

# EDITORIAL

**By Paul Beasley-Murray**

Welcome to the first edition of *Ministry Today*! Published by the Richard Baxter Institute for Ministry, it aims 'to promote excellence in the practice of ministry, enabling ministers and other pastoral leaders to become increasingly effective in the mission to which Christ has called them'. Since the local church is at the cutting edge of the kingdom, the health and vitality of ministers and other pastoral leaders is crucial. The RBIM (as its name indicates) is committed to local church ministry. In the words of Baxter himself: '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'.

This commitment to local church ministry is reflected in our journal. Published firstly for pastoral leaders, *Ministry Today* is concerned above all for the practice of ministry. It is primarily a professional, not a theological, journal, focusing on the challenges facing pastoral leaders. Articles will be designed to enhance ministerial skills, and to encourage theological reflection on the practice of ministry. Some will be written by distinguished Christian leaders; many, however, will be written by working pastoral leaders - people like you. We particularly want to publish articles reflecting grass-roots experiences - both successes and apparent failures.

We are delighted that the Bible Society wishes to be associated with this new journal - a link which should signal clearly that *Ministry Today* is not targeted at any particular denominational group, seeking rather to be relevant within all denominations, enabling valuable cross-fertilisation. We also hope that *Ministry Today* will be read beyond as well as within the UK.

How can you help? Not only in making known *Ministry Today* and the work of RBIM, but also in encouraging new members (using the enclosed form). We believe that an annual membership fee of £15, including as it does three issues of *Ministry Today* and discounts to RBIM events, is good value and it will help us to develop the work of the Institute. And please send in articles (between 500 and 3000 words) relating to the practice of ministry.

You might feel able to summarise the fruits of your sabbatical studies, or to write about an issue recently faced in your church. The issue most likely to stimulate readers is the issue about which you feel most passionately at the moment.

## **ABUSE IN THE CHURCH**

**By Muriel Green and Anne Townsend.**

The following extract is taken from the first chapter of Anne Townsend and Muriel Green's new book, *Hidden Treasure*.<sup>1</sup>

"I never have thought something like that could happen in our family - it's such a loving one and we all get on so well together!" wept Joan, Pete's mother, typical of a sad number of parents, relatives and friends who unknowingly collude with the fact that sexual abuse is occurring within a particular family set-up.

Because more often than not the perpetrator of child sexual abuse is a family member or a trusted family friend, the problem of disbelief is further compounded. 'Not us ... that sort of thing happens in other families!' is the typical attitude. Quite often the abuse is 'known about' at an unconscious level by several family members and even by friends; warning signs may be passed-off, ignored, repressed or denied as of no significance, so that years later on Joan confessed through tear-filled eyes: 'Yes! Now I see why it was that Pete was so quiet and subdued after those long sessions he had with his Dad in the study - but I'd assumed they were sharing and praying together, as father and son should do, and so I never interrupted them and thought no more of it.' She had even managed to ignore the fact that bed-wetting in Pete's case had continued well into his teens, and had effortlessly silenced the common-sense part of her which knew perfectly well that bed-wetting so late on was far from usual and her other

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<sup>1</sup> Anne J. Townsend & Muriel M. Green, *Hidden Treasure: journey towards healing from sexual abuse* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1994).