one who knows our human condition as one of us. Often though, Christians give more weight to the one than the other and this can shape the kind of care offered.

On the one hand, the significance of the atonement is that Christians who have a strong sense of Jesus atoning for our sin, may feel strongly that their duty is to share in the great commission to go and make all people disciples, to lead them in the way of Christ's salvation. This is, for them, the Christian's main task, and putting right any other problem may take second place. Such Christians feel their first calling is to reach across the great divide between God and the sinner to make known Christ. This may be what one might call a 'word centered' approach to pastoral care.

On the other hand, the significance of incarnational theology is that it places Christ, the immanent God, at the heart of the

world he created, and nearby in every human predicament and need. Frank Wright, echoing the words of Matthew 25: 40, talks about how important it is to reverence the person in need as if they were Christ [\*3]. For Christians who have a strong sense of Christ incarnate in this world, the person at the door is there to be ministered to as if they were Christ himself. Such an approach might be seen as ‘deed centred’.

Christians need to hold on to both aspects of Christ – his transcendence and his immanence, and Christian pastoral care needs to take hold both of Christ’s ‘saving word’ and the ‘God who is in all things’. Word and deed truly belong together (Acts 4:20). There is a balance to be kept here, the balance between a God who is both our Creator and our Saviour. Both are important in that they shape how we see pastoral care. Care for the soul and its ultimate destiny goes hand in hand with care for the body which God also created.

Truth to tell, the spiritual and the material both matter. The question then arises, ‘Is it possible to find a method of pastoral care which neglects neither the needs of the soul nor the need of the body, and is appropriate for the helped as well the helper? Only the Church offers a whole perspective on the person, seeing them in the broadest sense of salvation.

## **E VII ‘Now and Not Yet’**

There is another theological balance to be considered and it relates to the question of time – the sense of the now and the not yet. This has already been briefly alluded to in section three above. For some, ‘now is the acceptable time of the Lord’ and it is imperative that needs are immediately addressed. Others may take a different view of how God uses time in his world, and for them there is ‘time for everything under heaven’, and perhaps the casual caller can come back tomorrow. In fact experience shows that most problems that are presented at the door are not nearly so urgent as they are first made out to be. Of course, in order to be able to determine what is urgent and what can wait has to be decided by a quick assessment of the situation – which presupposes possession of a certain knowledge of the procedures and skills that are needed to be able to do this with any degree of confidence.

## **E VIII The Venue for Care**

What do we understand of the home life of Jesus? Certainly he had an unsettled beginning – in a stable – as a political refugee – then as a more settled family making the regular trip up to Jerusalem in a caravan for the Jewish festivals. Finally, in his period of recorded ministry, he spent three years on the road, sometimes staying at the houses of friends, other times having nowhere to lay his head. He had no family life in the ordinary sense, his ‘family’ were his band of followers. We are therefore faced with the question as to whether the pattern of Jesus’ home life was unique to his ministry, and does not therefore provide us with any

guidance as to how vicarages or for that matter any homes should be run. Are there any guiding principles that have relevance to the vicarage household?

Well, perhaps there are. The band of followers was a kind of household. For example, they had to arrange meals, they ate together, and someone had to keep the purse to pay for them. On the whole though, scripture is silent on their precise domestic arrangements. The picture is of a very open and flexible situation which had to be very accommodating of different people coming and going, and of the different situations they found themselves in.

People called to challenging places of ministry may have to open doors as well as hearts in a way they never anticipated beforehand. Within the Christian household, there will be times when it is appropriate to care for the members of that ‘family’ before all else, for example, when Jesus was dying on the cross he summoned John to care for his mother.

Mary Anne Coate in her book “Clergy Stress” [\*9], says that the pressure on ministers from their surroundings are considerable. “Somehow”, she concludes, “we have to come to terms with pressures lest they engulf us” (page 48). She writes, “Ministers of religion are notoriously bad at caring for themselves, firstly in not taking their own feelings seriously, and secondly in their response to the ‘received’ dictum of total availability and a merging of personal and professional life such as would not be tolerated by many other people” (page 94). She has identified a problem area here. There are dysfunctional and ‘wounded’ helpers in the Church, and the lack of separation between home and work, and on- and off-duty times, contribute to the problems in the management and care of the casual caller. It may also be the pressure of callers which disable clergy and their families.

## **E IX The Process of Care**

These sketchy thoughts on theology and pastoral care, show that our pictures of Christ and our understanding of Go may do more to determine our response to the casual caller at the door than we first think. It was Michael Taylor [\*5] who rightly said, “faith needs to shape care”. Faith will give us our loving ethic and motivation. What will also be needed is a caring process for meeting the needs of the caller.

The process by which appropriate help is given, whether at the vicarage door or elsewhere is often more complex and requires more skill than might at first appear. Following Gerard Egan [\*10], one might adopt a three stage helping process, i.e.:

- (1) exploration of the problem;
- (2) development of new perspectives on it and setting goals; and then
- (3) action.

Then each of these helping stages might itself become an involved and skilled assessment and helping process. Yes, some callers bring simple and straightforward problems

which are clearly stated, their understanding of their situation is sound, and with the carers help a solution is well within grasp. However the reality is that hardly any callers are like this, and very few Church personnel will be able to provide the level of skilled help the caller really needs!

