



Arrow Articles: these short articles aim to address common leadership issues with questions to aid reflection. The issues raised may form part of your conversation with your mentor or within your peer cell. This article explores the place of sacrifice in following Jesus through research done by Peter Smith as part of his sabbatical.

### **Personal Experience**

This issue is at the heart of my own ministry. As I came to the end of my degree course at Durham University, I was trying to discern my calling. I attended an ACCM conference but I went knowing I needed to see a bit of life in the raw before I started training. I was recommended for training with the agreement I should work for two years before I began. I applied for a number of jobs and research positions, but rightly potential employers felt the two years I had were not sufficient time to warrant taking me on. I was also beginning to feel these two years should involve service as well as employment. I applied therefore to join a youth work project in London. Mayflower Family Centre in East London accepted me to live there and serve in the youth clubs while working in the area.

My time at Mayflower was a cultural baptism of fire. Up to that time I had not really appreciated the effects of deprivation. For a while during my time there I doubted God's ability to change some of the seemingly overwhelming difficulties and challenges the area and individuals faced. Yet as time passed I began again to believe nothing was beyond God's power to transform. I came to believe faithful incarnational ministry would in time bear fruit. The type of area was also beginning to feel like home, in spite of the constant challenges.

When I began my training at Ridley hall in Cambridge I suffered reverse culture shock. The brief 50 mile journey to East London seemed like thousands of miles. I was unsettled by the comfortable affluence that seemed unaware of the chronic deprivation so close at hand. Hence my sense of calling to UPA type ministry was developing more strongly.

I did two curacies in mixed parishes that had pockets of real deprivation. Growing during this time was a feeling of being more at home with 'real people', as I saw the more deprived. It seemed as though the middle classes were more unreal about life issues. In my second curacy I lived in a short middle class street of bungalows. The impression was given by the residents that all was well. Yet I knew through pastoral contact that there were serious mental health issues in at least six of the homes, all neatly hidden behind the net curtains. The crude honesty of the nearby council estate, where such things were normal, and worn on the sleeve, seemed to have more integrity. The openness both shocked and attracted me. My calling to work with such people seemed to grow ever stronger.

Towards the end of my second curacy, I married. As we considered a first incumbency it was suggested we consider an outer council estate in Coventry. A strong sense of calling began to grow through seeking advice and an inner sense of sadness and tears. We felt these tears were God saying 'this is my heart for this place will you share it with me?'

Later we also became aware of people praying for a ministry like ours to come to Canley. I also had a profound experience at my induction.

We felt we were very much in the right place but there was a great cost in taking on the challenge. Canley is a deprived outer council estate with many of the problems of such an area, but as it was too small an area it did not qualify for the funding directed to other UPAs. Human resources were also limited and impaired both on the

estate and within the church. Vandalism and petty crime were endemic. We were also expecting our first child as we moved in. Was it right to seek to bring up a family in such a demanding area? Was it fair to impose the cost of our calling on them?

There was another more hidden cost to my personal convictions. The church in Canley had been fairly Anglo-Catholic under the previous incumbent, and that is not my spirituality; hence initially I did not feel at ease leading worship. There was a cost of feeling out of place and unsure how to do things. How much should I adapt myself and how much could I in all conscience not do? Benediction ceased but prominent statues of Mary remained. Where in this context would I find support? Who would I feel at home with in this ministry?

Calling and sacrifice have therefore been very real issues for us in ministry. There are now other issues we have and are facing in this multi cultural UPA in East Birmingham. The immediate challenge is that of secondary education for our son. There appear to be no suitable secondary schools for boys within catchment area distance. We continue then to face real issues of cost.

## Calling Others to Join Us

The desire to study this theme of calling and sacrifice has partly emerged from the experience of seeking to find others to work alongside us here in East Birmingham.

In early 2005 my colleague Graham Turner left St Paul's Bordesley Green and I was asked to take on pastoral oversight of that church as well as the role of Area Dean. Under 'Called to a New Kingdom' (our diocesan strategy, to streamline for mission) three parishes St Paul's, Christ Church Burney Lane and St Margaret Ward End were to link up in some way. St Margaret's was a very small struggling congregation with no vicar. Over time we decided on forming a United Benefice with two stipendiary clergy (curate not included). An associate would be based at St Paul's and the benefice holder at Christ Church; together they would seek to develop a mission strategy for the St Margaret's area. This combined approach was already being pioneered by a community worker working across the three parishes but focused especially on the St Margaret's patch. We were also offered the possibility of another curate. Therefore towards the end of 2005 we had two opportunities available; an associate vicar post and a curate's position. As we advertised and sought the right people this issue of calling and sacrifice arose very clearly. It seemed that people had a sense of calling but were not ready to make the sacrifices that calling involved if it meant ministry in a multi-cultural UPA.

Issues that affected some of the few who enquired or we approached included; 'too much graffiti' and the area being 'too Asian and Muslim'.

I began to wonder how these issues were being addressed in the wider church and especially in the theological colleges.

From all these experiences it seemed that this area of calling and sacrifice deserved some study in depth. It should be noted that although my experience is of a calling to UPA ministry, there can be great but different types of sacrifice in other callings.

I want to try and understand how calling comes, what costs might be involved in fulfilling it and if there are any ways to ease the cost or at least give a sense of a shared burden.

It is important to start by considering Jesus' calling to his followers from the gospels.

## A Gospel Perspective on Calling and Sacrifice

Jesus makes a clear link between calling and sacrifice when he says to his disciples, 'if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me' (Luke 9:23). Jesus had already called these same disciples to 'follow me' (Mark 1:8). Now he is clarifying that call and what it will mean to fully confess him as the Christ (Luke 9:20). Clearly to take up one's cross and deny yourself would be a sacrifice.

