

Editorial – Ending Well

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For almost a quarter of a century, Ministry Today UK (initially called the Richard Baxter Institute for Ministry) has been committed to the well-being of ministry. On the back of the early issues of the journal, we printed the words of Richard Baxter, the great 16th century pastor of Kidderminster: “All churches either rise or fall as the ministry doth rise or fall – not in riches or worldly grandeur, but in knowledge, zeal and ability for their work”. Or in other words: “The key to the health and growth of the churches is its leaders”. I dare to think that the many ministers who have read our journal and attended our conferences have been the healthier for it.

However, nothing in life is permanent and, as members of Ministry Today UK (MTUK) will know, this summer we made the decision to close down Ministry Today as from April 2018. As members of the Board will testify, I struggled with that decision. It is not easy to bring to an end an organisation which one founded. However, as much as I enjoyed chairing MTUK and serving as the General Editor and Review Editor of the journal, I realised that, now that I was retired from stipendiary ministry, the time had come for me to step down from leadership. Although I still am involved in preaching and teaching, the fact is that I am no longer running a church, and so no longer experiencing the stresses and strains of ministry today. I believe that a strength of MTUK is that it has been an organisation run by working ministers for working ministers, so I gave notice to the Board that another chairman was necessary.

We spent a good deal of time looking for younger leaders to take over, but unfortunately were not successful. We explored the possibility of a partnership with one or two theological colleges, but the Board felt that such a partnership would change the character of MTUK as a body run by working ministers for working ministers.

Inevitably, I feel sad about this outcome, yet the reality is that there is much to celebrate. MTUK has occupied a special place in the life of many ministers – there has been no other British cross-denominational organisation focussed on the day-to-day practice of

ministry. Over the years, I certainly have been blessed by the insights of others from traditions not my own.

The good news, however, is that, even with the closure of MTUK, the journal will continue to bless ministers for a good number of years to come. As a Board, we have decided to leave a permanent legacy by republishing all 520 articles from the 72 issues of *Ministry Today*. Entitled *Ministry Today UK 1994-2018*, we will deposit sets of the eight hard-backed volumes in all six British copyright libraries, and are expecting that sets will be bought by many theological colleges.

We keen too that working ministers will be able to afford to buy the legacy volumes. Therefore, from our own funds as well as from help elsewhere, we have been able to make a substantial subsidy to publishing costs, with the result that orders received by the end of November 2017 will be priced at only £48 (plus £10 postage for UK residents) for a set of eight hard-backed volumes. Orders received after 30 November 2017 will be charged in the region of £95.

Topics covered are amazingly wide-ranging and include: leading a building project; a call to excellence; abuse in the church; adolescence, popular culture and the church; appraisals; all-age worship; the art of preaching; building visions; care for the dying and the living; care for those struggling with terminal illness; blogging; celebrating families; cathedrals and growth; Celtic spirituality; chaplaincy; children and communion; children in the church; Christian grandparenting; chronic illness and the church; church design; church growth; competency; creating a learning community; creating safe community; Damascus or Emmaus; depression; developing a health cell movement; digital faith; dreaming dreams; ending and beginning well; fishing nets or safety nets; forgiveness and faith; disability; finding holy ground in dull terrain; forty days of purpose; funeral of a baby; gathering a harvest of righteousness; funerals are not always celebrations; goal setting; God gave rock'n roll to you; grave inscriptions; growing old; helping large congregations to stop the right; home groups; imagination and fun; immortal longings; inviting a response; is Allah God? Jubilee ethics; keeping sermons fresh; lay ministry; leadership; leadership in the Book of Esther; lessons in leadership failure; liberation theology and the local church; losing a staff member; lost souls – who we do think we are?; loving God and

nation; managing is not enough; ministry and revivalism; ministry and technology; ministry burnout; ministry from the margins; ministry in a small community; ministry stages; ministry to survivors of sexual abuse; multi-ethnic worship; pastoral counselling; pastoral visiting; prayer; prayer and midlife ministry; preaching amidst the ruins of Christendom; preaching the messianic prophecies; the preacher as poet; race, class and the Gospel in multi-cultural Britain; real men don't do church; reforming worship; reliability in ministry; reshaping worship for evangelism in a missionary church; responsibility without authority; retirement; resolving difficulties in the local church; rural evangelism; same gender relationships; seven keys for survival in ministry; spiritual accountability; suburban and urban spirituality; suicide; supervision; surviving the culture of criticism; the care of seniors; the challenge of assimilation; the Christian leader as contemplative; the cultural context of mission; the Gospel-driven church; the long-term pastorate; the Lord's prayer and terrorism; the male identity crisis in the church; the ministry of little things; the care of the homeless; the violence of language; theological reflection and stress management; time to move on; transition planning; turning leavers into returners; understanding the changing patterns of church attendance; where have all the prophets gone?; why we should not commemorate World War 1; working with asylum seekers; and working with young people.

What a bargain for this wide-ranging collection of articles on almost any aspect of the practice of ministry! Although this offer is being made primarily to members of MTUK, we are willing to make the same offer to others too.

One final comment: I am proud that MTUK is going to end well by leaving this legacy for future generations of ministers and church leaders. Would that every Christian or church organisation knew how to end well!