



Christmas and Happiness

In mid November, the Coalition Government announced that it was going to add questions to the existing household survey, carried out by the Office of National Statistics, to gauge people's happiness and how well they are reaching their "life goals". The French president, Nicholas Sarkozy, announced last year that he plans to include well-being in France's measurement of economic progress.

This arises against the background of a survey to be published next year in the British Journal of Industrial Relations that claims that there is increasing evidence that "psychological health and mental well-being" is getting worse across Europe – a result that underscores the need for the government's plans to measure people's well-being, its authors claim.

Economic growth pointless?

Andrew Oswald, Professor of behavioural science at Warwick University who led the study, backed the British Government's new initiative. He said, rather tellingly, that there was an urgent need to realise that economic



growth "is pointless if people are becoming more distressed and feeling ever more pressurised".

The professor's point is well made. We all know those, including ourselves, who are feeling pressurised by uncertainties that give no sense of joy or peace! What will happen to my job? Will I be employed again as I am over fifty? What is going to happen to me in the structural re-organisation of the business/organisation that employs me? These and many other questions are picked up by workplace chaplains like me in our current economic

dire straits. Alongside this there is, as we have seen,

mounting anger not only over the extent of cuts but its discriminatory nature that it is claimed will have disastrous effects and add to growing poverty in the country.

In it together

Well-being is not about having everything rosy and uncomplicated. Life just is not like that. We are all in this together as government keeps telling us. However those words only feel real when we feel that our fears and anxieties are being taken seriously. Then we want to participate in change.

The Christmas story and the gospel message of Christmas bring out the sheer joy of true well-being. At our Carol Services and over Christmas we will read about the joy and excitement of the shepherds and the wise men or three kings. This is true happiness because they realised that their wildest hopes and dreams had come true. The Christ child was born in Bethlehem.

What is real happiness?

This is not a fact just for the "religious" but for humanity. The present economic crisis is forcing us to consider what it really means to be happy. Does getting the deficit down really have to be the bottom line? When we equate prosperity as being the only symptom of happiness then we are in deep trouble and on the road to greater distress and being ill at ease with ourselves.

The birth of Jesus which we especially celebrate at Christmas gives us the signpost to true happiness. Does Jesus' life of self giving to God and others strike a chord with economic prosperity? If not, why not? We may even find ourselves redefining economic prosperity. And not before time!

A happy and joyful Christmas to you all!

Chris Savage, Chaplaincy Team Leader



Christmas Carol Services

Cambridge City Workers Carol Service

Monday 6th December 7.30pm at Wesley Methodist Church, Christ's Pieces, Cambridge. Refreshments from 6.30pm
This service will be recorded by BBC Radio Cambridgeshire for broadcast over the Christmas weekend.



City Workers' Carol Service

Tuesday 14th December 6.30pm at St Bene't's Church, Cambridge

Cambridgeshire Police Carol Service

Wednesday 15th December 7pm at Christ Church, Newmarket Road, Cambridge

Chaplaincy to Cambridge University Staff Carol Service

Friday 17th December 3pm at Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge

Carols at the Abbey

Monday 20th December 7pm at Cambridge United Football Ground, Newmarket Road, Cambridge

LOOKING AHEAD

Breakfast Briefing

'Belief systems: are examination certificates proof of real learning or just a piece of paper?'

Bene't Steinberg

Group Director, Public Affairs, Cambridge Assessment

7.30am February 2nd 2011

The Felix Hotel, Whitehouse Lane, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0LX

£15 full breakfast / £10 continental breakfast

Booking by 28th January 2011 with your choice of breakfast to admin@workplacechaplancy.org.uk

Please make cheques payable to **Chaplaincy to People at Work**
and send as soon as possible to:

CPW Administrator c/o 12 Station Road, Histon, Cambridge CB24 9LQ

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