

EDITORIAL: Constant change is here to stay

By Paul Beasley-Murray

In their book *In Search of Excellence* (Harper & Row, New York 1982) Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman analysed 43 of America's best-run companies such as IBM and 3M. Within two years of the publication of that best-seller, 14 of these businesses were in financial trouble. *Business Week* magazine explained the reason why: 'failure to react and respond to change'. Leith Anderson, the dynamic pastor of the fast-growing Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, commented: 'One of the realities of the emerging 21st century is that yesterday's successes are no guarantee for tomorrow's survival'. Yes, neither in businesses nor in churches is there room for leaders to rest on their laurels. No institution has ever 'arrived'. We are always *en route* to our goal.

It is a similar conviction which underlies the work of the Richard Baxter Institute for Ministry. As an organisation, we are committed to 'promoting excellence in the practice of ministry'. But such commitment inevitably involves a constant willingness to re-examine and, where necessary, modify models and practices of ministry. In this seventh issue of *Ministry Today* the theme of change is never far from the surface. Indeed, Wesley Carr's article tackles head-on the whole issue of negotiating change. It never ceases to amaze me how many Christians -and Christian organisations -find the process of change such a threat. By definition churches are in the business of change. We call men and women to repent, and to repent is to change. Furthermore, if the doctrine of sanctification is anything to go by, then we are in the business of on-going change. Yet sadly, although the gospel means change, Christian institutions all too often seem to resist it.

The theme of change is very much to the fore in David Goodbourn's perceptive article on adult education. In a day when adult education is such a massive growth industry, it is alarming to realise that most churches have yet to come to terms with modern learning. True, many a church has bought an overhead projector, but that modern educational tool is for the most part used as an aid for singing modern songs rather than as a tool for learning.

Change is also implicit in Joan King's article on the family, not least because the very institution of the family in this country has changed so much. How are we as churches to address meaningfully the issue of the family so that all feel welcome? Incidentally, do note that Joan King's article is in two parts: the first part is primarily concerned with theory; the second part, which will appear in the next edition of *Ministry Today*, is much more concerned with practical application.

Colin Buchanan's contribution surprised me. For although Colin has established such a reputation for being a radical thinker in the Church of England, his article on ministerial training actually appears to defend the status quo within it. To be fair, as a Free Church person I have to admit that the Church of England's system of curacy has much to commend it over the Free Church system where for the most part young ministers have been launched out into solo ministry without the benefit of working first with a senior minister. Certainly this was my experience when I was inducted to my first church at the age of 27: without any supervision or further training, it was a matter of either 'sink or swim'. Fortunately things are beginning to change – not least because of the opportunities for church-based (as distinct from college-based) ministerial training which are now arising. Yet most of these opportunities are being offered largely to older candidates for ministry. Rob Mackintosh in his reply to Colin Buchanan suggests that the Church of England still has things to learn in the area of post-ordination training.

At first sight Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* may seem to have little to do with change. On the other hand, as Bryan Gilbert points out, 'Habit Seven: Sharpening the Saw' is all about self-renewal, which inevitably entails change. Indeed, for some ministers learning lessons for ministry from the secular world of leadership may in itself involve a change in learning patterns.

And so to return to where we began. I shall be sad if this issue of *Ministry Today* fails to bring about change in the lives and churches of our readers. None of us should be satisfied with the status quo. For me one of the great adventures of pastoral ministry is the constant re-examining and modifying of my models and practices of ministry. I trust that will be your experience too. If it

is, then let us know the way in which you are seeking to bring about change. We shall be delighted to hear from you.

TRAINING NEWLY ORDAINED MINISTERS

By Colin Buchanan

The Church of England has much in its patterns of ministry about which to be embarrassed or even ashamed (not least in a system of diocesan episcopacy which often bears little relationship to its own public rationale). It has an appalling history of clericalism, an hierarchical caste-system, and a bizarre and ramshackle appointments system. It is compromised by the involvement of the State in many of these procedures; and it has made a virtue out of fudge, cheerfully invoking that new-fangled virtue as a theological principle to justify almost anything it wants to go on doing. I could go on at length ...

However, my purpose in putting up a fairly penitential beginning is simply to provide a contrasting back-cloth for an area in which I believe the Church of England does display a real strength, and in which she can cheerfully look competitors in the face. And my credential is that I am not a blind supporter of everything 'C of E', that I have grave criticisms to issue from within, and that therefore, when I blow a trumpet for something we do, I do so not out of Pavlovian or defensive reflex, but through actual conviction on the merits of the case.

I refer to the training of the newly ordained. I recognize in most 'mainstream' denominations in England the existence of a category of 'full-time' (or as we would say, stipendiary) ordained ministers; I think that in local pastoral situations their job descriptions are not too far from each other; and I find that, for instance, in local fraternals (or sororities) of ministers, people at least understand each other's language and can relate to each other's task. So I dare to hope that some evaluating of how 'we' do things may actually speak to other people's situations, and should not be written off as