### **E X The ‘Peculiar’ Situation of the Clergy, the Clergy Household and the Vicarage**

The Church of England is organised geographically on the basis of the parish. Personnel are appointed with leadership responsibility under a bishop. There is an institutionalised duty of care. The parish boundaries of the Church of England encompasses every square inch of England. Every person in England lives within a parish, and every parish has a specified person with responsibility for ‘the care of souls’ within it.

At his induction and institution as the incumbent of a parish, the bishop asks the parish priest designate various questions, including the following.

*As a messenger, watchman and steward of the Lord you are to feel God’s people with his word, enabling them to proclaim his love. You are to teach the faith of Christ both inside and outside of these walls. In his name you are to bless and encourage those who come for marriage, you are to declare the forgiveness of sins to the penitent, and to comfort and console the bereaved. Will you care for the people of this parish in the name of Christ?*

*You are with your colleagues to lead people in prayer and intercede for the whole parish, to bless and encourage in the name of the Lord all who come in search of God’s grace. Will you serve them with joy, pray for them with sympathy and understanding and do all in your power to build up the body of Christ in love and peace?*

This makes it clear that the focus of all pastoral responsibility lies within a church structure and hierarchy of care, and in each parish the ultimate local responsibility rests with the incumbent – it is in the ‘job specification’.

Often, but not always, the incumbent, the incumbent’s family, and any other members of the household, live within the parish; and their home, normally a vicarage or rectory, is locally recognised as part of the church ‘plant’. Like the hospital, police station, petrol station or local ‘pub’ the incumbent’s official residence is seen to be ‘open’ 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This arrangement, living not ‘above the shop’ but ‘in the shop’, not surprisingly raises difficulties, and creates stress. A carpenter, by contrast, would open his workshop for business at stated hours.

Perhaps it is unique to the Church, that the incumbent has to manage the twofold and sometimes conflicting demands made as a result of the ‘tied house’ being both an ‘official residence’ and a ‘family home’. It has been suggested that

the two be separated, not least because of the unacceptable stress this can impose on domestic life.

### **E XI The Response of the Sub-Committee**

- (1) Why do clergy tend to see themselves as the sole focus of care giving? Clergy need help to pass on callers to other appropriate helpers, both within the church and without.
- (2) Who explores the models of care clergy use? Does it happen in theological training, in post-ordination or continuing ministerial training, or in personal spiritual direction and supervision? Indeed, does it happen at all? We recommend clergy, and those responsible for training and support examine these questions.
- (3) It is unreasonable to expect the vicar (or anyone else) to be available at all times, day and night.
- (4) How much local variation between parishes might be acceptable, bearing in mind the different gifts people have, their differing personal, family and household situations?
- (5) A vicar does not have to carry out pastoral duties from home. It is possible for the church or parish office to be the ‘place of work’ rather than the vicarage doorstep or study.
- (6) The vicar should not be required to live ‘on site’ next to the church, even in the parish, without some careful prior assessment being made.

**F IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**F I Implications**

**A. PARISH CLERGY should ask**

- > Do they see themselves as the sole focus of care?
- > Do they pass on callers to appropriate other helpers?
- > What model of care do they use, is it reasonable in its expectations of themselves and their family?
- > Have they developed a strategy to enable boundaries to be drawn in terms of what care is reasonable and possible?
- > Where can they turn for advice and support?

**B. LOCAL CHURCH/PCC should ask**

- > Do they know and support the policy operated by the priest?
- > Has it been discussed?
- > Do they see casual callers as the sole responsibility of the clergy?
- > Should the laity help, and if so, how?
- > What training and support will they need for this?
- > Are they aware of the number of callers and the needs they bring?
- > Are they aware of the help given in their name?
- > Are they aware of the security implications for the clergy and clergy family?
- > Would a church office be helpful?
- > How often is the local church open?
- > Could a plan be devised to enable the church to be open for those wanting quiet and a place to pray?

**C. DEANERY OR LOCAL CHURCHES should ask**

- > What local strategies exist?
- > What information is available?
- > What support and help is offered?
- > What is the level and type of local need?
- > Is what is offered the best possible, and is it effective?
- > Is it supported by the local 'churches-together'?
- > What is the best forum in which to discuss these issues, and implement strategies?

**D. LOCAL AGENCIES, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND HEALTH AUTHORITIES should ask**

- > Is there effective monitoring of Community Care provision?
- > How can care be co-ordinated so that fewer people slip through the net?
- > What provision is there for liaison and exchange of information between agencies, personnel and the churches?

**E. THE DIOCESE should ask**

- > How does it recognise its duty of care towards the clergy; particularly in isolated situations and in difficult locations?
- > Does it have a responsibility to clarify legal rulings as to whether it is in the role of employer and needing to face health and safety issues on behalf of its clergy?
- > Who monitors (and how) the incidents and intolerable level of demands made upon some?
- > Who monitors security issues, and how?
- > What is done to identify locations where ministry has a history of placing clergy and their families under unusual stress?
- > What care for the carers can be provided, especially when some clergy say they are afraid to open up to each other, and authorities are out of touch with realities of parish life.
- > What is the vicarage for?
- > Should today's venue for work be the church office rather than the vicarage?
- > Should there be a London Diocesan Policy to review security matters when the quinquennial inspections are made?

- > Should the diocese try to inform the congregations what are reasonable expectations of clergy. And what appropriate boundaries need to be established – e.g. for a day off each week, personal time, family time, holidays at home, and uninterrupted time for other things?