The cross was a horrendous object of disgrace and shame for the Jews, and obviously a sign of impending death. To take it up means for Jesus' followers a calling to humbly be ready to face even the ultimate sacrifice. To deny oneself will mean putting Jesus before all else in this life. This is made clear in the following verses of Luke 9 where Jesus contrasts finding life by following him with gaining the whole world, and says life with him is of far more lasting value.

This passage appears at the heart of the gospel message. Luke 9 is a pivotal chapter as Luke unfolds the story. Here the nature of the disciples calling is filled out, after they have seen clearly who it is they are already following. The centrality of sacrifice in Christian life and ministry is plainly spelt out here. The link with ministry is made clear by the context in Chapter 9, for this passage comes between the two sending out for ministry of the 12 (9:1) and the 72 (10:1). Jesus is saying if you are to follow and serve me this will be the cost; denying yourself and taking up your cross.

What this cost might look like in practical terms is filled out by much of the rest of the chapter. Jesus' teaching about his identity and his followers calling is interrupted, by the costs of; addressing the needs and facing the hostility, of the world. In Chapter 9:10-17 the costly challenge is to minister to and feed the 5,000 when the

disciples are exhausted. For the disciples the cost seems too great and they encourage Jesus to send the crowd away, rather he challenges them to meet the need out of futile resources. Later the cost is the disillusionment of not being able to deal with a stubborn hostile evil spirit (9:37-45).

Later there is also the cost of human opposition from some Samaritans (9:51-56). In each incident the disciples are challenged to face different costs. Are they up to the cost of following Jesus?

The chapter closes with this question being spelt out and being illustrated by some real examples in 9:57-62. What the costs might be of following Jesus are identified clearly here in three key areas. Three men come to Jesus and are called to follow him. For each there is an issue of cost, and a challenge to follow despite the cost. Jesus makes it clear that he and his calling must come first before all else in 9:62. There is no room for looking back in the kingdom of God. As G B Caird (St. Luke; Pelican, 1963) puts it; this is 'a call so urgent and imperative that all other loyalties must give way before it'. Each of these three men illustrate a significant area in sacrifice might need to be made. Caird identifies these by pointing out 'a man must be prepared to sacrifice, security (9:58), duty (9:60) and affection (9:62)'. It seems that the costs of hearing and obeying Jesus' call to discipleship can be summarised under one of these three headings.

I intend therefore to use these three headings; security, duty and affection, to fill out what sacrifices might need to be made in following Jesus, using examples from the experience of those I have consulted in the course of this study. Before that, it seems appropriate to consider some of those who were ready to take up their cross, such that it lead them to make the ultimate sacrifice in following Jesus.

## The Ultimate Sacrifice

Throughout Christian history there have been those who have heard Jesus' call and in responding have made the ultimate sacrifice, laying down their lives. Charlie Cleverly's book; *The Passion that Shapes Nations* (Victor, 2005) follows this story from Paul to the present, giving some challenging accounts.

How is Jesus' call so clear and strong that people are ready to face almost certain death in following him? Today in some parts of the world this is a very real issue. There are seven nations where apostasy from Islam is, under state law, an offence punishable by death. What is it that motivates Christians to openly declare their faith and be ready to pay that price?

I have chosen to consider these issues by studying one historical situation. Many of the early missionaries to

Africa went knowing there was a significant risk that they would not return alive. There are many missionary graves spread across Africa. I have chosen to look particularly at the work of the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). This mission was set up during the later part of 1800s in the English Universities by Anglicans seeking to follow up Livingston's opening up of Central Southern Africa. The first history of UMCA was written in 1897 (Anderson-Morshead; UMCA, 1897). It tells the story from its founding by sending its first missionary Bishop Charles Mackenzie in 1860 up until 1896.

During that time the mission sent out 290 English members. (All information from an appendix of *The History of the UMCA; 1897*, which lists English members of the mission.) These were clergy, school teachers, agriculturalists and craftsmen like; carpenters, printers and bricklayers. Of these 290 sent between 1860 and 1896, 66 died in service of the mission and a further 43 were invalidated out of the mission.

These figures were published in 1897 and there were certainly others who died in service with the mission after that; as is evidenced by the graveyard at St Anne's Nkhotakota.



Fr. William Follitt's Grave outside St. Anne's Nkhotakota. He died Nov 10th 1901.

Within the scope of these incomplete figures then it can be seen that; nearly one in four of those who went to work with UMCA died in service. A further one in six were invalidated out. This means that somebody considering a call to work with UMCA during that period (1860-1896) faced a one in three chance of either dying or being seriously disabled in following that call.

To try to understand what motivated these missionaries such they were ready to face a very real possibility of paying the ultimate price, I will consider three individuals whose stories form part of these statistics. All three died within a few months in 1895 around Lake Malawi, and had worked together.

**George William Atley** was the son of Bishop Atley of Hereford. Educated at Marlborough and St John's Cambridge, he decided during his final year at university on joining UMCA. He felt especially drawn to Nyasaland (now Malawi), by hearing its Archdeacon preach when he

was ordained in Hereford.

He went in 1891 with Archdeacon Marples and worked on Likoma Island in Lake Malawi, where his labours proved very fruitful. In early 1895 he baptised 59 people and had over 100 communicants. When school broke up in August he took two of his boys with him for a recreational hunting trip to the mainland.

Unfortunately he decided to camp where the Agoni tribe were on the warpath. Confronted by tribesmen brandishing clubs he choose not to kill them with his loaded rifle, prayerfully submitted to their blows and was then speared to death. As 'The history of the UMCA' puts it, his seems to have been 'the voluntary sacrifice when the good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep he could not save'.

