



Mainstream *baptists for life and growth*

NEWSLETTER NO. 10

APRIL, 1982.

If it is the job of a conference to provoke people then the 1982 Mainstream Conference must be judged a great success! Many people have written to us asking searching questions about the purpose and direction of Mainstream. We do not have space to publish enough of your letters to be representative of the comments made, but the executive committee have read all the letters carefully and spent time together considering what you are saying to us. In reply we seek to answer three questions in particular: What does Mainstream stand for? Who is Mainstream for? And what does Mainstream do?

Mainstream styles itself 'Baptists for life and growth', but this very general title raises further questions. Is Mainstream evangelical? Yes, certainly. The life and growth we desire for our denomination will, we believe, come from a more wholehearted affirmation and implementation of convictions commonly called evangelical. At the same time the evangelicalism we profess seeks to be warm and positive, open to the new things God is so evidently doing today in the life of all the churches.

Is this life and growth to be seen only in 'charismatic' terms? Not only so. Some of us in Mainstream are enthusiastic towards the charismatic movement, others much less so, but we are committed to accepting one another in one fellowship for life and growth, and are in any case unhappy that a word that should characterise the whole life of the church should become a party label. God is indeed doing new things today, but not all of us see the same things or see them in the same way. Mainstream exists to be a forum where evangelicals can share together what they see God doing and what they themselves are doing in the name of renewal, church growth, or whatever, and where the truth and wholesomeness of our claims can be tested in love.

Is Mainstream truly Baptist? Emphatically, yes. We are loyal to the family of Baptist churches affiliated to the Union, and committed to staying within it and working for life and growth in the denomination at all levels. It would be idle to deny that we are sometimes very unhappy about the state our Baptist Union is in and about some of the things it does and does not do, but we are unhappy precisely because we love the churches and officers of our denomination, and believe that God loves them and has plans for them and us, plans which we are anxious not to miss. The title 'Mainstream' reflects not only our belief that the gospel as we profess it has good claim to be the main stream of Baptist believing down the years, but also our desire to stand for it in the main stream of denominational life.

Mainstream is for all Baptists. It is not only, or mainly, for ministers, but for everyone concerned for the life and growth of our churches in the sense already described. To encourage and assist them Mainstream publishes booklets and a newsletter, organises conferences and is planning other things. During the three years of existence Mainstream has had considerable success in bringing evangelicals together and enabling their voice to be widely heard. Mainstream is at present organised by an executive committee consisting of (in alphabetical order): Paul Beasley-Murray (Altrincham), Raymond Brown (Spurgeon's College), Alastair Campbell (Broadmead, Northampton), David Coffey (Upton Vale, Torquay), Pat Goodland (Gorsley), Peter Grange (Kirby Muxloe), Douglas McBain (Manna Ministries), Jack Ramsbottom (Kidlington), David Slater (Kingsbridge), David Warner (Perry Rise) and Barrie White (Regents Park College).

The aim of Mainstream is to be Forum, Workshop and Gadfly in the service of the living and growing of our churches in the Holy Spirit. It should be a Forum where ideas can be freely aired, a Workshop where experience can be shared, and a Gadfly from time to time piercing the hide of our Baptist churches, producing the occasional bellow of rage, perhaps, but also, who knows, a little forward movement.

THE MAINSTREAM EXECUTIVE.

Why Elders Today?

Everybody is talking about elders. Anglicans are appointing elders. So are Baptists. Christian traditions that have got on quite happily for a long time without either the office or title of elder are feeling impelled to look at this New Testament word afresh. The charismatic movement is no longer about individual spiritual experience alone. It is about the ministry and order of the church. Nor is it just churches in the charismatic stream that are talking about eldership. There is a growing recognition in other evangelical churches of the need for multiple ministry within the local church. The American experience of multiple more specialised ministries can be fruitfully combined with charismatic insights regarding spiritual gifts to call in question our traditional patterns of leadership and to say to us, in one word, elders.

Why is this? What felt needs of the church today does the reappearance of elders seek to meet? I believe there are two: the need for a more effective ministry, and the need for better pastoral care with which may be linked the need for a clearer recognition of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in His church.

Common sense and experience, as well as the New Testament, tell us that one-man-ministry is wrong. No one man has all the gifts, neither the New Testament gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, nor the gifts that we have been accustomed to look for in our ministers: preacher, pastor, organiser, counsellor, children's worker, etc. No man has them all, and that means that so long as we see the ministry as only the paid professionals, usually only one in a given place, whole areas of the work of Christ will continue to be left undone.

