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**CHRISTIAN BROTHERS REVIEW**

**SERVANTS OF GOD**

*(Papers on the use of full-time workers in Brethren churches)*

EDITOR: HAROLD H. ROWDON

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**The Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship  
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# CONTENTS

		<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION	<i>Gerald West</i>	5
PART ONE WHERE WE ARE NOW		
1. The Brown-Pearce survey	<i>Roger Pearce</i>	9
2. The present position	<i>Brian Mills</i>	25
3. The historical perspective	<i>Harold Rowdon</i>	37
PART TWO WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES		
4. Biblical practices and principles	<i>John Baigent</i>	49
5. Biblical reflections on the religious professional	<i>David Clines</i>	57
PART THREE HOW IT WORKS OUT		
6. The role and status of a full-time worker	<i>Neil Summerton</i>	65
7. Patterns of full-time congregational ministry	<i>Neil Summerton</i>	75
8. Adapting to full-time congregational ministry	<i>Neil Summerton</i>	85
9. Full-time or part-time?	<i>Alfred Kuen</i>	95
10. A local church view	<i>Gerald West</i>	105
11. A personal view	<i>Colin Holmes</i>	115
APPENDICES		
1. Selection and terms of service	<i>Chris Bocutt</i>	121
2. Self-employed or employed?	<i>Alec McIlhinney</i>	125
3. Impact on itinerant ministries	<i>Stephen Short</i>	129
4. Impact on para-church ministries	<i>Roger Chilvers</i>	131
5. The wife of the full-time worker	<i>Rosemary Jennings</i>	135
6. Relationships within a group leadership	<i>John Boyes</i>	139

# INTRODUCTION

**Gerald West**

The past decade has seen various changes of practice in many of the churches commonly known as Open Brethren. One of these changes has been an increase in the number of churches supporting a full-time ministry within their fellowships. This development has received notice at conferences and in *Harvester* magazine.

There is some difficulty in charting its progress. Various estimates of the numbers involved have been attempted. Although there is no doubt that there has been a significant increase in the practice, the numbers do not appear to be as large as has sometimes been suggested. This may in part be due to the fact that the relationship appears in many cases to last only a few years. A short life cycle seems to be inherent in the nature of the arrangement, and is partly indicative of a learning process. In some cases, no doubt, there have also been misunderstandings and mistakes. The dominant picture, however, is by no means one of difficulty. Such relationships have proved to be a blessing to the church and to the individuals involved. The period of initial experiment and growth is continuing.

Some three years ago, Partnership (CBRF) formed a study group to consider the implications of this development. The papers which follow were commissioned on the recommendation of the study group whose enquiries had identified a number of issues that could usefully be considered in a wider forum. There is no published material available to help either churches or individuals contemplating such an arrangement. A further reason for commissioning these papers was to bring together such experience as already exists to meet this need.

Taken together, the various contributions cover the principal theological and practical implications of the matter. Each contribution represents the personal view of its author. They were not commissioned on the basis of a common understanding or approach, nor with a presumption in favour of such arrangements. Their publication is not an act of advocacy. Rather it is hoped that they will stimulate further informed discussion and enable any who are contemplating such arrangements to give this many-faceted matter careful consideration.

The papers have been collected by the editor into three parts and a number of appendices. The first part, entitled 'Where we are now', commences with an analysis of a survey carried out in 1982/83 by Graham Brown and Roger Pearce ('The Brown-Pearce Survey'). Some 32 'servants of God' working full-time with local Brethren churches shared their experiences with the researchers. Roger Pearce has written up the findings and provided some comment on them. This paper is followed by one written by Brian Mills, formerly field secretary of Counties Evangelistic Work and, at the time of writing, secretary of the evangelism department of the Evangelical Alliance, seconded to Mission England. Based on the observations of a number of people consulted by him who move widely among Brethren churches, Brian's paper looks at the condition and prospects of Brethren churches, with special reference to the growing number availing themselves of the services of men and women working full-time with a particular church. The third paper of this first part, written by Harold Rowdon, author of *The Origins of the Brethren*, attempts to place the matter under discussion in its 'historical perspective'. It draws attention to the existence of full-time workers in local church situations throughout the history of the Brethren movement in this country and in many other parts of the world today. Like the first two papers, it draws on a survey—in this instance a random survey of Brethren practice around the world.

Part two turns from the factual to the biblical. It contains two papers. The first, written by John Baigent, well-known Bible teacher who is now spending half his time serving the local church of which he has been an elder for some years, is a concise yet comprehensive survey of 'what the Bible teaches' about localised full-time ministry. It looks at the practices of the church in New Testament times in the light of the principles enunciated there. The second paper by David Clines, who teaches biblical studies at Sheffield University, sounds a loud and clear warning against professionalism and the institutionalizing of the structures of ministry in the church.

The third part of this collection of papers moves from the biblical to the practical (without in any sense ignoring the former). Three papers by Neil Summerton (based on articles which appeared in *Harvester*, September to November, 1985) scrutinize the role of a full-time worker in a local church in relation to the leadership as a whole and the total congregation. The legitimacy of an appointment to full-time work is considered in the light of the warning against religious professionalism given in the previous paper. Various aspects of the calling and ministry of a local full-time worker are explored in some depth. The effects on the dynamics of the leadership and the congregation of what is for most Brethren churches in this country a new development are pointed out with great clarity.

There follows a paper given by Alfred Kuen at a conference of European Brethren held in Switzerland in September 1985 and drawn from his book, *Ministères dans l'Eglise*, which debates the respective merits of what he calls full-time and part-time ministry. Especially intriguing and suggestive is the section in which he suggests ways in which the advantages of full-time ministry can be secured—in part at least—in a church which lacks it, and the benefits of relying on part-time ministry can to some extent be retained in a church which possesses full-time ministry.

Part three is rounded off by two further papers, one of them a survey by Gerald West of the whole question from the point of view of the local church; the other a complementary paper by Colin Holmes which is the 'testimony' of an itinerant evangelist turned local church worker.

Six appendices deal with half a dozen important, detailed matters relating to the appointment, impact and relationships of local full-time workers. They should not be overlooked since, unlike the appendix in the human body, there is no question about their usefulness!

The discerning reader will observe a certain amount of overlap, as between papers. The editor has deliberately refrained from ironing out all of it, in view of differences of *nuance* and emphasis, and the importance of the points being made which seems to justify a certain amount of repetition.

Finally, the reader is notified that in view of the frequency with which the term 'full-time worker' appears in the pages that follow it has been deemed wise to abbreviate to 'FTW'.



# **The Church: God's Agent for Change**

**Bruce J. Nicholls (Ed.)**

These papers from the Wheaton '83 conference on the nature and mission of the Church include contributions from Tokunboh Adeyemo, Peter Kusmič, Bong Rin Ro, Theodore Williams, Pablo Perez, Klaas Runia and many others.

They are arranged under eight headings: Biblical foundations for the missionary church; The church as the kingdom community; The nature and mission of the church in the local setting; The church as God's agent for conversion; Churches as God's agent for social change; Para-church agencies serve the church; The church triumphs in suffering; God renews his church for change.

Both encouraging and challenging, this book is essential reading for all those who are interested in the mission of the church worldwide.

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# THE BROWN-PEARCE SURVEY

## Roger Pearce

*During 1982/83, Graham Brown, an experienced market-researcher who had already conducted two surveys of evangelistic activities and church life among the Brethren, and Roger Pearce, himself a resident FTW, made a survey of a number of FTWs known to them. Roger reports the findings and makes a personal assessment of the responses.*

### Introduction

This is a brief report of a survey conducted in 1982/83. Letters were sent to 50 men and two women understood to be engaged in various forms of ministry largely associated with a particular local church. Somewhat arbitrarily, this was defined in terms of three-quarters of his/her time.

A number of replies was received from those who did not feel that their role came into the area of this survey. Reasons given include the following:

I work in a limited area rather than in a single-church situation.

I am not a resident full-time worker in one assembly but engage in an itinerant ministry.

I have been instrumental in initiating the commencement of two new assemblies. I am connected closely with the second but I am not the resident worker. It is simply my base from which I work country-wide.

I do not give such a large proportion of my time to one church.