Atley was a Cambridge graduate and the doors of opportunity were open wide to him in England. He could have risen to some of the highest positions in the land. Yet he clearly had a strong sense of call to Nyasaland, well aware of the dangers, many had already died serving with the UMCA.

We are told that when he chose to go to Africa his father the bishop was 'rejoicing much at the offering of his son'. Atley was ready to face the cost and made the ultimate sacrifice serving his Lord.

**Bishop Chauncey Marples** spoke of feeling called to be a missionary from the age of about 12, and this became a growing conviction. This led him to read honours in Theology at Oxford and get ordained as preparation.

The specific calling to Africa came when Marples read a simple note on 'a scrape of blue paper' posted in the Oxford Union by Bishop Steere the third Bishop Chairman of UMCA. 'In response to it Chauncey Marples offered himself body, soul and spirit to missionary work in Central Africa' (From account by Ellen Marples his sister 1897). For Marples the cost of this calling was immediate for he had accepted a curacy at St Leonards-On-Sea with the understanding he would in due course receive the living. This plan had to be given up and with it the prospect of future security it offered.

He graduated in June 1875 and spent nine months; first serving as a layman, being ordained and then serving in St Mary Magdalene's in Oxford, before going to Africa. He sailed on 18 March 1876. He served faithfully with UMCA and had risen to the position of Archdeacon by 1894 when he was called back to England for his consecration as the first Bishop of Likoma.

He returned to Africa in the summer of 1895. While he was travelling to Nkhotakota and Likoma to take up his post overseeing the new diocese, disaster struck. He and

companions were sailing up Lake Malawi, as a storm struck. The bishop encouraged the captain to press on against his better judgement. The ship was wrecked and the bishop and some of his companions were drowned, although others survived.



The Cathedral church of St Anne's Nkhotakota.

His body was found and taken to Nkhotakota, where he was buried at the spot marked out as the chancel of a future church. This is now St Anne's the cathedral church of Lake Diocese in Malawi, and Marples' grave lies at its heart in the centre of the chancel.

Marples heard God's call and sacrificed a secure future here in England for the obvious risks and the material deprivation of missionary work in Africa. He seems to have been motivated by what one friend called a 'zeal for God'. He seemed to be ready to do anything for God. 'This zeal in the early days of his life may have on occasion, outrun discretion', as his friend put it. 'He gave his best and expected others to do the same'.

**Arthur Fraser Sim** was ordained and ministering in England when he felt a call to Africa, 'in no indistinct tones'. For this calling he was ready to give up his well-beloved work in English parish life. Someone asked him at the time 'if after all the Africans were worth the sacrifice' He responded "HE is worth it all" (see 'The Life and Letters of A.F.Sim' Westminster, UMCA, 1897). He went out with UMCA in May 1894 to be 'First missionary to kota-kota', as his grave describes him.



Arthur Fraser Sim's Grave outside St. Anne's Nkhotakota

He certainly set up the first station established by UMCA on the Western Shore of Lake Malawi. He worked faithfully for over a year seeing little fruit. There were only three communicants for Easter in 1895, and he only baptised one adult convert, a penitent murderer, before his execution. Sim was disturbed by the deaths of George Atley and



Bishop Marples. Soon afterwards he wrote in his last letter (Oct 10-13 1895); 'It is rather like a battlefield out here. However safe one feels oneself, there are those one cares for and look up to falling all round us'. Five days after he completed that letter he was struck down with fever and died very early on October 29.

Sim too had paid the ultimate cost of obeying Jesus' call. Yet he had stated only 18 months before, knowing what he faced: 'HE is worth it'. This complete devotion in following Jesus seems to have been at the heart of these three lives laid down. Fever, often malarial, was the great threat to new missionaries in Africa. Very few died of violence or shipwreck like Atley and Marples. Yet for all who went not knowing if they would return, they felt their Lord 'worth it'. What was it then about their faith that it moved them so readily to consider laying down their lives for Jesus?

To say 'He is worth it' as Sim did, speaks of adoration and veneration.

This is a loving devotion which somehow marries intimacy and awe. Sim's own grave proclaims: 'The love of Christ constraineth us. Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it' (2 Corinthians 5:14 and Mark 8:35).

## Sacrifice of Security

I shall consider various aspects of securities that we are attached to. Things that we may find ourselves called to sacrifice in fulfilling our calling. Material securities like a place that is 'home', possessions, and future prospects need to be examined. Yet there are also less tangible securities focused around personal safety, peace of mind and health issues.

### 1. PLACE

To have a place that is 'home' seems to be a need found deep in the human psyche. However the call of God often seems to be to leave 'home' and go somewhere alien. This pattern seems to have started with Abraham and has been repeated myriad times ever since.

For some there is great cost in leaving a place that has very much become 'home'. Sonja's life, work and ministry had revolved around London for many years, that was where she felt 'at home'. For her the cost of a call to come and minister as a Vicar in UPA outer council estate in East Birmingham has been great. Home in London was a place on which important relationships were focused, and familiar places were part of everyday life. Now the constraints of UPA ministry and distance from London have stretched those relationships and she does not feel at home in the same way.

For others there seems no great cost in a dramatic move away from 'home'. Ann says there was 'no cost' in moving

to Kenya for ten years, when her husband Mark was appointed to the staff of a Theological college in Northern Kenya. For her the positive experience of such a move even with a very young family outweighed any cost of leaving 'home' in the UK.

For some the place God calls you to can be very costly even in the short term. Rob, an ordinand at Ridley Hall Cambridge, did his month's parish placement at a church in North West Pakistan. Life there is very basic and the security situation is very volatile. It was not safe for Rob to go outside the church compound unaccompanied. Hence the placement felt almost like a prison sentence being confined in one place. Rob also felt a strong sense of call to that region. It will be interesting to see where he feels called to minister long term. Was this some sort of preparation for a hard calling?