One man ministry is unhealthy. It leads to guilt and to breakdowns, because men are trying to do what cannot be done. Expected to do the impossible and believing that they should accept that burden of expectation, ministers commonly feel guilty, they carry crippling sense of failure, they work all the hours God sends in an unhealthy attempt to cover the ground and appease the demon within. Alternatively, one man ministry leads to a fatal accommodation, in which a man accommodates his vision of what God wants done to what he personally can do. As a defence against pain a man will define the task of ministry in over-narrow terms according to what time and inclination allow, and then seek to find in scripture justification for so understanding the work of Christ. Either way again whole areas of the work of Christ are left undone.

One man ministry fails the test of Ephesians 4: 12. It does not equip God's people for the work of Christian service. We know that the ministry really belongs to the whole people of God, and, of course, in all our churches many willing people are working in different ways to be the work of Christ. But on the whole they are receiving very little training. The objection is sometimes made that if we had a team of ministers or elders all the work would be left to them and there would be even less incentive for God's people to find their gifts and use them, but this overlooks the fact that the purpose of the leadership gifts in Ephesians is to equip others. In actual fact very little equipping or training is going on in our churches for the simple reason that the single minister does not have time. Perhaps he does a bit here or there, but never enough and always at the cost of doing other things the mounting pressure of which sooner or later forces him to abandon training in favour of putting out fires. Usually people are appointed to offices and tasks within our churches on the basis that secular training has already endowed them with some ability rather than because the church undertakes to train and support those it calls to work. Because of this many of God's chosen vessels are never recognized: they would use too much time.

So here is the first need of the church today that is pointing to multiple ministry. It is the need for the church to be apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral and educative in a way that it cannot be so long as it is in bondage to a view of the ministry which would restrict it to people trained in colleges to be preachers of the word, and to an expectation that there will only be one minister to a church.

The second felt need of the church today is for better pastoral care. We are in the business of growth, of enabling men and women to grow up into Christ. We are concerned with wholeness of personality and holiness of life. As society around us breaks down and increasing numbers of our members are recent converts with very little idea of what God provides and requires, we know that we have to do more than give instruction in baptism and church membership and then leave a person to make their own way with the help of the preaching ministry of the church and perhaps a midweek meeting.

We are rediscovering the church as God's school for living, a fellowship of people with a real commitment to one another. We are not content that the church should be a club where people pursue religion, meeting on Sundays and on other days to carry out the stated purposes of the club, then to disperse into the privacy of their homes and families. We are concerned with a discipleship that embraces the whole of a person's life, his money, his family, his life-style, his health, his reputation in the community. We have always known that God was concerned about these things, but our love for people has generally stopped short of correcting them and encouraging them in holiness of life. We have given little place to the Pauline injunction to restore the erring brother in a spirit of gentleness; rather, we have ignored him. We have become in John White's phrase 'the Church of Private People with Private Lives'.

Pastoral care has tended to mean care of the weak, of the bereaved, the sick, the person with marriage breakdown threatening or actual and many other cases of acute pain. We have not tended to care for the strong. We have not had the time. One of the most impressive things I witnessed while staying with a growing church in the U.S.A. was the systematic and deliberate pastoring of one person by one person over a period of months during which a hard look was taken at the whole person, physical and spiritual, his relationships with God and man. It is not the aim of such training to rob a person of responsibility or to keep him dependent on others. On the contrary, the aim is that he will be able to go forth into the world as a free and mature man able to disciple others in his turn. The alternative we know too well, where faults of personality flourish unchecked causing havoc as a person rises to positions of influence in the church, or where unwholesome practices fester in the dark until they break out in a scandal that can no longer be ignored.

What has all this to do with elders? Pastoral care of this depth requires eldership for two reasons: first, because again it is too time consuming for one man either to do or train others to do, second because when we are dealing with people's lives in this way the risks are higher and the need for supervision is greater. Indeed, the whole movement towards closer fellowship in the church necessitates closer supervision as people collide with each other and need help in handling their differences within the commitment of fellowship.