**F. ABM and CME should ask**

- > How can they provide clergy training, both before and after ordination, in this presently neglected area?
- > Who explores the models of care clergy use? Does it happen in theological training, in post-ordination or continuing ministerial training, or in personal spiritual direction and supervision? Indeed, does it happen at all?

G. GENERAL SYNOD should ask

- > What does it mean today for the Church to have clergy appointed with an institutionalised duty of care within their parish (as in the ordinal and institution: ‘Will you care for the people of this parish in the name of Christ?’). What does this mean when callers come with problems which the carer may feel it is neither within their role nor ability to provide help?
- > In the light of what other professional employers currently practise, should the Church be offering guidelines to help and protect the health and safety of its personnel – a ‘Code of Care’, setting out clearly the Church’s responsibilities to support its staff at the ‘sharp end’?

H. THE GOVERNMENT should ask

- > How does it monitor and respond to needs created by changes to the benefits system – levels, eligibility and delivery; housing policy, and provision of daytime and evening services for homeless people?
- > What is the present impact and purpose of ‘The Vagrancy Act’, which criminalises the homeless and destitute?
- > How can it work with the Church and other caring agencies having to care for those falling through the welfare net and on the margins of society; particularly the homeless and destitute?
- > How can the government work with the church and others to get effective benefits to those who need them, and to provide a sense of belonging to the community?

I CARIS should ask

- > Can it receive this report; and can it support its recommendations?
- > Can it publish the guidelines to support callers and carers?
- > Can it discuss what areas fall within its responsibility and follow up on such recommendations?
- > Can it approach the bishops, diocese, A.B.M., General Synod and appropriate government agencies to make this report known and to urge that its implications be considered?
- > Does the CARIS Board recognise that the needs the callers of today present are different and more difficult for those whose duty it is to care?

> Should the Church still be offering care to the casual caller?

> If so, then how and by whom?

> How best can the needs of today’s caller be met whilst safeguarding the carer?

> Should the ‘stories’ of callers be recorded and, within the bounds of proper confidentiality, shared and used to form policies for social change?

**F II Recommendations**

We believe this area of ministry must be more effectively managed and supported, both for those who call and those who care.

A. CARE OF THE CALLER – we recommend that

> The Church recognises the clear mandate for Christians to care for the casual caller.

> The church recognises that giving pastoral care is, for clergy, part of their calling, and that there will always be a spiritual dimension to any help offered.

> The Church should really listen to the ‘stories’ of callers. These should be recorded and, within the bounds of proper confidentiality, shared and used to form policies for social change.

> There should be a gathering of expertise into centres of skilled good practice where callers could safely be referred, and carers feel properly supported. Presently, the availability of such centres does not always match local requirements. Strategic thinking and planning is needed at each level of the church structure from Diocese to PCC in order to address this need.

> Planning for provision at a deanery or borough level, based on natural local community groupings, has much to commend it.

> Local groups of churches, of all denominations, should learn to work together.

> Clergy should be trained to respond courteously to people by phone, letter or in person. And training should be given in assessing clients, both to discover their needs, and any potential danger they may pose.

> The provision of food and drink is the most common request. We recommend that each church works out how it can safely and appropriately meet this request.

> The diocese should offer basic guidelines which could be consistently applied at the vicarage door. Clear boundaries are important to callers, as they need to know clearly what help they can expect.

B. CARE OF THE CARER – we recommend that

- > The Diocese should take regard for the sort of priest and clergy family it is intending to locate in a difficult parish or vicarage, bearing in mind the number of people broken by a parish ministry simply due to its location; and regard must be paid to the risk of burn out.
- > The Diocese should establish appropriate systems to demonstrate its corporate responsibility for care. The bishop and those who act on his behalf should find ways to evaluate the needs of clergy and clergy families and households; and provide both support and a sense of belonging, recognising that care of the caller and carer requires on-going training, development and support. This should include training in how to set up physical, emotional and family boundaries and then in keeping such boundaries.
- > The Church should recognise the vulnerability of its personnel (which includes not only paid employees and their families, but also volunteers). So we recommend the Diocese draw up a ‘code of care’ for the personnel, along the lines of those drawn up by the more enlightened secular employers. These guidelines should be written into implicit ‘contracts’ so that both employer and employee are obligated to observe good practice.
- > Security systems should not be the financial responsibility of the incumbent. A crime prevention report should accompany the quinquennial survey, and its advice followed.
- > Clergy appraisal should include a check that the workload is manageable and reasonable, premises are secure, and counselling and training are being used when appropriate.
- > The Church should accept that it is unreasonable to expect the vicar’s family, or those who live in the vicarage, to minister to the needs of the casual caller in the absence of the vicar.
- > The point of care need no longer be focused on the vicarage/rectory door, and that the introduction of more parish office based places of work in ministry should be encouraged.
- > The diocese should monitor all incidents concerning casual callers in vicarages or parish offices, and know about any physical assault and threats, their seriousness and special features of the problem.
- > There should be paid leave if needed following serious trauma.

- > The dioceses should arrange that full compensation is available for personal loss of property, and a joint approach should be made to church insurers for adequate cover, and help with contents insurance.
- > Clergy and households should be supported and advised about prosecution of claims or legal proceedings.
- > The care of the casual caller must be an element in theological college, in post-ordination training, and in continuing ministerial education.

F III Guidelines

The following are offered as a basis for discussion, and arise out of the request expressed at the original conference and elsewhere by clergy. They may appear at first sight to be stark and uncompromising, but this is a reflection of the society in which we live and the uncertainties surrounding this issue.