### 2. POSSESSIONS

More widely than just a place that is 'home' our securities are often bound up with things; material possessions. This is frequently a significant area of sacrifice in fulfilling God's calling, sometimes in surprising ways. It is an issue felt acutely in our culture that is so strongly attached to having and getting things; we have also contaminated much of the rest of the world with this culture.

Sarah a long term missionary with CMS in Africa has faced the cost of losing possessions very acutely. Obviously there has been material cost in responding to the call to be a theological lecturer long term first in Nigeria and now in Kenya. Yet the hardest sacrifice was one imposed by circumstances.

When Sarah served in Northern Nigeria all her meagre possessions including personal items of sentimental value were kept in her house on a church compound. At one time she and all the senior church leaders went away for a few days on a residential conference. While they were away local Muslim extremists stirred up a riot. The mob marched into the church compound, killing those they found there and burning all the buildings to the ground, including virtually all that Sarah treasured. Obviously Sarah's grief was first for her friends, but she had lost everything too.

The religious, by nature of their calling, have to be ready to give up all possessions. Brother Mark SSF a friar who leads a youth work project on a South Birmingham council estate on taking vows gave all he had to his order. He admits this was a challenge he found difficult in the early days, but now some years on things do not seem important. Having nothing may even give a sense of freedom.

A surprising example of material sacrifice is that of The Rev Cyprian, a Kenyan priest who came to UPA estate on

the edge of Manchester with CMS to work with the Eden youth project. One might assume an African priest in the UK would automatically be better off, and might have been attracted to Britain by the lure of gaining more materially. In pure pounds and pence it is true that Cyprian is paid more in Manchester than he was in Nairobi. Yet in many ways he and his family are in fact materially worse off. As the youth pastor at Nairobi Cathedral Cyprian had a large house, private health insurance for all the family and through his wife's teaching job, good private British style education for the children. Now they all live in a small house in one of the most deprived parts of the UK. His children have asked more than once; 'Can we have a big house like we had in Kenya?'

Rose the vicar of Dedza in Malawi gave up a good job and better prospects to answer the call to ordination. His uncle who had got him his job asked him, 'Do you want to die a poor man? Why?'

For others this material cost is more mundane, nevertheless it is still very real to them. Cyd, the Eden project worker at Harpurhey Manchester is simply not able to keep up with the things her friends and contemporaries have. She would love to have a car but simply cannot afford it on the pay she gets as a youth worker with Eden. Lastly this material cost may be felt more by dependent family than by the individuals who respond to the call. Frank and Mavis felt called to go with CMS to Southern Pakistan to set up a community project using their horticultural skills in a very poor desert region. Their daughters were very young at the time and spent much of their childhood in Pakistan. Both look back fondly to their time there, and one would return there if the opportunity arises. Yet there is great cost for them, as Frank and Mavis had started a very successful garden centre before going to Pakistan. They sold this business to Frank's brother and mother to enable them to go. The business has continued to thrive and the family have become relatively rich. Now therefore, Frank's daughters can compare themselves very unfavourably with their cousins. Frank and Mavis feel for their daughters in the situation.

### 3. PERSONAL SECURITY

The call to face personal danger and possible serious injury seems to be a common part of many vocations. Nonetheless it can be a hard cost to face for the individual involved and equally for those who care for them.

Morris, a vicar in East Birmingham, was seriously assaulted inside his own vicarage on Easter Saturday 2006. He was attacked in his hallway by a gang of apparently drug crazed young people, who had broken into the vicarage. Morris has suffered other physical attacks while serving in a deprived outer estate.

Amazingly Morris does not consider this any great

personal cost to face in his ministry. He sees this instead as 'par for the course' for work in such an area. He considers other's issues far more costly as we shall see later.

When Brother Mark was serving at an especially tough house in a rough part of Glasgow he was seriously slashed with a knife. An atheist community worker who worked alongside him said; 'You will be moving then?' Brother Mark said 'no, this is what following Christ is about'.

Understandably this issue of personal safety has arisen quite often as I have talked with women involved in ministry, especially in UPAs.

Carol has been physically assaulted twice in only 18 months as she has been serving as curate in Aston, Birmingham.

Penny joined the Eden project in Harpurhey when she was 72. Moving into a deprived area and youth ministry has caused her some fears, but it was family who reacted more strongly to this move.

They were very concerned for her personal safety. These fears have so far proved unfounded, yet living under the tensions such fears bring can be very costly too.

Cyd, working in the same Eden project, certainly admits to feeling 'on edge' whenever she is in Harpurhey, and that 'nothing is safe'.

This area of cost is a complex one. Reactions like Morris' are quite astounding. Yet clearly there is a very real area of cost here both for those involved and for those who care for them.

A further area of personal security that may be challenged by God's call is that of being healthy. There is a sense of security in having generally good health. For Mother Christine CSJD, her call to set up a midwifery school in Nkhokota Malawi cost her her health. During the four years she was there she suffered from almost continuous diarrhoea, and this caused chronic damage to her digestive system. Recently she has needed further surgery that resulted from this damage done nearly 30 years ago. This is a lasting cost that can sometimes be hard to live with.

### 4. FUTURE SECURITY

As well as issues of current security being threatened there are often future implications in one's calling too. Many give up a considerable amount financially when they respond to God's call and this can impact the future as much as the present, for example The Revd. Peter had a 75% decrease in income when he began training for ministry.



It seems that Rose's uncle's prediction that he will 'die a poor person', is very likely to be fulfilled. Yet there are further implications for him and his family in terms of their future. Clergy houses in Malawi are fairly simple, but probably a little better than most ordinary accommodation, but houses for retired clergy are very basic. A Malawian clergyman can expect to be offered a thatched hut in poor condition when he retires from stipendiary ministry.