And so we come to the dread word 'authority'. When we speak of elders we are speaking of people with authority, but the way to understand their authority is to approach it by way of pastoral care as we have just tried to do. The authority of elders is not the authority to throw their weight about in the church. It is not primarily about church government (though we shall have something to say about this). It is an inescapable corollary of effective pastoral care. All effective caring and healing is about authority. If you go to the doctor you accept his authority. If you will not answer his questions, allow him to probe, agree to his prescription or accept his diagnosis and treatment you cannot be healed. It is the same within the Christian church. We are in the business of healing. God calls and equips people to care for His sheep, and it is as shepherds after the pattern of the Good Shepherd (whose authority no one would deny) that elders are to be seen as entrusted with the dangerous gift of authority. Of course their authority extends to the life of the church and not just to individuals, because the church is a healing community not a surgery. Of course, too, their authority is to be exercised in a Christ-like way under all the restraints laid upon authority in the New Testament. But the authority of undershepherds, like that of the Chief Shepherd, is real.

Talk of authority leads naturally to a brief consideration of church discipline. We are uneasily aware that this is something we have not wanted to know about for some time. We know it is biblical; perhaps we also know that the Anabaptists reckoned that church discipline was, together with the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments, constitutive of the true church, but we shrink from it. Horror stories of savage punishments for minor offences, of hypocritical church leaders harshly judging those who had sinned, have led us to ignore the whole subject. We major in the story of Jesus and the woman taken in adultery but we ignore what Jesus said to his apostles on the subject of discipline (Matthew 18). The subject needs extended treatment and rehabilitation. Suffice it to say here that in the New Testament (and I have in mind particularly the teaching of Jesus in Matthew and the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 5) discipline is not primarily about pushing people out of the church but about building them up in the church. As I read it the New Testament never says that people are to be put out of the church for committing some specific sin, however grave, but for one thing: rejecting the care and authority of the church and continuing in sin with an impenitent heart. What church discipline does mean is that the lives of its members are the proper concern of the church, and that Christian commitment is commitment to accept correction in the pursuit of holiness.

To sum up, elders are needed in the church to equip and to shepherd with varied gifts and with authority that one man can neither be expected to have nor trusted to wield. I have not said anything about how this might work out, about the relation of elders to deacons, to the church meeting, to 'ordained' ministry, about how elders might be appointed, nor have I attempted to show the scriptural base for what I have said. All of this will be the subject of further articles in this Letter.

Alastair Campbell.

Who's Radical Now?

The Radical Christian	Arthur Wallis	Kingsway £1.75.
Radical Discipleship	Christopher Sugden	Marshalls £1.95.

To have been called 'radical' would once upon a time have seemed suspect to most conservative evangelicals but today the word is not only in vogue, it is positively in danger of being overplayed. It must not be allowed to become the next shibboleth neither must we fall into the trap of believing that because it's radical it must be right. Having said that, it is a good word. The true Baptist heritage is a radical heritage calling the church back to a demanding conformity to Scripture; it is a heritage which ought to teach us to be restless with both the social and ecclesiastical status quo.

Both of these books are written by men with a concern for a whole hearted and uncompromising application of New Testament teaching to our situation. Having read some negative comments about The Radical Christian I was keen to find out whether they were justified. In the event there is in the book much with which I whole heartedly agree, a good deal which provoked me to examine how radical I am myself (always an uncomfortable task) and a certain amount from which I might want to dissent or which I might choose to approach differently; but certainly the burden of the book, that our total church life is to be fashioned not by the traditions of men but by the word of God, and that we are to be courageous and obedient in the accomplishing of this task, should receive a warm response from the hearts of free churchmen committed to the principle of a believers' church.

The Radical Christian is essentially the manifesto of one wing of the Restoration movement and Arthur Wallis is its able, lucid and perceptive senior spokesman. He writes in the conviction that the charismatic movement has peaked because of the refusal of those involved in it to take the next step in renewal, namely the restoration of New Testament church structures and ministries (such as apostles and prophets). The failure to take such a step he

attributes to sentiment and misplaced loyalty to denominational structures. Denominations have, in his view, no biblical justification and rather than be hindered from obeying God's word believers who want to move on with God should join fellowships which represent the Restoration emphasis. Not to do so is to fail to be radical. The suggestion is that in fact many churches are not valid churches because either they are built on the wrong foundation or they are not related to the right ministries.