We affirm the local church as having a responsibility to care. It is a place where much help is given. We recommend local churches continue to develop and do what they do best, namely provide simple practical care such as food and drink, and a caring, listening ear. Some churches will be able to offer more, such as a drop-in facility. The wealth and experience already existing can be drawn on here.

We recommend that each local church assesses the service it can offer. There are many factors to take into account here. For example, the level of demand made; the personnel available; the security of personnel and buildings; resources to hand, etc.

Every church needs to have its own strategy for dealing with callers. Guidelines should be agreed, written down and followed.

A. FOR PARISH CLERGY/STAFF

Decide locally **what level of need exists and what help will be offered**. Remember some with years of experience, and others working in special projects say that the type of caller has changed so much that clergy should not attempt to get involved, except on the level of giving information or making referrals.

IF DECIDING THAT HELP WILL CONSIST OF INFORMATION ONLY THEN:

- > So far as possible callers should never leave feeling rejected, unloved and in a worse state than when they arrived. Invariably, even when unable to give the help requested, something positive can be offered.
- > Clear rules are important to callers, and they need to know clearly and quickly where they stand when they come to the local Church or vicarage door. Tell them what is on offer.

- > Do give information, have a printed list of resource centres to hand, including local shelters, social services offices, psychiatric social worker, emergency social worker, Citizen's Advice Bureaux, Alcoholics Anonymous, CRUSE, Relate.
- > Do not undertake a pastoral engagement.
- > Do not invite the caller inside.
- > Do work with other local churches to provide care cover.
- > Do ensure that the ground rules are consistently applied.

IF DECIDING TO OFFER MORE THAN INFORMATION:

**ACTION**

- > Do ensure that the ground rules are consistently applied.
- > If any demand or expectation is unreasonable, say so and don't feel guilty.
- > Do hold on to the 'stories' people tell.
- > Do not look for thanks.
- > Arrangements can be made with a local café to provide food and tea on production of a chit, have a limit or about £4 per voucher.
- > Keep suitable food from gifts at harvest services to hand out in a carrier bag.
- > Drinks can with ring pulls to hand out can save having to make tea at an inconvenient time.
- > Set times and boundaries when help is available and do not make knee-jerk responses 'on-demand'.
- > Help callers with a long story to get to the point by asking "What do you want me to do".
- > If appropriate refer people on to specialised caring agencies (as above).
- > Remember that the traditional responses of a cup of tea and a sandwich can meet both a spiritual and practical need, and demonstrates God's care for the caller.

**MONEY**

- > It generally helps to have a local 'no money' policy, because when established the requests become less; but individual parishes may wish to continue to exercise discretion in particular cases. If appropriate, make it clear that you don't give money but will give spiritual help if needed.
- > Demands for money often come when social services are closed – in fact they are never closed.

A duty social worker is available at all times and their name can be obtained from local police.

- > Demands for train tickets have been met by people going to buy the ticket, but callers are now are that they can present the ticket for a refund.
- > Giving money can be aiding those on the run. Demanding money with menaces is an offence.

**SECURITY**

- > Consider the usefulness to your situation of spy holes in the door, door chains, panic buttons, personal alarm, visible security alarm, mobile phone, security mirrors, entry phone, video-entry phone, security lighting, window locks, double glazing...a dog!
- > Most problems that are presented at the door are not nearly so urgent as they are first made out to be. Ask callers to call back in 30 minutes as it is not convenient to see them now. (Most do not call back.)
- > When needy families request food consider agreeing to deliver later and get the address.
- > If you have a porch, provide a seat (and possibly a carpet) to interview people here. Keep the door to the house locked.
- > Be cautious about letting strangers in. If you consider there is any risk, keep callers out of the family home and interview them on the doorstep.
- > If leaving the door to use the phone or make reference, lock the door with the caller outside.
- > Requests to use toilet should normally be politely refused. This can be a ploy to get into a home and is especially risky if there is more than one caller. If you feel sufficiently capable of controlling the situation, and allow a downstairs toilet to be used, it should be locked off from the rest of the house, if possible.
- > Be cautious about letting unknown people into the study. It helps if another adult is in the house and within reach of a telephone.
- > Make a careful assessment of the situation before interviewing on your own whether in the church, parish office, or the vicarage.
- > When visiting clients in church or their home/hostel, always inform another person of where you are going and when you expect to be back.
- > When interviewing, keep nearer the door than the caller, and check that the lock on the door cannot be used to lock you in.

- > Formal interview areas should have visibility for others to see in, and consideration should be given to installing an alarm system.
- > When with a caller about with whom you become anxious, listen carefully, avoid sudden movement or change in attitude, appear calm, give a sense of security and ensure that boundaries are clear. Avoid physical contact. It is lawful to use self defence if it is 'reasonable' but the best course of action should be to attempt escape.
- > Agree to meet callers whom you know to be potentially violent at the police station.
- > If you feel yourself to be in any danger call the police, use 999 not the local numbers, and remember help can take up to 15 minutes to arrive. (Failure to call the police can invalidate insurance claims.)
- > The Offences Against The Person Act gives grounds for calling for police intervention if feeling threatened. The Public Order Act states that threatening words are an offence. Injunctions may be brought against people who threaten you – these can be issued by a solicitor.
- > All incidents should be recorded.
- > Records should be kept of dealings with callers: e.g. details of person, time, date, requests made, and help offered.
- > Agree your policy with the PCC.