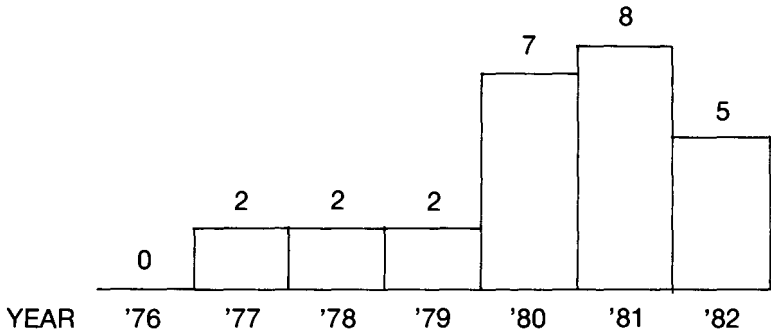
Completed questionnaires were received from 28 men and two women. They showed an interesting and anticipated variety which is not easy to summarize. Certain responses can be listed, but others indicate a greater variation of experience or attitude. I have tried to give a fair impression of this in the notes that follow. Finally, in a personal assessment I have attempted to suggest one or two important lessons that can be drawn from this exercise.

A copy of the letter sent to informants is included as an appendix.

**Summary of Responses**

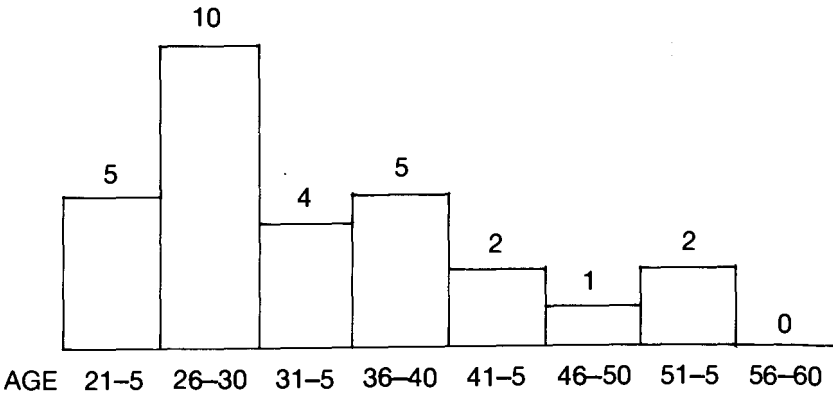
1 *When did these 30 FTWs begin their present appointments?*

1 had been appointed between 1966-70 and 3 between 1971-5.  
Others:



26 were first time appointments in full-time work in a local church but 4 had been in similar work before.

2 *At what age did FTWs enter their first such appointment?*



3 *What was the FTW's previous employment or situation immediately before appointment?*

Missionary	5	UCCF travelling secretary	2
Evangelist	4	Full-time work	2
School teacher	4	Full-time in other church	1
Bible college student	3	Occupational therapist	1
Bank official	2	Youth & community worker	1
Retail trade	2	Solicitor	1
Family business	2		

4 *What is the family situation of the FTWs?*

Of the 30:

26 men are married    2 men are single    2 women are single

Of those married:

6 do not have children    20 have children    2½ on average!

5 *How many FTWs have a Brethren background?*

21 have a Brethren background    9 do not.

6 *Did the church have a FTW before?*

7 churches had a FTW before this appointment

7 *Where are the churches that have made such appointments?*

London	9	(7 suburban    2 town centre)
South East	4	(3 suburban    1 town centre)
South	3	(1 suburban    2 town centre)
South West	6	(3 suburban    2 town centre    1 village)
Wales	2	(1 suburban    1 town centre)
Midlands	—	
East Anglia	1	(1 suburban)
Lancs/NW	—	
Yorks/NE	—	
Scotland	1	(1 suburban)
Northern Ireland	1	(1 town centre)

(2 churches have more than 1 FTW)

8 *How big are the churches making such appointments?*

Over 100 members	9 churches
81-100 members	3 churches
61- 80 members	4 churches
41- 60 members	4 churches
21- 40 members	4 churches
Under 21 members	2 churches

(No reply from 1 church)

9 *Are these churches growing or decreasing?*

		<i>Average number baptised in 12 months</i>
Of the 9 with over 100	2 are increasing fast	12 *
	2 are increasing steadily	12.5
	5 are increasing slowly	8
Of the 3 with 81–100	2 are increasing slowly	5
	1 is decreasing slowly	5
Of the 4 with 61–80	4 are increasing slowly	9.5
Of the 4 with 41–60	1 is increasing fast	8
	1 is increasing slowly	6
	2 are decreasing slowly	0
Of the 4 with 21–40	2 are increasing slowly	2.5
	2 are decreasing slowly	1.5
Of the 2 under 21	1 is static	0
	1 is decreasing slowly	0

(\*1 of the 2 increasing fast did not give the number of those baptised)

10 *How were the FTWs found by the churches?*

In most cases the FTWs were well known to the churches. 14 of the 30 were already members of the churches and many more were known through regular speaking engagements. 22 were definitely 'approached' by the church, many invitations growing naturally out of increased involvement in the work of the church or out of a growing sense of call over several years, although for one, the invitation came 'out of the blue'!

5 others said that the process towards appointment began with their own initiative. These include someone who clearly had to prompt some elders who had not been alive to the possibility, and another who offered himself to a co-ordinated city area advance and through this was appointed to a new fellowship.

11 *What 'agencies' helped in seeking a position?*

Only 8 definite responses were received to the question.

4 Bible College staff	4 via individuals already in full-time work
-----------------------	---

12 *How did churches go about making an appointment?*

There was great variety—from the natural progression of a member of the fellowship gradually taking on more until an appointment became a step in the process, to the conscious praying and planning where procedures for appointment had been anticipated.

Most had opportunity for considerable familiarisation in each direction. A good number had chatted with either the elders together, or a special delegation, and some who were not very well known had preached more than once to introduce them to members.

4 said that *one* elder had been 'the driving force' (or something similar), conducting most of the negotiations.

18 said that they had a time of discussion with the elders.

13 *Did the churches define the role of the FTW?*

4 churches supplied a written job description.

Many of the FTWs wanted to know how the church defined their role.

Most churches did not anticipate this need. 1 said 'they were very vague—a brother saw our role as "moving in and out among them" (whatever that might mean!)

12 said they had to take their own initiative in working this out and some of these felt this was not ideal. eg:

Although attempts were made to discuss this when lack of role definition did cause problems, nothing really satisfactory was ever produced.

I asked on several occasions for a job description but got none so submitted one of my own for comment.

I asked four times for a written job description but never received one.

They seemed unclear about what they wanted—or perhaps apprehensive about the reaction of others.

A good number, however, wrote of a trusting relationship, a process of working out a role with the elders, and of freedom to develop their role.

14 *How did the churches check the FTWs' suitability?*

As above, many were already well known to the churches—18 stated this.

8 had been questioned fairly fully at a special meeting with the elders.

Some were questioned widely on all beliefs, some had been asked about views on specific subjects such as ethical matters, marriage and divorce, charismatic issues, etc.

2 of these discussions had only taken place at the prompting of the FTW. 1 who was already well known thought it a possible mistake that he had not had a 'definite interview'.

We also asked FTWs if they had a chance to question the church. 1 thought 'that questions about the church were not expected!' Most knew the churches sufficiently well already. Others had a good chance to ask questions. 2, however, felt they had limited opportunity.

15 *What steps did churches take to prepare for an appointment?*

Much depended here on whether the church was simply strengthening

a role that was already being exercised by a church member who then became their FTW, or whether the church was consciously restructuring its pattern of ministry. The former seemed to require little preparation compared to the latter where a variety of procedures were listed:

4 churches had letters or papers prepared to outline proposals to their members.

A similar number asked members to give some idea of their expected financial commitment to support an appointment.

17 described a fairly long process of building unity and understanding for such a step which included some of the following:

A series of Bible studies about the principle, special church meetings, inviting representations to elders, discussion in groups, individual consultation, times of prayer, a vote of members on the principle, a vote of members about the individual being considered, etc.

#### 16 *How are FTWs supported?*

Of the 30:

18 are on a fixed salary.

3 of these listed themselves as 'self-employed'.

8 said they were paid additional expenses eg: car costs, gas and electricity, visit home each year, help with rent, etc.

3 (including 2 of the 18 above) said they were paid a guaranteed minimum plus expenses from outside sources.

4 (including some of the above) have church-owned accommodation rent-free.

1 (of those with a fixed salary) has his mortgage paid.

3 (of those with a fixed salary) have a car supplied by the church.

Here are other individual responses from those not on a fixed salary:

My commitment was on a half-week basis. I was to give 50% of all my time. I was to look to the Lord to open doors to provide other remuneration.

I pay all my expenses from my investments.

The team with which I work provides a flat rent-free and the assembly provides financial backing for this. Remaining living expenses are from my own resources.