The conviction of the reviewer is that Arthur Wallis puts his finger on many issues of great importance which need to be discussed, debated and hammered out. If what he has to say is received then there is no doubt that many churches will have to face the challenge of radical change. He is not afraid to raise issues which many free churches have all but lost sight of as respectability has been gained. He is prepared to challenge the institutions of infant baptism, clericalism and the like when many of us have lapsed into a broad latitudinarianism. For this he is to be admired and commended.

My concern with this book would not be so much with things that are said as attitudes which lie behind what is said. Similar things can be said arising out of completely different attitudes. Identical truths can be contended for out of totally different dispositions of spirit. My concern is, what kind of debate will this book arouse? One which encourages believers to look at the issues and to discuss them in the context of acceptance of one another, patience and forbearance, seeking to win one another to a deeper commitment to the will of God revealed in Scripture? Or will it be one in which one believer looks at another subconsciously feeling (although not saying) that, although they may be saved, they are not really 'valid' or 'kingdom' because they are not involved in the right kind of church structures or covered by the right 'valid' ministries? In other words are we going to be caught up in judging one another, or in accepting one another for Christ's sake? My perception would be that only within the context of unconditional acceptance of one another in Christ can the issues raised by Arthur Wallis be profitably hammered out. And behind all of this there is the question: what constitutes 'validity' in the church? Is it the right doctrines, ministries and structures (vital although all these are) or is it the presence of Christ in the midst of His people? Biblical church structures are of great importance but more important still is the ability to recognise Jesus wherever He may be found among believing people.

Radical Discipleship is a book which goes further than Arthur Wallis and which poses the question: is The Radical Christian actually radical enough? Whereas Arthur Wallis is principally concerned with the restoration of biblical church structures, Chris Sugden is concerned with the restoration of a truly biblical ethic. Arthur Wallis represents a modern day expression of the Anabaptist vision of a believers' church governed by the Holy Spirit; Chris Sugden (although an Anglican) represents an expression of the Anabaptist concern for a way of living which is conformed to Christ and not to the status quo and which leads God's people into economic sharing, concern for the poor, involvement in the process of bringing justice to the oppressed and renunciation of nationalism and militarism. According to Sugden, evil cannot simply be personalised. Preaching the Gospel is not simply saving individual souls and hoping that they will then change the world. It has to do with liberating men from everything that imprisons them which includes not only original sin but the structures of society in which injustice and evil are institutionalised, and which are manipulated by demonic forces in order to hinder men from responding freely to the Living God. Radical discipleship is concerned with the servants not being above their master who lived simply among the poor, who challenged the corrupt institutions of His day and who allowed Himself to be crucified because He forbade His followers to take up arms.

It is the reviewer's conviction that the kind of thinking offered to us by Chris Sugden represents the next stage in God's purpose in renewing His church. Ultimately this stage will be more costly than that touched on by Arthur Wallis, indeed, it will be interesting to see how many 'Restoration' churches follow through to this next stage. The problem with the church is not

only that it has become conformed to the ecclesiastical status quo and needs to recover its radical simplicity as the people of God but also that it has become conformed to the social and political status quo. Chris Sugden, and those like him, offer us help in disentangling ourselves from the self-seeking, materialistic, conformist mould in which we are by and large stuck to become again radical followers of a radical Lord. It is in the fusing together of this radical lifestyle within the church and this radical prophetic witness to the world that much of the future for God's people must surely lie.

Nigel Wright.

Scrap The Sunday School?- A couple of replies

I am replying to Roland Wort's contribution in the January newsletter; "Scrap the Sunday School?" His theology of the child was helpful and on the right lines but I do not see how it follows that we should shut down our traditional Sunday Schools. Is not the biblical view of children as needing the new birth in order to be 'in Christ' the very motivation for us to reach children for Christ?

I accept that children's work can be the 'soft option' in the church's work of evangelism. There ought to be at least as much effort put into adult evangelism as there is in children's work. The outreach programme should be comprehensive, seeking to draw children, teenagers and all age groups of adults to Christ.

In the church in which I work, as well as a morning School, which is comprised mainly of church members children, we still have a Sunday afternoon school with all the usual departments. Every Sunday afternoon a team of young people and adults 'cast their nets' amongst the various estates surrounding us, bringing in children who are completely ignorant of the name of Jesus, let alone any bible stories. This influx of children has meant that we have had to gear our teaching content and methods to these children rather than to our members' children. Our aim is still to teach the Bible in an elementary and enjoyable fashion. We don't always succeed!