Rob, an ordinand in Cambridge, has no material security; no money, no house, what of his future? He will qualify for a clergy pension in time if he ministers within the Church of England. Yet as he looks around at contemporaries he seems to have nothing as security for the future.

What does the future hold for those who unreservedly respond to God's call?

Clearly there are many costs in responding to God's call in this area of security. These will vary a great deal from person to person. I have been surprised by some things not seen as costs and others identified as such by those I have consulted. There seems to be though a strong sense of the need to 'deny self', letting go of all sorts of securities in following Jesus.

## **Sacrifice in the Area of Duty and Responsibility**

The second area identified by Jesus' encounters in Luke 9:59, is that of duty and responsibility. How might obligations impose a cost upon a calling? To many this might seem a harder cost to face. It is one thing to sacrifice yourself and all you have to follow Jesus. Yet it is quite another thing to expect others dependent on you to face the cost and especially when they cannot be fully included in the decisions involved.

I will consider duties and responsibilities in a number of areas. Obviously close family and other dependents will feature highly, but other issues like duty to church or other authorities, and to your own convictions need to be considered too.

### **1. PARTNER**

When a calling comes, close dependents need to be included in the decision wherever possible. It cannot be right for an individual to press ahead with a calling against the wishes of a partner. Yet a shared calling can still be very costly for a spouse.

When James, Rector of a middle class parish, felt called to ordination this was very much a vocation his wife felt part of. The priest who first suggested the idea to them wanted to talk with her about it before James himself. Even the cost of his following this calling has been immense for her. James describes his first curacy as appalling. The most

difficult aspect being that his training incumbent 'almost broke' his wife's faith. It seems that in difficult situations one's partner can suffer more than you do yourself.

For Peter the call to UPA 'ministry' came first to his wife, who throughout her medical practise as a GP has felt called to work in demanding urban contexts. She was already very much involved in this type of work when they married. Peter has now very much embraced this call to UPA style ministry and is vicar of a tough parish.

### **2. CHILDREN**

It is usually the case that children have little say in how their parents answer a calling, and yet they often face some of the greatest costs. They are therefore to be considered very carefully in these matters, such that they do not become what might be seen as 'innocent victims'. How this responsibility and the call to ministry are balanced seems to vary from case to case and with time. As I have already explained these are very real issues personally.

Dave was for 40 years a missionary teacher and head teacher at a school in Beirut Lebanon. This was throughout the period of Civil War in that country. During this time he and his wife Kathy brought up their family. Some might question imposing such a cost upon their family. Local Christians said they would leave if they could and found it hard to understand why they did not. They felt strongly they had a call to stay with those who had to stay. There were clear costs for the family.

The children's education was disrupted by outbreaks of fighting, and yet three of the sons have been teachers. Two of them are at present head teachers of schools in Lebanon. There was also fear at night as there was often shelling going on. Dave and Kathy sometimes lay awake worrying about the effect of this noise and then found the family had slept through it all.

For Jen having children in Harpurhey Manchester, while working with the Eden project, has been a positive experience. Many questioned Ian and Jen's decision to stay in the area to have their family. Even local Christians asked, 'you would not have kids here would you?' Ian and Jen feel the schooling should be good enough for all children, the local kids as much as their own. 'Do you let your kids play in the streets like the locals?' is a question they are now grappling with.

In contrast, Frank and Mavis returned from 14 fruitful years of ministry with CMS in Southern Pakistan for the sake of their daughter's education. She had already started at a boarding school in the UK to continue her education, but was not settling in there. Hence Frank and Mavis felt it right to come home and be available to help her through this difficult phase. This was a hard wrench for them

leaving a thriving community that they were largely responsible for founding. They had already had to have the girls educated 1,000 miles north of where they were working. They were mainly boarding there, although for some months of the year Mavis was able to live nearby and they were day pupils.

Chris Cocksworth (Sacrifice and Service: 2003) talking of his in-laws; Bishop David and Mary Pytches tells of how 'they decided unless they returned from South America their family would fall apart'. Their four daughters were in UK at boarding school while David worked as a missionary Bishop in Chile. The mission could only afford to fly the family back to Chile once a year. David and Mary were told by local Christians, 'Your ministry is so critical here; it is indispensable, you must sacrifice your family for the kingdom.' David and Mary made the difficult choice to come home.

Others have found ways of overcoming the possible cost of poor educational provision near their place of ministry. Peter and his wife have found it necessary to send their children to private schools to complete their primary education, since their move to Aston. During Peter's curacy the children started education at a good church school, but when they moved there was nowhere comparable available.

Surprisingly private education even proved necessary for James's sons, despite living in the middle of a relatively wealthy area. This was due to bullying problems. This may have been caused by the family having to move at difficult times in the family's education, as a result of James' ministry changing.

This area of cost for children is clearly a very complex one. What scars may be left by such experiences are hard to gauge. James says his sons hold no resentment about disruption to their education, caused by his ministry. Yet I know of situations where young people seem to have felt a sense of abandonment when their parents returned to the mission field abroad, even as late on as their starting university courses.

Clearly much prayerful consideration is needed in each case. Where possible, the children should be included in these decisions, as Cyprian Yobera's were about coming to UK. Later I shall consider whether there are ways that the wider church could ease these difficult choices for families.

### 3. OTHER DEPENDENTS

There are times when the need to care for dependent relatives impacts on a particular calling. Often this issue arises with ageing parents, but will include others, like becoming unexpectedly responsible for those for whom you have been guardians.