Agreed I look to the Lord for accommodation and finance and the church would do what they could. We have a council flat—finance comes from money given by church members specifically for our support, and support of our families and friends.

Individuals pay into a central fund on our behalf. From this (according to the amount regularly coming in), we draw a monthly allowance.

a. free gifts/expenses for preaching, etc. b. wife's part-time earnings.

We draw part of our living costs from overseas trips which we organise and the remainder is made up from gifts from many individuals/churches, etc. Church give £100 a month for rent etc and a collection 3 times a year. Other support comes from individuals and my wife's church (£50 a month).

In our discussion with the elders remuneration was never once raised. Only after we had taken up residence did we learn that the free will offering on one Sunday each month was to be given to us.

17 *Has the FTWs' role developed as envisaged?*

16 said a clear 'yes'.

But some of these, and others, 13 in all, said their role had widened. Several were more involved than expected in teaching and pastoral care. Some stressed their role in being catalysts for change, and particularly in planning ahead.

A few have taken a central teaching role which has changed the pattern of ministry. One, however, recognised that he needs a fuller teaching ministry to complement his pastoral role ('the pulpit must be seen as part of the pastoral role').

6 raised problems about lack of clarity in defining leadership responsibilities and lack of a review procedure to assess how things are going.

1 expressed dissatisfaction with the development of his role: 'our objectives are right and our methods are acceptable, but spiritual lethargy prevents many believers from getting involved'.

18 *What changes have FTWs tried to make?*

Most mentioned several items:

10 —the programme of Sunday services—many wanting to meet family needs (inside and outside the fellowship), some wanting an atmosphere which was not strange to outsiders, some wanting renewal in the breaking of bread services

9 —a greater involvement in caring in the community and a realistic evangelistic outreach

8 —a programme of consecutive Bible teaching

8 —the development of house groups

6 —more mobilisation of all the members' gifts, and for some, more stress on the charisma in the widest sense

4 —more clarity over leadership, more open government and stronger leadership

3 —more awareness of pastoral needs, the needs of young Christians, the ministry of women to be encouraged



19 *What are the top priorities of FTWs?*

Again, most mentioned several items which are not easy to summarise:

- 11 —caring evangelism in the local community: eg
  - ‘mobilising the whole membership for this’
  - ‘breaking down barriers around church’
  - ‘a new evangelistic thrust in our community’
  - ‘reaching whole families for the gospel’
  - ‘real conversion growth’
- 4 —building up the fellowship; ‘renewal and restoration’, ‘growth of fellowship’
- 4 —‘to be a catalyst’, ‘to initiate change’, to give ‘vision and direction’
- 4 —discipling new believers, personal work
- 3 —training and equipping: ‘motivating and training’
- 3 —Bible teaching
- 2 —young people’s work
- 1 —deepening spiritual life of leadership

20 *Do FTWs have any stated ‘position’ in the church and how are they related to the leadership?*

Of the 30:

17 are elders in their churches.

8 are referred to as ‘pastors’ (1 of whom is not an elder).

7 have other titles, eg: pastoral worker, church co-ordinator, evangelist, youth leader, pastoral co-ordinator, youth co-ordinator, community and pastoral worker.

11 have no title apart from elder (if they are elders).

4 are not elders but meet with the elders for the whole or part of their meeting.

21 *What advice would FTWs give to churches considering an appointment?*

These responses are set out under my own headings in logical order rather than according to the frequency they were mentioned. Many, of course, listed more than one point for consideration.

26 mentioned *making the role clear*. They wanted the church to give a lot of thought to why they needed help and discussing together what kind of person is required.

State clearly what you want him to do and what he is *not* being called to do.

Test motives to see if members are looking for someone to do the work they are too lazy or scared to do.

Don’t make him an odd job man—the FTW is to help you move forward.

Don’t look for a ‘pastor’ as the ‘answer’. He will be most use where the church is already on the right lines.

2 suggested asking a FTW from elsewhere to *analyse the needs* of the church.

19 mentioned *preparing the way*.

4 stressed that the elders need to be in accord and must lead by bringing clear and firm proposals to the church.

9 stressed the importance of prayer, particularly for a period of time after an initial discussion of the possibility.

12 stressed the need for full consultation with members providing a full and free flow of information and conversation between elders and members.

16 mentioned *finding the person*.

13 advised looking amongst those who have already been of service to the church especially in the membership.

5 suggested areas of possible supply and contact: Bible colleges, other churches, missionary contacts, national Christian organisations, Brethren communication channels, etc.

1 said 'Don't stereotype the man in advance.'

7 made suggestions for getting to know a candidate before appointment.

16 mentioned *Finance*.

Practical suggestions included:

- appoint 2 leaders to work out arrangements
- determine the extent of the church's financial commitment.

Suggestions about remuneration varied *between*:

- work out the arrangements with generosity
- make the negotiations realistic by taking advice from other FTWs and the man himself
- be ready to pay the average salary of leadership or membership
- base thinking on average church member expenditure: house purchase, mortgage costs, etc

*and*

- don't pay a regular wage! give him expenses and gifts
- weigh carefully the Müller principle and, if another arrangement is arrived at, make sure it involves as much faith

15 mentioned *the FTW and the church's development*.

- taking on a FTW will be felt to be a major change but it must be recognised that this is only the *start* of change
- the appointment must be tied in with a vision for church growth
- the FTW must have vision—a shepherd who goes nowhere is no good for the sheep
- allow the possibility of the FTW taking initiative on the methods of implementing the job description
- plan for regular evaluation of the FTW's work

4 mentioned *the church's attitude to the FTW*

- important to have a public recognition of his calling and appointment

respect the FTW—you are taking on a skilled person and should treat him/  
her accordingly  
pay him on time!  
ensure that you include wife and family in your consideration before and  
after the appointment

22 *What advice would you give to someone thinking of the possibility of becoming a full-time worker in a local church?*

20 mentioned *getting advice*.

seek advice from an experienced worker  
spend time with the elders of a church with a FTW and pump them re the whole arrangement  
every pastor needs a pastor, and someone who knows the church but is not a leader of it, is ideal  
link up with either a Baptist minister or a FTW

15 mentioned *the need for a job description*.

I recommend that the potential worker ask the church leaders what their aims and goals are as a church for the future, and what they feel a worker could achieve  
have a written job description

2 suggest observing, assessing and offering your own job description, 1 of these suggesting 'checking that you can bring the changes you see are needed without traditions hindering'.

Another suggests: 'listen to the elders about what *they* want. Compare your gifts to their needs and mutually agree on a job description'. One woman suggests asking the elders 'if she will meet opposition from those outside the leadership over her role, and asking them to indicate how they will support and advise her when this occurs'.

9 mentioned *financial and working arrangements*.

agree financial arrangements before accepting the job—too late to moan after  
financial details are always difficult but the tendency is for them to be ignored or left undiscussed which is unsatisfactory

2 suggest *getting advice from a Christian accountant*.

Other matters touched on: days off, holidays, outside engagements, etc

get the time-off situation sorted out

8 mentioned *provision for review*.

Comments here were related to supervision and support of the FTW and the extent to which the church was willing to see change. Some FTWs had obviously experienced a lack of opportunity to report to the elders and to the church, and a lack of readiness to review progress.

Establish what the channels of communication are to be: to whom is the

FTW directly answerable? What decision making and implementation authority will you have?

5 mentioned *knowing the church*.

They stressed the need to talk at length with the elders and to get to know them well.

*You interview them!—why have you asked me? Are the church behind your approach? What do you see as your greatest need? Do you have any recent or specific problems?*

Some spoke of the need to get the church's views on sensitive matters.

Find out how prepared the church is for change. If they are conservative in this area, he will have a great deal of frustration.

4 mentioned *freedom to exercise gifts*.

The particular difficulty that led to these comments seemed to be that those with a gift for teaching had been frustrated by going against the grain of an apparent Brethren antipathy to planned consecutive Bible teaching.

Many also, of course, stressed the importance of prayerfulness, conviction of call, and patience. And one said: 'Don't look to a Brethren assembly unless you have stamina, a brass-neck, tough skin, utter conviction as to your calling. Full-time ministry is tough in an assembly and could be much easier elsewhere.'

### A personal assessment

The responses to the questionnaire show a variety of definitions of the role of a FTW. Some see the FTW as fulfilling a ministry *attached* to the local church, but with the church itself remaining much the same. This may be possible with a youth worker or children's evangelist. But this particular questionnaire was interested in churches which viewed the appointment of a FTW as an opportunity to regain some of the original Brethren hopes for flexibility and development according to the Spirit's guidance, for a freedom to be biblical rather than traditional. Where a church does not have this vision of the FTW as a catalyst for change there is bound to be some disappointment in taking on a FTW.