What are our results? We still lose too many children in the teenage years, but there are youngsters converted and continuing in the faith. Children's work needs an equally good youth department to which teenagers can be handed on, where their special needs are met. If the Sunday School child has not made a personal and simple response to the gospel before he is 13 or 14 years old our experience is that he is unlikely to have sufficient motivation to continue in the church youth group.

Even so, the majority still need encouragement from their homes (if they are to continue during the teenage years). This is where our outreach amongst adults becomes so important. The contact through the child is a great help for it removes suspicion when knocking on the door and has often engendered respect towards the church. The Sunday School contacts give opportunities for home visitation evangelism and for special services and events at the church.

For our Sunday School Anniversary last year we invited all the parents to a Saturday evening presentation of 'Jerusalem Joy' (the cantata for children by Roger Jones), together with slides of the 'Sunday School Year'. We had over a hundred adults present who had come for the first time, and hearing the gospel. Some of those adults now attend Sunday worship. The film 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' also attracted a good number of parents.

The important work of adult evangelism is made easier through the many 'warm' contacts created through the Sunday School. Surely it should not be either adult evangelism or child evangelism, but a mutual complement and interaction of both. The Sunday School work is not an end in itself but, as part of the local church, it plays its part in the total ministry of creating and building up the body of Christ.

Graham Sinden (Graham is assistant Minister at Rye Lane, Peckham).

I enjoyed reading the first part of Roland Wort's article in Main-stream and appreciated the Biblical passages he quoted in developing a 'theology of the child'. Also, I agree wholeheartedly that we should try to win the head of the family for Christ.

However, I felt it unnecessary and even dangerous to criticise those who invest their time in teaching the Word of God to children who do not have the blessing and benefits of Christian parents.

Planning a Sunday School only for children whose parents are in the church could be interpreted as preventing other children from coming to Jesus. An error the disciples made as Mr. Wort pointed out. Many Christians I meet grew up in ungodly homes. They have good reason to thank the Lord for faithful and dedicated Sunday School teachers who loved them and introduced them to His Word and to the Saviour.

The Sower went forth to sow the seed - which is the Word of God. And the Good soil is 'he who hears the Word and grasps and comprehends it' (Mt. 13: 23 Amp). Is an evening of games and 'a short talk at the end' the best way to communicate the Word of God to children from non-Christian homes so that they can grasp and comprehend it? Yes, by all means have a club but in addition to, not as an alternative to, Sunday School! Sunday School is the only programme in the church for teaching the Word of God consecutively. I encourage churches to increase the size and quality of their Sunday Schools so that they can reach thousands more children and young people with the Gospel. Seed sown in young hearts will not make evangelism more difficult when they grow into adults. On what Scriptural grounds can Mr. Wort make a statement like 'when we teach many of these children in Sunday School, unless the teaching can be backed up by parents' explanation, then all we end up doing is giving a childish view of God'? If we teach the Word of God, is this giving a 'childish view of God'? We need to be child-like to enter the Kingdom of Heaven - but this isn't being childish. 'And from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures.....' (2 Timothy 3: 15 NIV).

I have just returned from the Middle East where one of the boys who was a regular member of my Sunday School class is now director of Christian Education in a 1000 plus multi-national fellowship. Chris came from a non-Christian home. Chris is just one of the many boys and girls from non-Christian homes who have come to know the Lord through Sunday School teachers at Southcourt Baptist Church in Aylesbury. (How thankful I am that I spent, and spend now, many many hours in the outreach of children!) My own secretary came to know the Lord through the Sunday School in her local church. Her sister has just returned from 2 years missionary service in Zambia. They came from a non-Christian home. Countless Christians would give similar testimonies.

We need dedicated Sunday School teachers as well as those who are evangelising Adults. Let us not discourage our brothers and sisters in Christ who feel the call to teach in Sunday School and spend their lives teaching the Word of God to children from Christian and non-Christian homes. In the body of Christ, the eye must not say to the hand 'I have no need of you'.

My plea is - let's encourage evangelism among adults and evangelism among children and young people.

I am delighted that God has called Mr. Wort to witness to adults in the Royal Navy. May we work together in discipling and teaching all ages for His Glory.

Martyn J. White (Managing Director of Scripture Press, Sunday School Superintendent in Aylesbury Baptist Church).

