

Editorial

Revd Dr Paul Beasley-Murray

On a recent trip to Australia I discovered that, every semester, school children are expected to reflect on their past performance and, in the light of that reflection, create fresh goals for the coming semester. So the eight year old grandson of the friends with whom we were staying wrote the following piece entitled 'My plans for improvement next semester. I need to improve':

- *keeping my writer's notebook tidy because it is very messy. I will do this by leaving spaces in my work.*
- *paraphrasing because I make up synonyms. I will do this by using real synonyms.*
- *open-ended tasks in groups because I get angry quickly. I will fix this by working in groups more often.*
- *division because I am not very confident. I will fix this by practising.*
- *charging my netbook because I leave it in my bag.*
- *my independence because in groups because I let other people think.*

My first reaction to this list of plans was to say, 'What an amazingly precocious child!' My second reaction was to say, 'What a model for self-improvement this provides to ministers!' What a difference it would make if, twice a year, ministers were to sit down and reflect on their 'performance' and, in the light of this, set some specific goals for improvement for the next six months. It would be a half-way house to an annual appraisal.

I wonder what form a minister's plans for self-improvement might take? Let me make some suggestions:

- I need to become more organised in terms of pastoral care because at the moment I am fairly sloppy. I will do this by writing up notes on each home visit I make.
- I need to be clearer and more specific in my preaching, because at the moment my sermons tend to full of spiritual platitudes and clichés. I will therefore seek to root my preaching in real life situations.
- I need to be more of a team-player, because at the moment I tend to insist on my own way. I will listen more carefully to

the thoughts and feelings of others, and incorporate their insights as I seek to lead the church.

- I need to give more attention to my public prayers because I tend to leave preparation until the last minute. Before the end of the week, I will therefore give thought to the content of my prayers, and will then carefully craft them by writing them out in full before the Sunday.
- I need to improve my chairing of meetings because I tend not to give any real thought to what I need to achieve through them. I will therefore construct my agendas with greater care, and before each meeting be clear in my mind about the desired outcomes.
- I need to be a better manager of my time, because I can often waste the day through having set no goals for myself. At the beginning of each day, I will therefore write down a list of priorities for the day, recognising that Spirit-led flexibility is also called for.
- I need to be more disciplined in keeping the principle of Sabbath, because I tend to allow the needs of others to intrude on my free day. I will therefore ensure that, apart from a death, no church-related business will be allowed to spoil the day.
- I need to improve my communication skills, because at the moment I tend to be dilatory in answering emails and letters. I will therefore aim to reply within 48 hours to every email and letter I receive, even if it is only a 'holding' reply.

It is not enough to set goals for self-improvement: we need to review our goals! There is much to be said for making ourselves accountable by sharing our goals with a friend, and then reviewing those goals with the same friend six months later. Accountability to another is a great encouragement to self-improvement.

Race, Class and the Gospel in Multi-Cultural Britain

Gary Jenkins

Vicar, St James & St Anne, Bermondsey

In 1985 the Archbishop's report on urban priority areas, *Faith in the City*, stated that "the Church of England's most enduring