This questionnaire not only brought out some of the principles involved in the appointment of FTWs in any kind of church. It has pointed out some particular problems specific to the Brethren. This assessment is related to the latter.

Most FTWs have two important characteristics. The first comes from experience outside the Brethren sub-culture. FTWs who have worked overseas or in other Christian spheres have realised that many traditional Brethren church patterns are cultural rather than biblical and that the stereotyped pattern typical in the UK is not a biblical norm and has certainly been restricting renewal and growth in recent years. The second

comes from Bible college training (or even professional training in some cases) where they have learnt to think biblically about church structures and evangelistic outreach. They have a sense of mission which they find many churches lack. They have a real vision for freeing church life from a maintenance complex, which keeps a church calendar moving along rhythmically, and want to instill a sense of purpose, flexibility, growth and fruitfulness.

These attitudes cause many churches to feel threatened. This could be illustrated by an example familiar to many churches considering change. The elders suggest that a morning family service would be more realistic for attracting outsiders and propose moving their breaking of bread service to the evening. In some churches many people would find difficulty with that proposal. The reason would be discomfort along two possible lines:

1. a feeling that they are betraying a certain godly tradition;
2. a feeling that the adjustment would be too disturbing to their long-unchanged Sunday lifestyle.

Both reactions would be very common and very understandable. What leads to deep concern is that the average church member has never been helped to think biblically about such changes. On the first issue above, it would be realised that the New Testament gives no authority for a particular pattern, and on the second the need to sacrifice self-interest would be realised if a genuine evangelistic concern was present (as it was formerly with the timing of the 'gospel meeting'). What makes this relevant to the FTW question is that if a church has little experience of thinking biblically about structures and has either settled changes by expedience or has avoided such changes altogether, then the appointment of a FTW will bring difficult tensions.

This observation comes from my reading of an interesting paradox in the answers to those questions which sought the advice that FTWs would give to churches or to FTWs who are contemplating an appointment. Many responses stressed two apparently conflicting concerns. The first was an almost universal emphasis that churches must analyse their situation, determine their needs and state as precisely as possible what the role of the FTW should be. Some had in fact asked elderships for a written 'job description' but had not received one. A few had presented their own for discussion.

The second opinion, expressed almost as much as the first, was a recommendation that churches allow their FTW to develop his/her ministry and not to tie them to too-limited a role.

Now, on the face of it, FTWs could be accused of having their cake and eating it! On the one hand they want to be clear what their job is, and then

they say that the churches should not tie them to it! These responses however seem to say two clear things about our current church life.

First, why do so many FTWs stress the need for a clear job description? Isn't it because church leaders are not used to analysing their real situation? Many FTWs have found it difficult to elicit any clear idea as to what extent their roles would include teaching, pastoral care, administrative responsibilities etc. There is little doubt that many elderships have never discussed these issues. They have some understanding that there is a given Brethren norm but act as though it is unspiritual to define these New Testament ministries or to acknowledge the marked way in which the New Testament anticipates that the Holy Spirit will equip members of the church. What lies behind the FTWs' request for clarification seems to be a conviction that leaders need to be much more conscious of the Spirit's pledged intention to guide his church by particular gifts and ministries for which the church needs to seek particular guidance, rather than through a group of elders who tend to work at jobs by rota, who have little idea of any policy of pastoral care, and who actually shrink from any specific honest analysis of why they are seeing progress or decline.

Second, why do FTWs want their role to develop freely? Why do many wish to see an element of growth and change built into their ministry? Here the thinking of the church and the FTW may be dangerously at odds. The church may see the appointment of a FTW as a change of very significant proportions in itself. They imagine and hope that evangelism, attendance at services and spiritual life will all be measurably improved but that the structure of the church will not greatly change. They look for a halt to decline and a move forward in their accepted pattern of church life. The FTW on the other hand sees his coming as only the beginning of change. He will want to help members to see change not as a necessary evil to be indulged in infrequently but as a constant of a healthy church life.

Doesn't discussion about FTWs among the Brethren need to distinguish between two areas which need attention? The distinction has already been made in the second paragraph above. On the one hand there are the questions of procedure—training, recruiting, interviewing, defining the task, financial arrangements, varieties of ministry etc, faced by any denomination. On the other hand, there is the issue of flexibility and freedom in Brethren church life. This goes far beyond the appointment of FTWs. It explains the comment: 'Don't look for a "pastor" as the "answer". He will be most use where the church is already on the right lines.' The 'right lines' must start much further back than this questionnaire!

**Appendix**

49, Nathans Road,  
Wembley,  
Middx  
HA0 3RZ

Subject: Survey of Full-time Resident Workers  
in Christian Brethren Churches

Dear

The number of workers attached full-time to a particular Christian Brethren church has been growing rapidly over the past few years, and the numbers of churches expressing interest in the idea is also growing apace. For a while it has been felt that it would be beneficial as an aid to both workers and churches as well as those thinking of 'taking the plunge,' if more were known about the methods of making appointments, roles adopted and required, financial arrangements used etc.

This survey is the first stage of fieldwork for a wider project on the establishment of full-time worker ministries in our churches sponsored by the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship. By initiating such a survey we are not trying to predict a trend or apply pressure in a particular direction. It is an exercise to learn more of the Spirit's leading in the churches and to help each other share and test our methods so that we might be more effective in the Lord's service.

We are writing to you to ask for your cooperation with this survey. One of the most difficult questions to answer is exactly who is a 'full-time resident worker attached to a church'. For example does 'full-time' mean that 100% of his/her time and attention is given to the one church or if not at what stage does the volume of other activities such as preaching mean that the person is really an 'itinerant with a home base'. We have in the end quite arbitrarily decided that someone who devotes at least three quarters of his/her time to one church should qualify as a 'full-time resident worker'. Should you fall into this category we'd like you to complete the attached questionnaire. Of course an undertaking of this kind is full of difficult and potentially embarrassing questions. It is sometimes hard to understand what is meant by a question and at other times it is only too plain. We assure you of confidentiality, in that, although we have a list of people we have sent questionnaires to, by using a 'third party' reply system we shall not be able to identify any person on the list with any specific questionnaire received back nor shall we know who has replied (unless of course you wish to relinquish your confidentiality voluntarily).

We hope to get sufficient replies to publish the major findings in a suitable format. Since we wish to get the 'fieldwork' completed reasonably quickly, we'd be grateful if you could return the questionnaire by the end of the year.

If you have any queries about the project you can address them to us at the above address or contact us at the telephone numbers below our names.

When you have completed your questionnaire, it should be sealed in the envelope addressed to Derek Ellis.

Derek Ellis,  
Ellis Marketing Research Ltd,  
Queensborough House,  
2, Claremont Road,  
Surbiton,  
Surrey.

Derek Ellis is a full-time market researcher who has agreed to act as a postbox for us. When he receives your envelope he will make a note of your name on his list. He will then send on your questionnaire to us for analysis. If you don't reply within two or three weeks you may get a reminder from Derek, but after that nothing.

But do please help us, because we believe that your experience can be of great value to others too. If too you can help us by giving us the names of people who would qualify for our survey we'd be grateful—just pop them in with the questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Brown  
01-904 7809

Roger Pearce  
01-866 7697



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ANTHONY A. HOEKEMA

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## THE PRESENT POSITION

### Brian Mills

*As secretary of Counties Evangelistic Work for 14 years, Brian Mills gained an intimate knowledge of many Brethren churches, particularly in the more southerly counties of England. With Graham Brown, he wrote the report, "The Brethren" Today (Paternoster Press). Latterly he has worked with the Evangelical Alliance, currently co-ordinating its departments of Evangelism and Prayer and Revival.*

### Introduction

Because of the rather ad hoc way in which information is gleaned from Brethren churches, there is nothing substantial to draw on since the report "*The Brethren*" Today (1980). This paper, therefore, will represent impressions and opinions rather than facts. It will also reflect the observations of those who move among the more open minded Brethren churches, and therefore the picture can only be representative of half of the open Brethren churches at the most.

### Background

A better understanding of the present position may be obtained by looking again at "*The Brethren*" Today and at the CBRF review entitled *Leadership in the Churches* (1980). More recent contributions in *Harvester* (1985) by Neil Summerton on 'Shepherding the Flock' and by Harold Rowdon on 'Who are the Brethren?', are also to be recommended.