Handling Change

We reproduce here part of Bill Hancock's address to the recent Mainstream Conference on caring for the Church in change, together with gleanings from Lewis Misslebrook who, as ever, has been reading books for all of us.

PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

This section is not a continuing narrative, but a series of suggestions that might help if applied in pastoral relationships to a church going through change. It is a sort of Book of Psychological Proverbs.

1. Offer yourself or others as ready to help. Explain your concern. Don't depend on winning the vote. Listen to difficulties and ensure that they are heard and taken into account.
2. Ask if there are any other personal or domestic problems causing anxiety. Some drastic upset in a person's life may have a profound effect upon his or her reaction to changes in the church.
3. In any two-person relationship it is the quality of that relationship that matters most. The person being helped must like the helper - most children learn more from teachers they like.
4. Two qualities are vital - warmth, which engenders trust, and experience which engenders respect.
5. Attitudes make certain reactions almost automatic. You can only influence attitudes by genuinely communicating with the person who holds them. Anything that savours of disrespect, ridicule or rejection reduces trust.
6. Understanding fears and anxieties is another requisite. Silence is one thing - listening is another - and repeating in your own words what the other person has said, is another. It is the latter that helps him or her to know that you have understood.
7. Trust and understanding reduce defensiveness. Defensiveness increases stubborn adherence to present attitudes.
8. Ask the person to try to look at things from another's point of view e.g. '.....but if you were young today, how would you see it.....' or..... '.....if you came from that background how do you think it would have affected your opinion.....'.
9. Try to show that the person has coped with change in another department of life. Show that it is better to learn how to accept change, because it is likely to go on happening.
10. Try to bring folk together in groups beyond their own immediate context. Insulated ignorance breeds defensiveness. Put people in touch with others who are facing changes but reacting positively.
11. Prejudices diminish in the face of a common enemy. Try to help people to see the plight of the churches today.
12. Discuss changes before people have taken up a public stance and been seen to commit themselves. A reasonable period of personal discussion amongst the fellowship is a good preface to open debates of significant change.
13. Help people and groups more amenable to change to see that the wider context of opinion represented throughout the fellowship involves a more gradual approach.
14. Decide if you want limited change achieved fully, or larger changes taking longer and subject to more modification.
15. Ask what changes a person would like to see themselves.
16. Give changes a limited life: make them subject to review in the light of experience.

17. Previous changes applauded. Present changes suspected.
18. Some will take a long time to accept changes. Others never will. Hopefully the process may begin with doubtful compliance move to external identification and end with internal conviction.

Bill Hancock.

Thoughts and gleanings after reading THE CHANGE AGENT by Lyle Schaller (Abingdon, U.S.A.).

WHERE CHANGE BECOMES POSSIBLE

1. Where a vision comes of something better and greater than the present situation. Stories (shared slowly and carefully) of other similar places that are being blessed are helpful, or visits from members of such places.
2. Where church members are concerned for the contemporary situation rather than for preserving past traditions - mission not maintenance. But showing how present concern is true to past purposes or tradition is helpful.
3. Where there is sufficient maturity and confidence in God to be able to change without undue threat.
4. Where a church sees itself as a "Pilgrim People of God", and expects progress and monitors it, testing results against clearly defined aims, and being sensitive to the pace members can go.
5. Where the Treasurer constantly puts his emphasis on Christian goals, purposes and generosity rather than on income, needs and caution.
6. Where a crisis is felt and members are looking for a new way that is more firm and satisfying.
7. Where there is real Christian trust between members and between members and leadership.

HOW LEADERS CAN HANDLE CHANGE

1. Be seen to be Christ-centred and without personal ambition.
2. Love your people, and so minister to them that trust grows.
3. Lead the church to discuss often its position and its possibilities so that the thought of change is not a shock.
4. Be positive and expect good. Avoid projecting goals your people cannot reach. This leaves depression and guilt.
5. Introduce new ideas early and let them simmer gently in peoples' minds for a year before action is proposed.
6. Build an Eldership or Diaconate which spends half its time sharing and studying together, and do not move until the Eldership and/or Diaconate are virtually leading together. Begin with books like:-
 Peter Cotterill - CHURCH ALIVE - (IVP) - £1.50.
 D. Bonhoeffer - LIFE TOGETHER - (SCM) - £1.50.
 Michael Green - EVANGELISM - HOW AND THEN - (Hodder) - £1.25.
7. Tell stories of what God is doing elsewhere and let people from lively places visit to share experiences.
8. Ensure that the ideas for change have been shared and accepted by a positive majority before proposing action. Build on strong support.
9. Change is threatening to many. Expect opposition. Love, pray for, visit and care for those who find change difficult. Be open, listen and share caringly - the opposition could be right!
10. Propose new things on a years' trial basis. This reduces tension. (The trial time and experience must be firm enough to have become something of the "status quo" by the end of that time).