## B. FOR SPECIAL CARING PROJECTS

We recommend the expertise and guidelines already drawn up and implemented by The Passage, St Botolph's and other projects. The key words are 'consistency and security'.

Any new projects should consider the presently used guidelines listed above in the main report (see §C II on page 6); plus the guidelines already listed in §F III a, in this section of the report for general parish/clergy guidance; and these additional recommendations:

- > Ideally, no member of staff should be alone to deal with callers.
- > Ensure that any carer has supervision support.
- > Hold on to the 'stories' people tell.
- > Limit the exposure of carers to callers.
- > Staff should know how to deal with people courteously by phone, letter or in person.
- > Workloads should be manageable, and should be regularly reviewed.
- > A mobile phone may be useful for personal security.
- > Staff should receive appropriate counselling and training.
- > All incidents must be reported and recorded to assess the seriousness and features of the problem.
- > Security arrangements in buildings should be reviewed every six months.
- > Staff who are injured should be helped to claim from the Criminal Injuries Board.
- > All requirements of Health and Safety and Insurance regulations must be fully complied with.
- > Finally, if the project is one involving a feeding ministry: state that demands outside set times will not be met: involve the church members in making the sandwiches, remember the work in the parish prayers; and support the costs from the offerings.
- > Obviously be aware that all government and local authority health and hygiene regulations must be met in full.

## G APPENDICES

### G I Membership of sub-committee working group

#### The Revd John Hall (Chair)

B.A., C.Q.S.W, Vicar of St Aldhelm's, Edmonton;  
formerly Senior Probation Officer, London

#### The Revd Paul Andrew

after working as a priest in Cornwall and Salford, is now vicar of St John's Hammersmith, (living in attached vicarage with aged parent), Trustee and Chaplain of the Abbotsleigh Trust (a charity for disadvantaged people). Previously a teacher in primary, secondary and special education

#### The Revd Christopher Brice

presently Director of CARIS after serving as an incumbent in the Hackney deanery from 1986-93.

#### The Revd Jim Dainty

B.A., Dip. Th. Dip. C.P.C., A.L.B.C., M.I.C - worked in publishing and journalism before ordination. Pastoral experience in the diocese of Wakefield, Rochester and London. Six years as whole-time hospital chaplain in Leeds. Presently priest-in-charge of Christ Church, Turnham Green.

#### Mrs Sue Hobson

married to Pete, the team rector of Hackney Marsh. Lived and worked in the inner city for 19 years. Teacher, and mother of five children.

#### Mrs Gill Morrison

after 20 year career in nursing, culminating as senior nursing tutor at St. Bart's., now a clergy wife and mother at St Luke's, Hampstead, and a magistrate in adult and youth courts in inner London.

#### Mr Michael Ogden

an architect and licensed lay reader, has spent 40 years as a representative of the congregation keeping "Heaven's Door" open at St Pancras, Euston Road.

We would like to express our gratitude to all who assisted us, those who acted as consultants; those whose work at the original conference fed out thinking; those who wrote to us following the article in the Church Times; those working for other voluntary, statutory and church agencies who responded to our requests for information; and also all those across London who answered our telephone questions as we conducted a diocesan-wide survey. A special thank you is due to Father Paul Andrew who cheerfully acted as the group's convenor and secretary. Finally, we owe a debt of gratitude to the staff of CARIS who provided the sub-committee with a place to meet and the necessary sustenance to complete our work!

## G II The Telephone Survey

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS** [original response forms held confidentially by Paul Andrew]

Size of Sample: 51

nil returns from 24 because:

- answer phone or no answer on 3 separate occasions: 19
- person answering not prepared/unable to answer questions: 5

Key to abbreviations:

p/o = parish office

a/v = vicarage adjacent or on the same site

¼m = vicarage within ¼ mile

d/v = vicarage more distant

pol = vicarage or family policy for answering the door

Number of callers/month:

3 or less 8 [p/o-1; a/v-3; ¼m-2; d/v-3; pol-4]

4 to 14 7 [p/o-1; a/v-4; ¼m-2; d/v-0; pol-5]

15 to 30 8 [p/o-1; a/v-5; ¼m-2; d/v-0; pol-4]

30 to 60 1 [p/o-0; a/v-1; ¼m-0; d/v-0; pol-0]

over 60 3 [p/o-1; a/v-2; ¼m-0; d/v-0; pol-2]

Ask for:

money/fares 24

food: 15

talk: 9

clothes: 5

accommodation: 5

bath 1

furniture: 1

Receive:

money: 4

tea/snack: 17

hardly ever/never money 19

blankets: 2

clothes: 1

from food cupboard: 2

vouchers: 1

own church charity: 3

referred elsewhere: 3

Miscellaneous remarks to surveyor:

Need diocesan-wide network to warn about con-men "doing the rounds".

Deanery resource list badly needed.

More publicity (at appropriate places) relating to shelters etc

Many "problems" are really government's responsibility – need to change attitudes there.

Why wasn't this questionnaire sent to all churches for a more accurate result?

The bill for vicarage security was put on the initial decorating bill when moving in to the parsonage house (and diocese paid without query).

This sub-committee a waste of time and money – clergy ought to be able to deal with casual callers without any help from CARIS!

Good relations with local police mean prompt attendance when alarms go off.

### **G III The response to church press articles and enquiries of other agencies**

#### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS** *[sources held confidentially by Jim Dainty]*

##### **PROBLEM and EMOTION**

##### **SOLUTIONS**

source a 1.