In the past four years my own ministry has been in a wider field. Prior to that I had personal knowledge of up to 100 Brethren churches in which I used to speak in a year, and through the extensive contact I had with evangelists and those associated with different kinds of evangelistic work. Since joining the Evangelical Alliance, I visit no more than 10 Brethren churches a year. Therefore I view myself as a kind of consultant—that is one who does the consulting of others who are still what might be termed 'general practitioners' exercising their ministry principally among Brethren churches. I asked a number of them the following questions:

1. In the past 5 years what significant changes have you noticed in Brethren church life in relation to growth or decline, leadership, youth work, charismatic renewal, small group ministry etc?
2. Has the recent emphasis, large and small, on evangelism, significantly affected Brethren churches? Did the training on offer, the emphasis on prayer and the fruits from the preaching bring qualitative or quantitative growth?
3. In your estimation what are the current strengths within Brethren churches, and the glaring weaknesses?
4. What lessons should Brethren learn from contemporary church experience in other traditions?
5. Do you wish to make any other comments, in summary, about current Brethren church life, particularly in relation to full-time ministry?

The structure of my paper reflects these concerns and answers, although not in the same order in which the questions were posed.

### **Church Life in General**

#### **Positive**

Over the past five years, an acceleration of full-time ministry has taken place. Attention must be paid to the fact that in 75% of the churches involved in the Brown-Pearce survey, growth of some kind has been experienced. A small but growing number of churches are prepared to move ahead with changes and new ideas, as the Spirit leads, and the Word guides. For them tradition is not a debilitating factor. Coupled with this is a willingness to develop wider association with other evangelicals and break out of a fortress mentality. This has brought exposure to what God is doing in other branches of his church.

The foregoing factors have resulted in a lessening of the ties with traditional Brethrenism. The more open-minded churches are getting more open in attitude and less recognizable as being in the 'Brethren' mould. Some are positively moving towards a position where they guard their independence to such an extent as to eschew 'denominational' links. They want to be more of the church to the community and less of an expression of one denomination. If this trend continues, it will radically change the face of Brethren churches in the future. The traditionalists will become less and less sympathetic towards the more open until each are isolated from the other.

Meanwhile the more open will continue to find more fellowship with evangelical or charismatic congregations regardless of their denominational persuasion. They will continue to express their 'autonomy' which will put them much more in the free, non-aligned camp of many churches, particularly those which are coming into being as a result of the planting or the emerging of new churches. Inevitably, it seems to me, the remaining

Brethren churches will lose the open flexible reputation Brethren used to have, and become a collection of fellowships, loosely structured, hidebound in tradition, making little or no impact on the world, and therefore not producing growth. A. N. Groves described an apostate church as one 'where no souls are converted under the *public* ministrations' and 'where Christ doth not manifest Himself among them in their *public* character'.

The charismatic movement has profoundly affected assemblies. Whilst many who have experienced renewal themselves have left Brethren churches and are conspicuous by their presence as leaders in other churches, particularly the house church movement, there is, nevertheless, a small but not insignificant number of Brethren churches that still consider themselves within the circle of the Brethren although they have embraced certain practices associated with the charismatic movement. These churches seem to be growing—some dramatically so. The point has been made that, alongside other positive trends, this actually tends to deepen the crisis of identity among Brethren churches.

Among the strengths identified were that Brethren still retain a fundamental biblicism. Potentially the stress on open worship and body life is healthy, even though the outworking of that potential leaves a lot to be desired. Another strength would be the continued good measure of lay participation.

These trends are to be found strongly present in many other church groups and are therefore less distinctive of Brethren churches. The same is true of plural leadership.

## Negatives

Nothing stands still in life, but many fellowships have. Little has changed over many years. But for the loyalty of older members, more would have closed down long ago than have done so.

### *Declining numbers and vision*

The decline of numbers noticed in most Brethren churches and evidenced by a drop in income to most Brethren causes, continues. The old are dying, but the young are not coming in. On the contrary, the continued loss of potential leaders is putting the future leadership of many Brethren churches seriously at risk. A lot of young people, after exposure to wider fellowships at college, move into other evangelical circles once they graduate. Others move out of Brethren churches from sheer frustration. In addition there is still a failure of elders in the older age bracket to prepare the younger for eldership or to make way for them to take on responsibility whilst they have ideas, vision, enthusiasm and energy.

Stagnation, too, is as much a reflection of decline as is noticeable, numerical decrease.

### *Division*

One constantly hears of continuing sagas of division so that one moderate, well-respected brother commented, 'in our area the Brethren churches are being decimated by division'. Personality clashes seem to be the cause more often than biblical differences. Charismatic renewal tends to be blamed for much of the divisiveness—although in many cases it is more the intolerance of the older towards the younger, or vice versa, that is at the root.

### *Doctrinaire outlook*

There continues to be a hard-line attitude in the more traditional circles towards charismatic renewal, cooperation with other evangelicals, the role of women, and new developments in evangelism. One correspondent commented, 'quite a few assemblies seem to suffer from an awful sectarianism which I think is the greatest weakness of the movement these days'. That sectarianism is often associated with a closed mind, complacency, isolationism, rigidity, inadequate leadership, and resistance to change in respect of structures, worship, teaching and youth activities.

### *Specific deficiencies*

What was once seen to be one of the Brethren's strongest points—knowledge of the scriptures, and the ability to teach and preach it now seems to be one of its glaring weaknesses, particularly in the inability to apply biblical teaching to life today. Not only is the quality of teaching available to most fellowships far from satisfactory or from being satisfying (*reflected to some extent in the desire for a more settled ministry*), but I also detect that there seems little of that hunger and thirst after God and the knowledge of his word which is surely needed if that weakness is to be overcome. The average church member has never been helped to think biblically about . . . change.

Other deficiencies include not only a slowness to introduce house groups into church life, but a distinct unwillingness to do so. This slowness may be seen as a reaction to the emergence of house fellowships and house churches, or a fear of cliques, or a fear that the door will be opened to the ministry of women. Groups may be seen as a potential threat to the leadership of elders/oversights, who are sometimes unwilling to face up to the need of having an open mind on things biblical. Many seem to live in perpetual fear of saying anything or doing anything to upset the proverbial applecart. Where there is a likelihood therefore, of 'precious truths' being challenged, or present practices being questioned, or of

honest debate, or of differing opinions—the risk must not be taken. House groups, with their greater informality, are the ideal forum for such things to happen, so are seen as too much of a threat and therefore not to be encouraged. Such a reaction, it should be noted, is based not on biblical grounds, but on pragmatism. Even those churches which do have house groups generally run them like a normal church Bible study, which fails to capitalize on the dynamic of the small group. Some churches would do better to meet in homes since their numerical size is more suited to a home group than to a church congregation. In other churches, home groups are one of the major factors contributing to both qualitative and quantitative growth.

Youth work, generally regarded as one of the Brethren's strong points, is now seen to be a weakness since, as one correspondent commented, 'we are probably a long way behind in this area, particularly in reaching non-Christian youngsters'.

There seems little or no strategy for growth, nor for church planting (apart from a few evangelists) and relatively little in the sharing of resources between fellowships. A failure to develop a doctrine of differences leaves the door open for the devil to sow his seeds of discord and to continue to bring division. A failure, too, to grasp the nettle concerning the ministry of women—sometimes known as the silent majority—prolongs the winter of female discontent and furthermore restricts the use of gifts God has given for the building up of his body.

### Evangelism

The 1980 report, "*The Brethren*" *Today*, revealed that 75% of all Brethren churches claim that preaching the gospel/evangelism/obtaining conversions was one of the top three aims of fellowship—it was by far the most prominent aim. When we look at the involvement and effect of Mission England and Mission to London on Brethren churches, the view has been expressed that those major missions did not affect Brethren churches nearly as much as they ought to have done. Yet twenty years ago the Brethren were one of the most conspicuous groups of churches in terms of involvement and support for Billy Graham's visit.

Despite the fact that leading evangelists and businessmen from the Brethren were prominently involved in leadership at regional and national level, the general impression is that too few availed themselves of the very real benefits to be gained from the wealth of training on offer as part of the missions. Can it be that, characteristically, Brethren are suspicious of training? Quite a few Brethren churches were late in taking advantage of the events, and because they were not involved in all the component parts they did not benefit as fully as some other churches. (Many other churches

not only saw their congregations double as a result of referrals from the stadium meetings in 1984 but have also seen more come to Christ in the year since).

However, some of the trainers were experienced evangelists from the Brethren. They gained a great deal from their involvement in all aspects of the training—church growth, nurture group training, counsellor training—and in relation to post-mission courses. Therefore, the know-how and experience is available to be used by Brethren churches, provided they recognize the need for training.