11. Many people react, not to the ideas, but to the people who put them. Let new ideas be proposed by those the church trusts and be carried out by those with the right gifts and competence, and the right winning spirit.
12. When a change takes place, establish it and give time before initiating further change.
13. Be alert, pray and trust (Romans 8: 28).

Lewis Misselbrook.

Masterlife

Two years ago I had the privilege of one month's ministry in Richmond, Virginia. On my visits to the U.S.A. I usually discover a methodology related to church growth, discipleship programme and outreach, which with some adaptation can be used in our churches. One example is WIN school, meaning Witness Involvement Now. This scheme has been used by some churches in the U.K.

My visit to Richmond opened an avenue of friendship with a very successful pastor who presented me with two attractive manuals entitled MasterLife. He informed me that this plan was the most effective programme for discipleship in his church. After prayerful investigation I agreed with his observation. But there was a problem!

No-one is allowed to teach the course unless he has received training. So, during November one of my members was sent to Georgia and underwent the training. He was impressed and excited about the programme.

What is MasterLife? It's an in-depth training experience to help you to be a complete disciple. 'You will learn how to abide in Christ, live in the Word, pray in faith, fellowship with believers, witness in the world, and minister to others. You will discover your potentialities and spiritual gifts for the ministry.' There are far-reaching conclusions, but the amazing fact is indisputable - it works! As a result, from MasterLife the Christian's life has more meaning and purpose. There's an ongoing ministry that assists you to understand yourself better: who you are, what you are to do, and what you can do through Christ.

A MasterLife group has approximately eight persons who will dedicate themselves to helping each other, their leader having been trained to transfer life to life and not a theory to an individual. Members of the group each week will be given practical real-life assignments. Early assignments are sequenced and easy. The group meets each week. Periodic checks and evaluation keep the group on track until each person is able to monitor and discipline the personal life.

What is the involvement? A preparatory meeting is held where the prospective group member is faced with the requirements before making a commitment. Each person is expected to spend sixty minutes a day in personal preparation and attend a two-hour session each week for six months.

New converts are not encouraged to join. MasterLife is designed for those who have at least two years Christian experience behind them. Those who face the disciplines of MasterLife are expected to specialise in one of the following areas: teaching, proclamation, intercession, nurture, evangelism, service and training.

From June 28th to July 2nd this year MasterLife seminars will be held in Duke Street Baptist Church by Dr. Avery Willis, who is the master-mind behind the programme. The associate will be Dr. Bill Wagner, Austria, who is a consultant in evangelism and church growth for the Southern Baptist Mission Board.

Seventy-eight pastors and leaders from Europe will be involved in the training. Pastors who are interested in attending the seminars should write to:- Dr. Bill Wagner, Austrian Baptist Mission, Weberbartlweg 14, A-5026 Salzburg, Austria. If you require further information, please contact the Rev. W. Freel, Duke Street Baptist Church, Richmond, Surrey.

William Freel.

Introducing Douglas McBain's New Trust: Manna Ministries

Since January I have been released from Pastoral leadership at Lewin Road in order to concentrate on the new work to which God has called me under the auspices of this new Trust. My emphasis will not be to do the work of the itinerant teacher and preacher, important as this is. My particular calling is to engage in a relationship building exercise between ministers and churches which are open to renewal emphases, both within and outside of our denomination. There is much work to be done here and it is already involving me in a great deal of travel around Britain and overseas. Together with work in training in leadership and the task of church planting and some writing too, life is going to be moving at a pretty hectic pace over these coming months.

One of the methods we are adopting is to call together leaders and churches for renewal weekends, conferences and celebration nights. Regarding these, we have a special weekend at Lewin Road from June 25th to 27th at which our speaker will be Dr. John Wimber from Fuller Seminary, California, on the theme of "Evangelism With Signs Following". We have also booked Kinmel Hall, Abergele, North Wales from July 5th to 8th for a residential conference on the theme "Building God's Kingdom Today" with Bob Gordon, Jim Graham and Michael Harper. This is specially for Ministers, Deacons, Elders and House Group Leaders, etc. For further details do please contact me at 52 Prentis Road, SW16 1QD (Tel: 01 677 4853) and I will supply all the necessary information.