Personal security

People should watch for their own security and for their colleagues.  
Don't interview in buildings on one's own  
On leaving a building check no colleague left behind  
In interview place avoid heavy items – like glass ashtrays which can become missiles  
Avoid keeping people waiting and anything that can build tension  
Book into Probation Service training on violent and aggressive clients tel: 020 7357 6373

source a 2.

Violence, physical, verbal threats, sexual trauma, assault, harassment against self or colleagues or family members

Employers should check all premises for security, provide adequate staffing and counselling and training  
Employers should monitor ALL incidents and know the seriousness and features of problem, with a view to finding solutions, provide paid leave if needed.

source a 3.

Personal security

The issues should be a health and safety issue and written into contracts so that the employee, as well as the employer, is obligated to follow guidelines.

source a 4.

Security of property, loss, theft, vandalism

There should be full compensation available for personal loss, and a joint approach to Ecclesiastical Insurance Group for decent insurance cover, and help with contents insurance

source a.5

Personal loss or injury

Staff should be supported and advised about prosecution of the client

source a 6.

Handling money

No one should be put at risk, through handling money or valuables.  
If threatened (e.g.) when taking money to bank, it should be handed over.  
Discretion and varied routine are required.

source a 7.

Personal security, fear

When interviewing, staff members should be nearer the door than client, the lock on the door should not be type that could be used by client to lock the staff member in.  
Formal interview areas should have visibility for others to see in and alarm system  
Security arrangements in building should be reviewed every six months.

source a 8.

Personal security

When visiting clients in church or their home/hostel, then inform another person of where you are going and when you expect to be back  
If in danger call the police, use 999, not local numbers and remember help can take up to 15 mins to arrive.  
Failure to call the Police can invalidate insurance claims

source a 9.

Personal security

Training should be given in assessing clients, both to discover their needs, and the potential danger they pose.  
Also staff should listen carefully, avoid sudden movement or change in attitude, appeal calm, give a sense of security and that boundaries are clear.  
Avoid physical contact.  
It is lawful to use self defence if it is 'reasonable' but best course of action should be to attempt escape.  
Staff who are injured should be helped to claim from Criminal Injuries Board.  
Employers should also have insurance to cover staff in case of disablement or loss of property.

source a 10.

Personal and property

List of resource materials should be available

security <u>source b 1</u> Alcoholism	Definition and support at Spitalfields
<u>source c 1</u> Personal security, fear	Staff code should be available, like Camden Staff should know how to deal with people courteously by phone, letter or in person. Their workload should be manageable, and should be regularly reviewed. Mobile phone may be useful for personal security.
<u>source d 1</u> Demands for money, fear	Demands for train tickets have been met by people going to buy the ticket, but some clients are now aware that once they have the ticket, they can present it for a refund. Avoid giving money. Demands for money come when social services are closed – in fact they are never closed. A duty social worker is available at all times and their name can be obtained from the local police. Those who call during the day should be directed to the Citizen's Advice Bureaux. Fraternal should co-operate together
Personal security, fear for family	Interview on doorstep if risk, keep out of family home. Have appointment and meet at church. Ask clients to call back in 30 minutes as not convenient. Most do not call back. Out of fear or compassion one clergy has even been known to give away their life savings. It can be aiding those on the run. Demanding money with menaces is an offence.
<u>source f 1</u> Isolation	Clergy are afraid to open up to each other and authorities are out of touch with realities of parish life.
<u>source g 1</u> Need for food	List of resource centres. In many areas of London food and compassion and shelter available at any time.
<u>source h 1</u> Need for food	Make a link with local shop or café and provide a chit for compassion say £4 of food to be provided, for which you will pay later.
<u>source j 1</u> Need for food, compassion	Keep a Harvest Cupboard of food from Harvest to be given to needy families.
Requests for food, for home	Agree to deliver later and get address (able to see if genuine) it would help to have a local 'no money' policy.
Feeling guilt when confronted	Need for training and counselling skills. Need for awareness
<u>source k 1</u> Homelessness, compassion Psychiatric clients	Ring Social Service contact Ring Psychiatric Social Worker, Social Worker, or DHSS.
Personal security, fear	Never open door without chain. Make a rule that no help after 7 pm.
Unreasonable demands, anger fear: Son woken at 5 am by man wanting glass of water	Say the expectation is unreasonable and don't feel guilty
Demand for food, compassion, guilt	Keen canned drinks with ring pulls, and some food which can be handed over in a bag, without having to make meals for callers.
<u>source l 1</u> demand for food,	If having a feeding ministry, state that demands outside set times will not be met, involve the Church

compassion members in making the sandwiches, remembering the work in the prayers and from the offerings. (Be aware that must meet health and hygiene regulations).