Those Brethren churches that did fling their weight into all the components of the mission—the prayer, the training, the evangelism—have benefited enormously. As might be expected, they were of the more open persuasion who were willing to cooperate with Christians from other branches of the church in England.

### **Full-time Ministry**

As we are particularly concerned with the role and function of full-time ministries within our churches, I want to give special attention to that subject.

During the past ten years the development of full-time ministry has been one of the most radical changes to have affected Brethren churches in England. Ten years ago there were comparatively few instances of local churches with experience of full-time ministry of any kind. I knew of one each in London, Barnstaple, the Blackdown Hills and Bristol. Other experience of full-time ministries was related to individuals whom God had used to plant new churches and who, for a while, stayed with the congregation that they helped to bring into being. My impression is that there are now between 100 and 150 Brethren churches who have had experience of a full-time worker being attached to them for the bulk of his ministry. (I hope that eventually we can get rid of the term 'full-time worker' which may psychologically give a wrong impression of the true view of their worth). Many saw the appointment of a full-time 'minister' as a panacea for many or all of their local church ills, even if that was not articulated at the time. Not a few sought for a FTW because they were small, lacking direction and were in something of a spiritual backwater, whilst some had thought through carefully and prayerfully the reasons for wanting a resident FTW.

### **The reasons**

The reasons that I would give for this development, although not in order of importance, are as follows:

1. A 'backs to the wall' mentality where survival was the main objective.
2. An awareness that pastoral and evangelistic needs appear to be neglected.
3. A reaction to anti-clerisy may have subconsciously contributed towards openness to full-time ministry.
4. The emergence of church growth teaching which emphasised the importance of full-time ministry as a major contributory factor to the growth of a local church.
5. The increasing isolationism of churches, coupled with a decreasing access to itinerant ministry and a decline in the quality and relevance of teaching given, made many hungry for something better.
6. The Spirit of God's leading in the church in general, bringing about both plurality of leadership, and the identification of full-time ministry.
7. The report "*The Brethren*" Today no doubt helped to accelerate the trend. Often fear of what others think paralyses fellowships from action that they feel desirable. This report, however, showed that 9% already had FTWs and that over a third thought it a good idea for a church to have a full-time pastor or evangelist.

Most of the above reasons—and there are no doubt more—were underlying ones that may not have been articulated. The crisis of leadership has been well talked about for years. The evidence of that crisis is that, because of demanding responsibilities in secular employment, those who are in positions of leadership as elders find that there is little or no time to give to the pastoral and evangelistic needs of the flock.

### **How it developed**

Once interest in full-time ministry began to emerge it was obvious that there was little or no experience to draw on. The lack of denominational structure, coupled with the decline of itinerant ministries which often resulted in useful cross-fertilising of ideas and information, meant that not too much was known about what was happening. However, the experience of Counties Evangelistic Work, who had been tentatively moving towards the practice of evangelists spending at least half their time in fellowship with one local church, as well as having wider responsibility for evangelism, coupled with the regional fellowship structure that CEW had established, meant that they were in a unique position to do some of the cross-fertilising and to be a resource. Some of their evangelists had been used to plant new churches and their experience of full-time ministry in that context helped. Soon, more and more of the existing churches with full-time ministries were identified. Publicity in magazines through articles and the sharing of information helped the thinking to develop.

### **The resources**

These tended to be very much ad hoc. Certain individuals, because of



their experience in the circles in which they moved, became the points of contact. For example, Dr. Rowdon at London Bible College and Dr. Copley at Moorlands Bible College were able to point Brethren based students in the direction of churches which they individually knew were looking for FTWs. Robert Scott-Cook in Bristol, because of the way in which he and others had successfully married their ministries to local churches, became a very helpful and worthwhile sounding board for opinion. The editors of *Echoes of Service* were aware of missionaries returning to this country to stay, and some of these were experienced enough in a local church ministry to be in demand by churches at home. Because my role at that time as General Secretary of Counties Evangelistic Work meant that I was in a position to know what was going on, I found it necessary to start a referral service to link individuals with churches. I notice, too, that the UK 'Aware' section of *Harvester* magazine has recently entered the field and offered its services to help link opportunity with manpower.

The linking service that I ran personally was, in my opinion, not used enough to make it as effective as it might have been. My impression is that few found what they were looking for through the introduction service that I ran. Most seem to find their manpower or their local church independently.

### **Lessons to learn**

Just over three years ago it became obvious, from the experience that some churches were having with FTWs, that some guidance was necessary for those who are still considering the possibility. So I put together a series of questions and comments (see appendix). Those questions were subsequently reprinted in *Harvester*. Because most churches have very little background to go on, and no experience to learn from, a lot of mistakes have been made and a lot of heartache caused. One full-timer in a local church has described the process in these terms: 'The honeymoon is followed by the nightmare, and then by the reality.'

It is clear that some local churches have rushed into the appointment of a resident FTW without giving enough detailed, careful thought about all the implications. Many are concerned about the casualty rate, from all points of view. A few churches have thought through the implications of what they are looking for and have encapsulated that in a job specification. They have allocated a percentage of time for different functions within the fellowship, and have, in some cases, allowed opportunity for their full-timer to exercise a wider ministry for part of his time. On the other hand some fellowships were looking for something on the cheap—little or nothing was offered in the way of regular financial remuneration and

housing was seldom made available. The kind of person they were looking for, it seems, was one who would be in the same kind of position with the fellowship as a caretaker—in that he was expected to be at everyone's beck and call.

A vital area where not enough thought had been given was in relation to authority—in whom was it to be vested? Little thought had been given to what *position* a full-timer needed to occupy in relation to the eldership. Whilst we may maintain that position is not so important as function, nevertheless if a person is given a vital function in the fellowship he may inevitably be looked up to as 'the leader'. This presents an obvious threat for those who occupy a position of leadership and who may not be functioning as such.

Some viewed the appointment in an employment context, opening the door to all the dangers of a 'paid ministry' where the emphasis is on the 'paid' rather than on the 'ministry'. Others, recognising the need for their man to be able to function as part of the body and to be committed to the church and the church committed to him, saw him as part of the leadership team. So his successes and failures were theirs also. In that way the full-timer was less likely to be either a 'messiah' or a 'scape-goat'.

Where a full-timer has been recognised from the start as a catalyst for continuing change and has become one of the 'eldership', questions of 'authority' have not been such a problem. There has been a willingness to change and to share in the decision-making that gives rise to change. Of course some FTWs were appointed with a limited brief—as, for example, a youth worker. Even though he may not be identified as part of the leadership 'body', he needs regular opportunity to share his heart with the local church leaders.

### Conclusion

We need to learn again from scripture and to hear again from God. What does scripture teach us about leadership, authority and service? How did Jesus keep the balance between being Master, Lord and Servant? Can we learn anything about full-time ministry, and particularly paid ministry, from the teaching of Jesus, the sending of the 12 and the 70, the experience of Paul both as an itinerant and as a resident (in Corinth and Ephesus) and also from the experience of the early church? And what is the Spirit saying to the church *today*? What is he wanting to prepare us for? Is he just concerned to maintain the status quo, or is he wanting an explosion of growth? Pragmatism and expediency, compromise and conciliation; these are the terms that are more often associated with decision making in the world today and alas, also in the church. What is needed are men of God, able to hear from God what the Spirit is saying to

the churches. Then the leadership that is given—both full-time and part-time—will be seen as prophetic and pastoral. Prophetic in the sense that God always sees beyond what we can see, therefore we need his mind and will mediated into our circumstances. Pastoral in the sense that God also sees what we need, therefore we need his love to enable the body to be his body to build one another up and to move forward where he leads.

## APPENDIX

STATEMENT TO HELP LOCAL CHURCHES THINK  
THROUGH FULL-TIME MINISTRY

Dear Friends,

Having had the opportunity during the past few years to test the information given, there are some questions I would like to put that may help you in discovering the person of God's choice.