Mainstream supporters have a variety of evangelical backgrounds and interests, and those who associate with charismatic renewal are just one part of the whole. It is to the good for all of us that we have such a forum for uninhibited creative dialogue. Through this new Trust we emphasise God's special provision through His Son and His Spirit for pilgrim Christians. There are many Churches and Leaders who are very hungry for the realities of which "Manna" speaks. Prayer letters are available for our new work. We value your prayer support.

Douglas McBain.

BOOK REVIEWS

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE YORKSHIRE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Yorkshire Baptists are to be congratulated on the Worship Papers they have recently produced. They are well written, and provide much information and mental stimulus. They could certainly form a useful basis for a series of house group studies on worship (questions are provided for each paper) - for the low price of 21p per set (inclusive of postage!) each member of the group could afford to have his own set. The subjects covered are:-

- Worship: an introduction (1½pp A4)
- New Music in Worship (3pp A4)
- The House Group in the life of the local church (4pp A4)
- The Church's ministry of healing in the context of worship (4pp A4)
- Architecture and Worship (3½pp A4)
- Communion (7pp A4)
- The use of charismatic gifts in worship (6pp A4).

In addition Yorkshire Baptists have produced an information paper on the House Church Movement containing questions for discussion (5pp A4) - at 15p each all deacons should be able to have a copy. Also this spring the YBA has issued a 14 page booklet on Covenanting: a Guide, which contains some useful information (both prices are inclusive of postage).

The address to write off to is:-

The Yorkshire Baptist Association,
1 South Parade,
Headingley, Leeds, LS6 3LF.

Paul Beasley-Murray.

KINGDOMS OF THE LORD - D. F. PAYNE - PATERNOSTER £10.50.

Kingdoms of the Lord offers an attractive history of the Hebrew Kingdoms from the time of the Judges to the fall of Jerusalem.

The standpoint is conservative, the Biblical narrative is summarised with interpretations provided by archeological insights. What are commonly thought to be divergent accounts in scripture are deftly harmonised and critical speculations are for the most part passed over in silence.

A notable feature of the book is the space given to the nations surrounding Israel, the author's qualifications in Semitic studies are put to good use and in this way we have a much clearer perspective on Israel's own history. The book concludes with two brief sections on the prophets and the faith of Israel.

A faithful rather than exciting book which may be recommended with confidence to anyone doing (or tutoring) Old Testament Papers in the Christian Training Programme.

R.A.C.

1983 MAINSTREAM CONFERENCE

The 1983 Mainstream Conference will take place at Swanwick from 4.00p.m. on Monday, 17th to 1.00p.m on Wednesday, 19th January, 1983. The theme of the conference will be Key Issues in the Local Church. The three main sessions will deal with the following areas.

1. The sources of our Authority.
2. Your local Church - who calls the tune?
3. Your local Church - can it go it alone?

A much greater time will be given to workshops and discussion with the possibility of some required reading beforehand. There will also be a longer period on Wednesday morning for worship, word and sacrament.

Please complete the booking form below and book early to avoid disappointment.

MAINSTREAM CONFERENCE BOOKING SLIP.

The Mainstream Conference will be held at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire from 17-19th January, 1983. The total cost will be £23. A None returnable deposit of £5. books one place.

Please book.....places at the 1983 conference.

I enclose a Cheque/P.O. of £5. per person.

Cheques payable to MAINSTREAM (Baptists for Life and Growth) please.

Name:.....
 Address:

Send to: The Rev. J. Ramsbottom,
 2 Lovelace Drive,
 Kidlington,
 Oxford, OX5 2LY.



MAINSTREAM SUBSCRIPTIONS

We invite individuals and churches to make donations to MAINSTREAM (we are now officially registered as a charity). A minimum subscription of £2.00 is necessary for an individual to be placed on our newsletter mailing list.

Send to: The Rev. Peter Grange, The Manse, Church Road, Kirby Muxloe, Leicester, LE9 9AN.

I enclose a cheque/PO to the value of £.....

NAME (Block letters):.....

ADDRESS (Block letters):.....

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