Cyd struggled with this issue when she and her husband Ian were asked to move from Essex to Manchester to lead the Eden project in Harpurhey. Her father had left her rather dependent mother five years before. Her older sister lived in America and her younger brother was still a young teenager at home. Cyd felt it her Christian duty to help her struggling mother. They agreed together to the move but the week before it was due Cyd felt: 'I can't do this to my family'. After further prayer and promising her mother that they would only stay in Manchester five years, they moved. Cyd, however, remained really worried about her mother's mental health. Things have so far worked out; even though the five years are now past. 'Mum' spends a lot of time in Manchester with Cyd and her grandchildren. Cyd's younger brother is also now in the area as he is studying nearby at Salford.

Others have felt the needs of their parents have changed the nature of their calling. John and Pauline returned to the UK after serving with CMS for ten years in Kenya, because of parents' health problems. There were also some other good reasons why the nature of their ministry needed to change.

Duty to parents then is another difficult consideration where calling is concerned.

### 4. CHRISTIAN AUTHORITIES

As well as considering duty to church authorities, I will widen the discussion to look at other Christian authorities, like duty to one's order for the religious. It is also important to recognise the demands made by unofficial authorities within the church that come in the form of powerful and unrealistic expectations.

In the Church in Malawi priests are told where to serve by the bishop or equivalent authority, and they have very little say in the matter. There can be great cost in this. If a priest is well settled in a place with his family and they are told to move with a few months notice it can be very difficult. In Nkhotakota church, now the Cathedral church of the Lake Diocese, a sad case illustrates this. Four years or so ago Fr. Dennis the incumbent at Nkhotakota was told by Diocesan authorities to change places with Fr. James Gakuwa then vicar of Salima some 100 km to the south. Fr. Dennis refused to move and was suspended by the Diocese. There was then some negotiation and the suspension was lifted. However yet again Fr. Dennis refused to move and has again been suspended. This has resulted in a strange stand off situation in this cathedral church. Fr. Dennis remains living in the vicarage and conducts the 6am Sunday service in the church, and as far as I can ascertain he keeps the collection.

Fr. James has moved into a nearby house in the St Anne's hospital compound. He conducts the main service at 8am to which most of the parishioners seem loyal. This



stalemate has been continuing for at least 18 months. It is not clear how these priests especially Fr, Dennis reconcile their behaviour with their calling and conscience. On meeting Fr. Dennis we sensed a different spirit from the warm open welcome we had received elsewhere in Malawi. This is clearly an extreme case, and there are many Malawian priests who dutifully follow their assignments in spite of very real cost for them and their families.

For Brother Mark SSF duty to obey his Franciscan order was very hard at one stage. Br. Mark had worked a great deal in very challenging urban ministry both before and after making his profession. He was then asked to lead a short-term project in Tyneside. Through lengthy experience he had come to recognise that any UPA ministry needs to be long-term and incarnational. Short-term projects in such contexts often do more harm than good. Therefore he challenged this calling from the order asking that the project be long-term or not at all.

The order's chapter disagreed with him, and told him to carry out the short-term project. He seriously considered leaving the order to build his own long-term 'Community' in the same location. However Br. Mark's duty to follow his vow of obedience prevailed and he did as he had been asked by the order. Here there was a great testing of calling. There was also an apparent conflict between two parts of his sense of calling; between that of his profession as a Franciscan and his strong sense of calling to incarnational UPA Ministry.

The 'authority' of expectations within the church needs to be recognised. These can be very powerful and hard to resist even when they are utterly unrealistic. Somehow this lack of realism is common. This is not only true in areas of great deprivation, where dependency culture can lead to never ending demands. Peter has found this in Aston parish. This sort of pressure easily leads to the danger of over work, stress and its consequences. Yet these issues can also arise in wealthy areas where James feels, 'all expect perfection'. In this situation one needs to be very clear what your calling is, especially its boundaries. This then cannot be allowed to be shaped by others expectations.

## 5. PERSONAL CONVICTIONS

Lastly in this area of duty I want to reflect on the challenge of one's own convictions and may be prejudices when it comes to fulfilling God's calling.

When May was preparing for ordination in Malawi his Archdeacon said to him 'don't listen to students from Sunday School.' This was because these students tended to be evangelical charismatics and were seen as too Pentecostal for the Anglican Church in Malawi. May had to come to terms with his own convictions in the light of a call to be ordained an Anglican, in a church that did not

fully share those convictions.

When I was a vicar in Coventry in a formally Anglo-Catholic parish, I invited a mission team to come from Oak Hill College for a Faith Sharing weekend. Paul Weston then a lecturer at Oak Hill College led the team. Some of the students he brought were very much Reformed evangelicals.

Paul suggested during the weekend that some of the team might have to consider working in parishes like mine as there were not enough evangelical parishes to go round. One particular student found this comment very hard to accept. There was no way he would serve anywhere but a reformed evangelical parish. His calling to be ordained within the C of E was challenging his own personal convictions. There may in such cases be a call to sacrifice long held convictions to fulfil a wider calling from God.

We have seen then that this whole area of duty and responsibility is a wide and complex one. It is an area that frequently arises as people face the sacrifices demanded by their calling. How it can be resolved can only be seen by prayerful consideration of each set of circumstances. Exactly the same circumstances, if there were ever to exist, could still be handled differently depending on different individuals own calling. All decisions would have to be made in good conscience and entrusted to God in faith.

## Sacrifice of Affection

Matters of the heart are notoriously complex and very much shaped by individual situations. It is important to recognise these issues in this study of calling and sacrifice. Clearly affection for a potential life partner will be an area where calling may demand sacrifice. Yet there are other areas in which affection plays its part. Affection for parents and family needs to be considered. Lastly there is the interesting matter of affection for self to look into. How do Jesus' commands 'to love your neighbour as yourself' and his call 'to deny' ourselves square up? Clearly Jesus expects us to love and value ourselves as those made in his image and generously loved by him. What does that mean in relation to this question of calling and sacrifice?