- a) Is there someone in your fellowship who could take early retirement, or withdraw from secular work to concentrate on your perceived needs? Or is there someone (in whom the church has confidence) in other full-time ministry, that could be given a Macedonian call?
- b) Is your church, as a body of Christians, committed to the concept of having a full-time worker? Are they prepared for the sacrifice involved, the changes that will most surely be needed, and the growth that should occur as a direct outcome of a successful appointment?
- c) Have you clearly perceived the work that you anticipate a potential full-time worker is needed for and the role he/she should fulfil? Those seeking for an opening do want to know from the leaders what they are concerned to see done, in specific terms—even down to percentages of time to be spent in different activities. A form of job description should be prepared.
- d) Do you envisage the incoming worker being in the eldership—either from the start or subsequently? If not, in what way is his leadership to be recognised by the fellowship in a way that will not be viewed as a threat to yours? How will his ideas and initiatives have an opportunity to be implemented harmoniously? Will he be seen as part of the team responsible for decision making and able to benefit from mutual care?
- e) Have you worked out realistically the church's ability to support the worker? If this cannot be guaranteed in toto by the fellowship, are there specific proposals that you can make to such a worker to help him 'make up the balance' financially? Is there, for example, any prospect of your co-operating with a nearby fellowship(s) so that a man's time and gifts are shared?
- f) What role do you perceive for the wife of a married full-time male?

Most of these questions are the ones that potential full-time workers expect the church to be able to answer when they meet for discussion about the way forward.

May I ask, from your experience so far, if there are questions that I should incorporate into the full-time workers' questionnaire, or that you would like put to them in general terms in advance of your meeting, to help them be prepared for the situation they might face in serving the Lord full-time among you?

Please note there seems to be no demand for a part-time appointment—at least from those who have been in touch with me over the past 3 years.

I look forward to hearing from you. Any comments you can make to help a

better service to be given will be appreciated. May I say that because of the increasing demand, the service is also becoming quite costly for me to handle privately. It costs me approximately £1 in administration for each individual that is introduced to you by correspondence, whether or not direct contact is subsequently made. I hope you don't mind my mentioning this matter.

With Christian greetings,

Yours sincerely,

**Brian R. Mills**

## THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

### Harold Rowdon

*Harold Rowdon, who is the author of The Origins of the Brethren and a consulting editor of Harvester, lectures in church history at London Bible College. Here he writes not only about the attitude of Brethren in the past towards full-time ministry in a local church situation, but also about the situation in other parts of the world today.*

This brief exploration into the question of full-time ministry in the light of Brethren history will be divided into two parts. The first will look in somewhat summary fashion at Brethren history in this country. The second will look at Brethren practice in other parts of the world. For some time now, it has struck me that the ecclesiastical practices of the Brethren around the world vary far more than we commonly think. That they vary in this country must be obvious to anyone who has moved around *among the different types of Brethren church* in the British Isles. The diversity of Brethren practice around the world is even more marked as I hope to show in the second part of this paper which will draw heavily on the returns of a random survey conducted during the last six months.

#### Brethren practice in this country

Early Brethren practice of the ministry was strongly influenced by their rejection of the concept of the ministry held by virtually all contemporary churches. One of the reasons why they attracted such bitter hostility from other Christians was their uncompromising rejection of what came to be disparagingly described as 'one-man ministry'. Their objection to it arose not only because it savoured of professionalism and was associated with theories of highly dubious validity, such as apostolic succession and 'democratic' election, but also because it simply did not square with their understanding of the doctrine and practice of New Testament scripture. We need not go into details, since they are well-known, and have since been discovered (independently, in most cases?) by many who would not wish to be known as Brethren! The alternative to 'one-man ministry' was not—or need not have been—'any-man ministry'. True, the Darbyite misunderstanding of the church—that structurally it is 'in ruins', is

apostate and lies under God's displeasure, and that any attempt to reconstitute its outward forms and offices is a sign of disobedience rather than obedience—opened the door to the latter phenomenon. Sadly, too many Brethren churches of the more 'open' variety have been influenced by this misunderstanding—sometimes without realizing it—and have allowed ministry to fall into the hands of any vocal male, whether or not he is spiritually gifted.

Early in Brethren history, the concept of 'stated ministry' was canvassed, whereby those who evidently possessed the gift of ministry were recognized as such. The extent to which oral participation in worship and ministry should be confined to them was the next question. For it is evident that Darby held the view that spiritual gifts were distributed by the Spirit to the members of the gathered congregation on what might be called an ad hoc basis.

On the question of resident, full-time ministry, it is not difficult to find examples, from the earliest times until now. Men like Robert Chapman at Barnstaple and Müller and Craik at Bristol were not alone in exercising their ministry predominantly—though not exclusively—in the context of a single church. The tradition was maintained throughout the years. It was particularly marked in the area directly influenced by Bethesda, Bristol. Unity Chapel, Bristol, regularly profited from the ministry of a pastor. Referring to the early years of this church, Keith and Alan Linton, in their valuable account of '150 years of local church work in Bristol' (*I will build my Church*) tell us that 'the pastoral work in the St. Philips district was taken on by the retired Army Officer, Major R. S. Tireman'. One suspects that many a Brethren church owes a similar debt to this kind of resident full-time ministry. During the decade, 1899–1909, G. H. Lang served as pastor to this church, Unity Chapel, though it must be said that he developed conscientious objections to this form of ministry. Copse Road Chapel, Clevedon, is another example of a church, influenced by Bethesda, which continued to engage full-time pastors. There were also resident workers in the Blackdown Hills who devoted all or most of their time to local churches.

Clapton Hall, London, was served by a pastor for some time, J. G. M'Vicker serving in that capacity from 1880 to 1900. New Park Hall, Barking, maintained the tradition until it passed out of the orbit of Brethren churches in quite recent times.

The late G. K. Lowther is an example of a man who combined a wider ministry with a local one of church planting and nurturing, leaving behind him churches at Wareham and Grimsby to bear testimony to the sterling quality of his work.

In recent decades, an increasing number of evangelists, including some associated with Counties Evangelistic Work, have been spending more

and more of their time in fewer and fewer places. Several have seen their role as principally that of planting and nurturing new churches, and in a few cases this has become their almost exclusive preoccupation.

The nature of such single-church ministry is varied. Sometimes, it has been predominantly pastoral, usually combining Bible teaching with pastoral care (as with Chapman, M'Vicker etc). At other times it has been chiefly evangelistic. The emphasis—which may be a combination of several of the above—has varied in accordance with the gifts of the worker and his sense of God's calling.

It has been normal, if not universal, for resident FTWs to be recognized as elders of the church. Certainly, Müller and Craik insisted on their being seen as *no more than* elders among elders. It would probably be correct to say that, where this has not been the case, the church in question has, sooner or later, drifted away from its Brethren moorings.

As for remuneration, the general reaction against current practice was sufficient to ensure that Brethren would set their faces against fixed stipends. Nevertheless, A. N. Groves was one of those who took serious note of the biblical principle that the labourer is worthy of his hire, asserting that 'if a pastor be worth having, he is worth paying, and wherever there is much spiritual work to be done, it is bad economy to let much of his valuable time be employed in mere labouring for his earthly sustenance' (*Liberty of Ministry*, p.51).

It should be apparent from what has already been said that the line between full-time and part-time local work is not easy to draw. All that one can say, by way of summary, is that while itinerant ministry on a full-time or more commonly a part-time, basis, was *generally* characteristic of the practice of Brethren, this was not to the exclusion of local full-time work, sometimes combined with itinerant ministry but not to the exclusion of men who spent the overwhelming majority of their working hours in a locality.

### Brethren practice around the world

With a view to discovering more about Brethren practice in respect of full-time ministry in other parts of the world, I designed a simple questionnaire (see Appendix 1). This was distributed with a covering letter (see Appendix 2) to Brethren known to me in 16 different countries including at least one in each of the continents. Replies were received from 11 countries, in some cases with more than one reply from a country.

The sample was avowedly random, dictated largely by the range of contacts possessed by me. This means that the correspondents were not



fully representative of the Brethren spectrum! Some correspondents felt able to speak on behalf of the whole country; others limited themselves to the area best known to them. The correspondent for Papua New Guinea divided the country into three distinct areas reflecting the variety of local conditions. In New Zealand, The Christian Brethren Research Fellowship was in the process of conducting a thorough survey on this very issue, and my correspondent was able to share some of the preliminary findings. It appears that, in a few cases, the category 'local full-time worker' may not have been interpreted correctly, despite the covering letter of explanation. Or it may be that the difficulty of differentiating clearly between local and itinerant workers—spelled out with clarity in the reply from Peru—may have resulted in slight distortion of the picture.

In view of limitations such as these, no attempt will be made to analyse the returns on a statistical basis. Instead, a number of general impressions will be offered as a basis for reflection, and an attempt will be made to enlarge a little upon the situation in one or two countries where the data obtained is clear and supplemented by explanatory notes or other material.