Casual caller with long stories Ask as soon as possible 'what do you want me to DO'?, it helps to have

Personal security, fear An iron gate was placed outside vicarage door, and conversation could be held through it. If leaving the door to use the phone or make reference, ALWAYS lock the door with client outside.

source m 1

Fearful clergy/wives, Fearful for teenager daughters No fair on kids

Keep chain on door  
Families object to appearing rude and to having to create a fortress.

source n 1

Fearful clergy wife ran out of the house with baby  
Man asking for a word in private, then asking to use WC, locked himself in WC

Fear, panic

Husband gave money and now clients return when husband not in

Feel threatened

Vicarage children answering the door announcing mum and dad are out

Vicarages need porches to cater for visitors

source p 1

Casual callers, personal security

Have a porch with a seat and carpet, interview people here.  
Keep door to house locked.  
Downstairs toilets, if people are to be permitted to use them, should be locked off from rest of house.  
Security systems should not be responsibility of incumbent.  
Crime prevention officer should accompany the quinquennial survey, and his advice followed.  
Panic buttons should be installed.

source q 1

Frightened clergy wife is living in these conditions

Answer door with dog.  
Walled garden with barbed wire  
Heavy metal gates only access to house, smash proof glass,  
heavy wooden front doors, door chain, peep hole, metal bolts.  
Children look through peep hole and not allowed to open door unless they know the person.  
People not allowed into study with vicar, unless another adult in house and within reach of the phone.  
Can't anyone to baby-sit unless they can cope with security needs.  
When husband away outside floodlights are on, phone by bed with phone number of churchwarden and police.  
Can't afford flood lights on most of the time.  
Downstairs alarm set every night.

source r 1

Personal and property security, anger, fear, loss

13<sup>th</sup> burglary.  
Diocese should help and care, should not have to bargain for security lights, window locks.  
Security mirrors helpful.

Diocese unwilling to help. Insurance not willing to pay. anger, isolated.

Children paying for ministry  
through their losses PCC paying for security system  
Wife threatened, fear Fitted an entry phone, one cleric has videophone.  
source s 1  
Casual caller, compassion Have a list of agencies who can help, AA, CRUSE, RELATE

source t 1  
Security fear Parsonage boards should be aware  
Diocese should determine 'what is ministry' and what are expectations, and where should ministry take place.

source u 1  
Personal security, fear Have a written and agreed plan to deal with situations  
Be careful of appearance and of car when making visits  
Make links with local police; ask their advice of your policy.  
Agree to meet potentially violent clients at Police station  
Urge local authority to keep good street lighting,  
Explain policy to PCC and Church.  
Keep people out of vicarage as Public Order Act does not cover people in dwelling houses.  
Offences against the Person Act gives ground for calling Police intervention, if feeling threatened.  
Public Order Act states that threatening words are an offence.

source u 2  
Security Injunctions may be brought against people threatening one. These can be issued by a solicitor

source v 1  
Casual caller,  
compassion Keep record of those helped and action taken. The Birmingham Diocese has useful guidelines

source w 1  
Security fear Need for reassurance and help.  
high level of personal even those not affected feel fearful, and may have had vandalism and car crime to contend with.  
loss Personal alarms provided.

source x 1  
Security fear Management should provide information, guidelines, policy, secure premises, alarms and personal security, a system for reporting incidents to a relevant person who will monitor and advise ALL staff.  
Dioceses have a duty of care – particularly for women priests who may be isolated.

## G IV Prayers and Readings

Each meeting of the sub-committee began with prayer and these are all provided below. Readings and meditations are also noted; unfortunately, it has not been possible to track down all the sources of material included.

### 27 July 1994 – People turn to God and seek him

**Prayer:** One thing I have asked of the Lord  
This is what I seek;  
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
All the days of my life;  
To behold the beauty of the Lord  
And to seek him in his temple.

Call: Who is it you seek?  
Response: We seek the Lord our God  
Call: Do you seek him with all your heart?  
Response: Amen. Lord have mercy.  
Call: Do you seek him with all your soul?  
Response: Amen. Lord have mercy.  
Call: Do you seek him with all your mind?  
Response: Amen. Lord, have mercy.  
Call: Do you seek him with all your strength?  
Response: Amen. Christ, have mercy.

### **Meditation:**

This morning, I was at prayer, alone in Church. In the middle of my prayers a man came in. I recognised him as the man who came to my door nearly six weeks ago to borrow a pound. 'I've called a number of times to repay you', he said, 'but you were never there. I've got some work to go to today. Thank you', he said. Crossing himself, he turned and left the church. As I watched him go, I thanked God for him, and not being one normally to weep, found tears in my eyes.

**Prayer:** You are the caller  
You are the poor  
You are the stranger at my door  
You are the wanderer  
The unfed  
You are the homeless  
With no bed  
You are the man  
Driven insane  
You are the child  
Crying in pain  
You are the other who comes to me  
If I open to another you are born in me

*(from D. Adam 'The Edge of Glory' Triangle 1985, p.34)*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

### 27 July 1994 - Christ meets us in the other person

#### **Prayer:**

There is a wonderful way to discover God – in the other.  
There is a receptiveness in our lives  
that make room for the Christ.  
Our mission is not to bring Christ to others, but to discover  
that he is there and to reveal his presence.  
When theology palls and mysticism seems empty  
there is still the third way – our neighbour

'I sought my God,  
My God I could not see.  
I sought my soul,  
My soul eluded me.  
I sought my brother  
And found all three.

*(from D. Adam 'The Edge of Glory' Triangle 1985, p.104)*

### 6 September, 1994 – Christ with us on the road of life

**Reading:** Ecclesiastes 9: 11-12 (Time and chance can overturn our finest plans)

#### **Canticle:**

Christ as a light illumine and guide me  
Christ as a shield o'ershadow me  
Christ under me  
Christ over me  
Christ beside me  
On my left and my right  
This day be within and without me  
Lowly and meek yet all-powerful  
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak  
In the mouth of each who speaks unto me  
This day be within and without me  
Lowly and meek yet all powerful  
Christ as a light  
Christ as a shield  
Chris beside me on my left and my right.