### 1. PARTNER

The call to certain ministries seems to exclude or seriously reduce the chances of finding a life partner. God's calling may well include for some to 'have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom' (Matthew 19:12) as Jesus puts it.

When vows of chastity are taken clearly a choice is being made to give up this type of affection. Brother Mark faced this cost taking his final vows as a Franciscan brother. It proved testing in his early experience in the order, especially as he saw friends and contemporaries getting

married. He felt this cost quite acutely then, but less so now. Br. Mark tells of a fellow Franciscan who has now left the order to get married.

Carol feels her being ordained has seriously reduced her chances of getting married. She feels that an ordained woman would be less attractive to an evangelical who might have doubts about women's ordination.

The demands of the job for her also seem to exclude the time needed to build a lasting relationship. Aware of this possible cost she consciously chose to obey a call to ordination.

My wife knew a girl while both were studying at London Bible College, who felt a clear call to be a missionary to Thailand. She began a relationship with a young man, but broke it off when he could not share the sense of calling to missionary work in Thailand. Interestingly she has since married a missionary doctor, but they have not yet worked in Thailand. They first worked in Mozambique and are now based in Singapore, overseeing work in Thailand and the wider region, they also worked for some time in nearby Cambodia.

## 2. PARENTS AND FAMILY

This can be a testing area when your sense of calling is not shared by those close to you especially your family.

For Brother Mark SSF there was a very painful cost following his calling in relation to his parents. His father was a publican. When they moved to Durham his mother was not accepted as church organist because of his father's profession. Brother Mark grew up getting involved in church lads brigade and hence church. His father struggled with this, even becoming jealous of Br. Mark's relationship with the rector. The rector unwisely told Br. Mark's parents when he was 16 that he thought Br. Mark might become a 'monk'. This was 'a red rag to a bull' and Br. Mark and his father argued so much he left home at 17. He found a home on Holy Island staying in a house with some monks. Only much later have Br. Mark's parents come round. This was a very tough part of his calling.

Obviously some of the distinctions I have made in this study may not be as clear as I have painted them. In this area of affection for family there may be some overlap with stories told earlier; for example for Jen in Manchester affection may have been the issue as much as duty when considering her mother.

## 3. OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

A sense of calling may mean that other 'normal' relationships are affected, by being changed or simply squeezed out due to lack of time.

Morris in East Birmingham feels one of the greatest costs

of his calling is in relationships being made difficult. In the nature of his work as incumbent he has found people behave towards him in unusual ways. This has led to relationship breakdown; the pain of which he feels very acutely.

For Cyd working with the Eden project in Manchester the demands of her calling mean she feels unable to establish new meaningful relationships of any sort, outside the scope of her ministry. This is a cost she feels strongly.

## 4. ONESELF

How does our calling to deny ourselves affect the way we love ourselves?

My wife met a young man while she was training as a nurse in Bristol, let's call him Colin. He was a keen young Christian who felt God had called him to seek to evangelise tourists.

He quickly became consumed by this work; devoting all his energy to it. During this time 'Colin' increasingly neglected his own needs, even to the point of not eating properly; he seemed not to value himself. After some time of this self neglect, he became ill and tragically died a young man. Was this God's calling for him, or had he overbalanced in self denial? There are only a few rare cases where it seems this extremely overbalanced, but we need to be aware of this possibility, and help people guard against it.

In the course of my study I only met one person who I feel needs help not to overbalance like this. For this person the work had become all consuming and they were unable to switch off. Only rarely did they get a holiday away from the pressure, and it returned when they did.

Material self denial is not a great issue for most of the people I met; for a number it came easily and even was welcomed by a few. However this over denial of one's own identity and value, beyond one's calling seems to be very dangerous.

## Ways to Encourage and Enable Callings

There are a whole range of sacrifices Jesus calls people to make in following and serving him. I have only had time to consider a few of these here. They are clearly very diverse and sometimes quite complex. Interestingly things one would consider a great cost are nothing to another and vice versa. The most surprising were Morris' not seeing physical assault as great cost and the willingness of John and Pauline to exchange comfortable UK for life in rural Kenya. One person's joy is another person's burden. Clearly these issues are very personal and depend on an individual's own make up, cultural background and calling. In the light of all this what might be done to aid disciples of Jesus in hearing and responding to his call? How can the call be clarified and amplified; explaining the need for

sacrifice? Are there also ways to make the responding to that call a little smoother and help people face the cost?

Might it be the case that some of the costs faced are the responsibility of the church to help with, and not things that Jesus himself is asking of those who follow him?

The ideas I shall now outline have largely been suggested by those I have interviewed in the process of this study.

Firstly it seems clear that the cost of calling is not normally taught as plainly as it should be. To caricature; the gospel is presented more as about how Jesus can meet my needs, than as a call to costly discipleship. There is a strong feeling that there needs to be a fuller explanation of the gospel message, making clear the costs as well as the blessings it brings. Christian disciples need to be reminded sacrifice is very part of Jesus' calling. This is clearly at the heart of Jesus' teaching as we have seen from Luke 9. There may be slight danger of over doing this call to self denial, but we have a long way to go before the pendulum swings too far and this becomes a problem.

Just teaching and preaching about the cost could also be unbalanced and very negative. There needs to be a clear exposition of the positive call Jesus makes on our lives. Jesus is the one who is truly 'worth it'. Christians need to be excited again about the ministry Jesus has for them. In this context the possible sacrifices involved will become acceptable as part of that calling.

