

EDITORIAL

Paul Beasley-Murray

An overview

Along with the usual varied collection of book reviews, this issue of *Ministry Today* aims to offer an interesting mix of articles. In the first place Patricia Fouque addresses the serious issue of abuse in the church. I do not believe she is understating the problem here in the UK. In some recent research I conducted among ministers representative of all the Protestant (i.e. non-Roman Catholic) mainline denominations I discovered that one in seven ministers confessed to sexual misbehaviour. That is a worrying statistic - not least because the probability is that many ministers would find it difficult to be totally honest about such behaviour. Furthermore, I was researching attitudes and behaviour amongst people still in ministry: i.e. my statistics do not include those ministers found guilty of sexual abuse and consequently had to resign from ministry.

Secondly, there is the first of two further articles on appraisal. Some may find this surprising, in so far as the whole of issue 9 was devoted to the theme of appraisal. However, I believe it is very important for non-Methodists in particular to learn from the major experiment in accompanied self-appraisal which is being conducted by the Methodist Church. Although appraisal in one form or another is becoming increasingly common for ministers, it would appear from my research that only a third of ministers undergo regular appraisal - two thirds have yet to discover the benefits of accountability.

Finally, we are publishing two papers on the long-term pastorate which originated from a reflection day enjoyed by members of the RBIM Board. As readers will see, I believe there is much to be said for ministers settling in for the long haul. It would be interesting to know whether or not there is in Britain an increase in pastorates lasting more than ten years. Some further research of mine among ministers indicated that as far as their predecessors were concerned, 27% had ministered for over 10 years in the church, with a further 33% having ministered for some 6-10 years.

Conferences on offer

One of the ways in which RBIM seeks to promote excellence in the practice of ministry is to put on conferences. In March, for instance, Bill Bolton and Gerald Bradley tackled the subject of 'The Church in Business'. It proved a very stimulating occasion. Among the challenges put to us were the needs: to create an environment where people feel valued (so that 'work' can be as important as a paid 'job'); to adapt our structures and approach to respond to changing job patterns (60% of all jobs involve shift, night or weekend working; 1 in 4 regularly work Saturdays, and 1 in 8 regularly work Sundays); to take a lead in job creation (for, in spite of the present unemployment figures, there will be a further reduction in the total number of jobs thanks to automation and the drive to reduce costs)

Future conferences include 'From Maintenance to Mission' with Robert Warren, the Church of England's National Officer For The Decade Of Evangelism (Melton Mowbray, 19th November 1997) and 'The Church: a Sign of Community' with John Perry, the new Bishop of Chelmsford (Chelmsford, 3rd February 1998).

To enable us to meet the needs of RBIM members we would like to make an offer. As a Board we are willing to organise a conference on any subject related to pastoral ministry if members provide the venue and the participants. As a Board we would like to reach out to every part of the country, and we believe this might be one way of doing so. Distance for us is no object.

Consultancy on offer

Let me remind readers that in addition to sending members the journal and giving a substantial discount on conferences, we are prepared to offer free (albeit limited) consultancy facilities to our members. Thus in response to written queries relating to issues arising from the practice of ministry we are more than happy to put members in touch with relevant resource material and/or people. We do not claim to have all the answers, but we do believe that we may be able to point our members in the right direction.

Over to you

Finally, let me draw attention to the statement on the inside back cover of the journal: 'We want to publish articles that fall within

the scope of our statement of intent and invite readers to submit articles and book reviews to the editor'.

If readers feel passionately about any aspect of ministry, then please put pen to paper and let us know. I am particularly keen to be able to publish articles in which ministers reflect on their practice of ministry, sharing not just their successes but also their failures. At the end of the day it is people working at local church level - not college lecturers or ecclesiastical bureaucrats - who are best placed to help fellow ministers by sharing their reflections and their experiences of life at what is the cutting edge of the Kingdom. Articles of less than 3000 words are very welcome.

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ABUSE IN MINISTRY

Patricia Fouque

Abuse in the church is a reality: a reality which must be faced. In this article we shall look at abuse with its issues of power and responsibility. We shall explore some of the unknown areas of our own lives which lead us sometimes to be in the role of victim, and sometimes in the role of persecutor or abuser. We shall listen to the voices of survivors of sexual abuse. And we shall look at some of the ways in which we can minimise the risk of abuse in our churches.

Reality of Abuse

How do we know that abuse is indeed a reality in churches?

In 1992 the Christian Reformed Church of North America commissioned a survey to determine the prevalence and nature of abuse throughout the denomination. Of the 65% of members who