#### **Prayer:**

O God, the Father of all the families on earth  
by the protection of your Holy Spirit  
protect families in ministry from all evil  
and strengthen them in what is good.  
Enable husbands and wives to live together  
in mutual consideration, love and forgiveness.  
Protect children in the front line of ministry,  
and grant that they may grow secure and safe,  
in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen

**7 September 1994: - We think of those who knock on 'heaven's door'**

**Reading:** Matthew 7: 7-12 (ask, seek, knock..)

***Canticle:***

Jesus, Saviour of the world, come to us in your mercy;  
we look to you to save and help us.  
By your cross and your life laid down  
you set your people free;  
we look to you to save and help us.  
When they were ready to perish  
you saved your disciples:  
we look to you to come to our help.  
In the greatness of your mercy loose us from our chains:  
forgive the sins of all your people.  
Make yourself known as our saviour and mighty deliverer:  
save and help us that we may praise you.  
Come and dwell with us Lord Christ Jesus:  
hear our prayer and be with us always.  
And when you come in your glory:  
make us to be one with you  
and to share the life of your kingdom.

***Prayer***

Father, we pray for the coming of your kingdom.  
We pray for those who are hungry and in need;  
For those who come knocking on the door.  
Grant us, Lord, a heart to pray, and a desire to serve.  
Guide us by your indwelling Holy Spirit,  
And lead us gently along the road you have called us to  
walk in,  
For the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

**2 November 1994: All Souls' Day – We think of those who have died on the street**

**Reading:** Rev 21: 1-7 (A new body, heaven and earth)

***Acclamation:***

Blessed are you, Lord our God, lover of souls:  
You uphold us in life and sustain us in death.  
To you be glory and praise forever:  
For the darkness of this age is passing away  
As Christ, the bright morning star,  
Brings to his saints the light of life.

As you give light to those in darkness,  
Who walk in the shadow of death,  
So remember in your kingdom your faithful servants,  
That death may be for them the gate of life  
And to unending fellowship with you;  
Where with your saints you live and reign  
One in perfect union of love  
Now and forever. Amen.

**The Prayer of St Thomas More:**

Thank you, dear Jesus,  
for all you have given me,  
for all you have taken away from me,

and for all you have left me. Amen

**11 January 1995: - The servant of others**

**Story:** John's story from 'Nine Lives' published by CRISIS, 1994, p.16 – The story of a man on the street who begs

**Reading:** Luke 10/ 25-37 (The Good Samaritan)

Saviour and friend how wonderful art Thou!  
My companion upon the changeful way.  
The comforter of its weariness,  
My guide to the eternal town.  
The welcome at its gate  
(Alistair MacLean)

***Prayer:***

Almighty father,  
whose Son Jesus Christ has taught us  
that what we do for the least of our brethren we do also for  
him;  
give us the will to be the servant of others  
as he was the servant of all,  
who gave up his life and died for us,  
but is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. Amen  
(Collect for Pentecost 11 – ASB)

**2 March 1995: - Lent calls us to self-examination and repentance**

The deeds we do, the words we say,  
Into still air they seem to fleet;  
We count them ever past,  
But they shall last,  
In the dread judgment they and we shall meet.  
(John Keble)

**Reading:** Luke 18: 9-14 (The Pharisee and the publican)

***Prayer:***

Lord our God,  
grant us grace to desire you with our whole heart;  
that so desiring, we may seek and find you;  
and so finding, may love you;  
and so loving, may hate those sins  
from which you have delivered us;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

**9 May 1995: - Working for justice with those on the margins of society**

**Story:** ‘Mabel’ A reading from ‘City Cries’, Spring 1995, No. 31; p. 3

*Article written by Peter Hobson, Team Rector of Hackney Marsh*

**Reading:** Luke 18 1-8 (A persistent caller gets justice)

**Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, whose Son Jesus Christ overcame the forces of evil and injustice in dying and rising on the cross. Grant that we who see the faces and hear the cries of those who have been unjustly treated may be moved by compassion and guided by your Holy Spirit. Family ground in us a heart for the oppressed, and help us work for a more just society. We ask this through the name of him who was unjustly treated, even our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

**13 July 1995 – The Carer’s share in the glorious future hope too**

**Story:** The experience of a clergy wife – as told by Steve Ann Henshall in “Not always Murder in the Vicarage”, *Triangle 1991, p. 61-2*

**Reading:** Isaiah 35 (The joy of the redeemed)

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**12 September 1995 – The love and comfort of God**

**Reading:** From ‘Families and How to Survive them’ Skinner and Cleese, Methuen 1983 p. 127-9

**Reading:** Matthew 11: 28-30 (Come unto me all who are heavy laden)

**Prayer:**

God Lord, give me the grace,  
in all my fear and agony,  
To have recourse to that great fear  
and wonderful agony that you, my Saviour  
had at the Mount of Olives;  
before your most bitter passion;  
And in meditating thereon,  
to conceive spiritual comfort  
and consolation profitable for my soul  
(*St Thomas More*)

**19 September 1993 – God has heard the affliction of his people**

**Reading:** Exodus 3: 7-13

**Prayer:**

Lord, come among us we pray,  
with your power,  
and help us with your great might so that;  
although we are hindered by our sins and wickedness  
from running the race set before us,  
your bountiful grace and mercy  
may speedily help and deliver us  
through the work of your Son our Lord  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit  
be honour and glory, now and forever. Amen  
*Collect for Advent 4 (Book of Common Prayer)*

**G V      References  
            and source acknowledgements**

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