This balanced teaching on calling is needed across the church, but there seems to be a particular lack of addressing it in theological training. For all those I spoke to who have trained for ministry recently, in a number of colleges and courses, there appeared to be little or no addressing of these issues. Ordained ministry is often a very great challenge. Whatever forms that ministry takes it will be costly one way or another. In order therefore to prepare ordinands well, and hence enable them to face up more fully to the costs of ministry, these issues warrant greater consideration.

One way that was suggested to help teach the church afresh about these issues is the use of story. Colin White told me how hearing the story of Jim Elliott giving his life for the sake of the gospel in Ecuador had inspired him. There are so many inspiring accounts of the saints down the ages that could usefully be used to illustrate this theme. 'Stories' from others experience can be helpful too; when a Franciscan brother is struggling with an issue, they are given a chance to talk with a more experienced brother who has worked through the same challenge previously. Often mission stories seem to be key in others callings. Yet these stories must be told realistically making clear the costs as well as the joys.

Relationships will play a key role in both discerning calling

and facing up to the costs.

It goes without saying a strong close relationship with God is essential in hearing and responding to his calling. There needs to be a clear understanding within this relationship of what true discipleship means; including engendering a clear sense of calling and readiness to make the sacrifices involved.

Relationships with other Christians will also form an essential part in the process. As I have just suggested, a 'relationship' to 'saints' who have gone before; living or dead can be very helpful. Yet there is also the vital role for support networks to play. This is both in discerning the call, including the costs, and in support to remain true to that calling. A number of people asked can such support networks be encouraged and strengthened. Each individual will need a network suitable for them so we will be talking about people like spiritual directors, work consultants, advisors or networks. What is essential is that each individual is encouraged to develop their own support structure. Therefore there needs to be help and encouragement to make this possible. This seems to be an obvious need in all types of vocation, not just in apparently tough callings like UPA ministry.

Another area where help is often needed is boundary management: Getting the right life balance so that the calling does not become all consuming.

Our destiny is first to 'abide in Christ' to live as God's children to his glory. This must come first before a calling to ministry. Life balance needs to be maintained. Therefore boundaries need to be established and maintained.

This can be very difficult, especially when working across cultural divides where such boundaries can be ignored or misunderstood. An area this issue arose particularly is 'time off'; boundaries surrounding day offs and holidays. Can help be given by affirming the importance of these times of re-creation? Are questions asked and followed through in reviews like MDRs (Ministerial Development Reviews) and other support that make sure this issue is fully addressed? Most Christians in ministry seem tempted to 'workaholism', what help can be given to guard against this? This was a common issue for those I talked with. It seems particularly hard for those who are single to get this right.

The 'postcode lottery' in public services is often an issue for those in UPA type ministry, especially as the lottery is biased against such areas. It is clear that UPAs do frequently have poorer services than more affluent neighbours. For those with families this issue is particularly acute in the field of education. Schools in more deprived areas do not achieve the standards and results attained in others places. As we have seen this may

mean a cost of ministry in a UPA may mean inflicting poor education on your children. Are there ways help can be provided for this? Might a few places be set aside at church schools for minister's children? Could ways be found to make the option of private education easier? Could extra support be given in application to suitable charities?

The other poor service highlighted in my research has been that of local health care. This does not generally seem to apply to hospitals but rather to GP services. It seems that some practices in UPAs are below standard. Are there ways to help with this? Maybe by liaison with Christian doctors in practise could give cover, or if necessary help with private medical health care. St Luke's hospital is clearly of great benefit to clergy, yet this is usually at the consultancy level not in initial diagnosis.

The last idea offered by more than one consultation is that of recruiting support to encourage and sustain ministry in challenging areas. It was pointed out that Jesus always sent out his disciples two by two, and yet the Church of England for example still puts people on their own into isolated ministry. Are there ways in which teams can be developed to work more collaboratively? Is it possible to produce more teams and projects like the Eden projects in Manchester? Is there an appropriate way something similar can be reproduced elsewhere in cities like Birmingham? A few of those I have talked with are wondering if this might be possible, and we want to explore this together. Can the wider church also be encouraged to hear the call to 'come over... and help us'?

There were a few other suggestions for easing the cost suggested by only one individual. There were issues relating to clergy conditions in Malawi that are peculiar to that country. In another case someone asked that joint calling of a couple be fully recognised. The suggestion of trying to allay fears like the fear of crime, with facts was put forward. Another individual asked for help in 'living more simply'. Lastly someone felt the need for better training in management and leadership.

## Conclusions

It is clear from this study that this important issue of calling and sacrifice needs to be rediscovered more widely within the church. If it is true that every Christian has a particular calling, they need to know that and be enabled to hear that call including the cost involved. On visiting a church during this sabbatical I heard a preacher use a helpful analogy. He said a church is like a ship. The problem is what sort of ship do those on board consider it to be? Is it a cruise liner, where a small crew work hard but many just sit back and relax as passengers? Or is it a battleship, where everyone on board has a part to play and if they play that part everything functions as it should? Are there too many passengers in the church in

general who do not realise they are crew and have a calling to fulfill?

Callings can clearly be very diverse as I have seen in this very limited study. I have focused largely on full time ministry but there is a whole other field to be considered in 'workplace vocations'.

I feel it is important that Christians are faced with these questions and encouraged to seek to discern their calling. In this process the costs and sacrifices that are inevitably involved need to be fully explored.

We need the church at large to discern and fulfill afresh its callings, making the necessary sacrifices involved. This may mean ways need to be found to enable these callings to be fulfilled a little more readily.

Peter Smith

Names have been changed.

### For Reflection

What are the key insights you've gained from this article?

What implications does it have for your leadership today?

What implications does it have for raising or developing others in leadership?