The first general impression—which should come as a surprise to few perceptive observers—is the extent to which expatriates serve as resident FTWs. Ever since I heard a missionary on furlough reveal the fact that the local church with which he was connected was bereft of pastoral care in his absence, I have suspected that this was the case. It rather looks as if, with the increasing number of believers and churches in countries like Nigeria and Zaire, the role of expatriates in local, church planting and nurturing ministry is now passing to the nationals, while the expatriates are concentrating on more specialized ministries such as Bible school work and Bible translation.

A surprising number of localised workers—national as well as expatriate—seem to be unrelated to local church leadership, though it looks as if this is less likely with nationals than with expatriates. From South Africa comes the intriguing observation that there are many cases of local FTWs being unrelated to the church leadership, few known cases of recognition as elders/leaders and a few known cases of their being 'above local elders as with missionaries'! In Singapore, all known cases are recognized as elders/leaders.

As far as financial support is concerned, it is of considerable interest that, whereas expatriates are almost always placed under the category of 'living by faith', nationals are not so. 'Almost always', because in one case the return indicates a combination of 'living by faith' and 'salary provided by the local church', with the revealing note: 'Elders say they are giving the worker a "thank you" gift, but it is regular and related to family needs.' In a European country it is openly stated that, while there are many cases of expatriates 'living by faith', there are also many known cases

of them receiving a salary provided by the local church, and a few cases of a combination of the two.

With nationals, however, it is rather different. What is good for the missionary goose seems to be less appropriate for the national gander! In some African countries it is common for subsistence farming carried on by the family to make a substantial contribution to a man's support. In the plantation areas of Papua New Guinea, a pastor is able to do several hours employment per day to supplement income. In South Africa, however, one estimate is that 90% 'live by faith'. In New Zealand, while there are relatively few instances of this mode of support, pure and simple, there are many cases of a combination of it with a salary from the local church—doubtless a reflection of the fact that 'salaries are almost never adequate'. Singapore, consistent once again, reports that all resident FTWs receive a salary.

Of particular interest are the benefits and problems thought to have resulted from the use of resident workers. Benefits include an impetus in evangelism and church planting, though this is mentioned somewhat infrequently, except in 'missionary' countries such as Nigeria, Zaire and France. In New Zealand, qualitative rather than quantitative church growth has generally resulted.

More effective pastoral care is rated among the most significant benefits in countries such as South Africa, New Zealand and Singapore. The availability of a 'contact person' (Singapore) is welcomed in numerous instances.

Benefits in the area of leadership are frequently mentioned, Spain, Italy, Singapore and Papua New Guinea being among the countries where this is underlined. From Spain comes the comment that resident FTWs have been able to supply 'local leadership and . . . give time that other elders have little time for, as for many years there were very long working hours'. Continuity in leadership is stressed in some cases (eg Italy) as a particular benefit.

There are surprisingly few specific references to benefits in terms of Bible teaching, though from Singapore comes an allusion to the 'organizing' of Bible teaching, Papua New Guinea (Southern Highlands) bears tribute to the 'quality Bible teaching' made available and British Columbia appreciates the 'consecutive teaching and visitation' made possible. From Johannesburg comes a somewhat cryptic tribute to 'uncompromised ministry'. It is also from South Africa that the one reference comes to the drawing out and utilizing of 'all the gifts' as a result of the stimulus of a local worker.

As for the problems, it is evident, for a start, that not all are committed to drawing out the gifts of others. Some try 'to do most of the preaching'—in South Africa at least. Others, as in Spain, (both expatriates and

nationals, be it noted) tend to become 'pastors of the churches' though in fairness it should be noted that this may result from the tendency of some church members to use full-timers 'for all purposes' (the phrase is from Singapore). In Papua New Guinea the tendency has been noted for church leaders to lean so heavily on the FTW (expatriate or national) that the work is placed 'at risk' should he move elsewhere. Appropriately enough, a warning comes from Italy against creating a class of 'leaders/cardinals'.

In passing, it may be noted that one of the correspondents who commented on the danger of developing a 'one-man ministry' also deplored a local worker who was not serving his own church effectively because 'he was still engaged extensively in other assemblies'.

From British Columbia comes a warning against the FTW who pushes his own ideas and, as a result, takes a church out of the mainstream of Brethren life.

A number of cautions on financial matters emerge from the survey. There is the problem of unrealistic levels of financial support, to which reference has already been made. Financial pressures may be felt not only by the FTW but also by the church, struggling to raise adequate support for him in addition to meeting existing commitments. There is one reference (from South Africa) to a reduction in giving to 'outside missionaries and works' as a result of having to support a local full-timer. In this connection it is perhaps pertinent that the current increase in the number of resident FTWs in this country is running in parallel with a striking decrease in the number of overseas missionaries.

Finally, there are perceptive comments from New Zealand about the problem of roles and relationships. Among the specific issues raised are tensions about the 'proper role in an assembly' of a FTW, particularly when the relationship between the worker and the church—especially its leadership—comes under strain. These are seen to be especially acute when the worker is brought in from another church or is serving, say as a youth worker, and is not an elder. It is with these tensions in mind that the suggestion is made that the nearest thing to an ideal situation is when an existing elder 'goes full-time'.

The need for a proper job description is ventilated not only from New Zealand—where approximately half the resident FTWs have them, though few are satisfactory—but also from British Columbia. Thence comes also the plea that 'a man must have a measure of authority as well as responsibility', the assertion that 'it is important that the full-time worker be part of a team of elders otherwise he does not have the "feel" of things nor is he aware of goals (if any)' and the suggestion that 'a program of internships with assemblies that have full-time workers would prove invaluable'. The problem of recruitment is touched upon only in the comments from New Zealand.

## Conclusions

Perhaps the most surprising thing that emerges from this survey is the fact that, wherever soundings have been taken, local FTWs seem to be a recognized and, sometimes, a widespread phenomenon. Something like 10% of Brethren churches in New Zealand have them and (not altogether without connection in view of the preponderance of New Zealand missionaries who work there!) it is estimated that there is approximately one pastor to every 2–2.5 assemblies in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. In Spain, there are about 60 full-time nationals, as well as many expatriates, who spend most of their time in a local church situation.

The difficulty of drawing a line between local and itinerant workers has already been mentioned. With this in mind, the report from north Peru spells out the situation as far as nationals serving the 60 or so assemblies are concerned as follows: 'Two married men are pastors/teachers in their local churches with little itinerant activity. Five married men have a heavy input in their local churches and are recognized as elder/pastors along with others. In addition all have a substantial itinerant ministry . . . One single man has a heavy input in a local church and is a recognized evangelist in his area. Two single women are recognized as deaconesses and have a substantial responsibility in their local churches, while also extending their ministry elsewhere.'

There are few claims that resident FTWs are universally successful, and none that they are the answer to all our problems! The overwhelming verdict, however, is that they are generally successful, though a few expressed the opinion that they were only sometimes successful. Occasionally, a note of urgency surfaces, as in the statements that 'The old style itinerating has gone for good so something must take its place,' and 'It is about time we Brethren stop fooling ourselves that we can manage the church without a full-time person and be bold enough to call him a pastor if he is fulfilling pastoral responsibilities.'

While considerable variety exists in the use made of local FTWs, their relationship to the leadership and the way in which they are supported financially, the most usual scenario is of a man fulfilling pastoral functions as one of the leaders of the church, in receipt of a salary which needs to be supplemented in many cases in order to provide an income that is roughly comparable with that of the *average* church member. More or less serious problems are likely to occur in the areas of financial arrangements, role definition and relationships with other leaders and the church as a whole. Despite this, there is every indication that the phenomenon—which is not totally new—is likely to increase, particularly in situations where leadership qualities are in short supply or the pace of life is so hectic for

church members that pastoral care and even consistent Bible teaching is in short supply.

As a footnote, it is well worthy of note that the January, 1985, issue of *Interest* contains an article by W. Ross Rainey entitled 'Changing Ministry Patterns' which shows that the situation in the United States of America broadly bears out what has been said in this study.

## APPENDIX 1

*London Bible College, Green Lane, Northwood, Middlesex, HA6 2UW, England*

Dear

I have been asked to prepare a paper for a consultation on local Full-time Workers to be held here in July 1985 under the auspices of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship. It would be an enormous help if you were able to spare the time to answer this questionnaire, and let me have it back, if possible by the end of December, 1984. Very many thanks in anticipation.

Harold H. Rowdon

Please answer questions along a scale of 4, where 1=all known cases, 2=many known cases, 3=a few known cases and 4=no known cases.

1. *To what extent are local full-time workers being used?*

A. *Expatriates*

i. as evangelists . . . . ii. as pastors . . . . iii. as teachers . . . . iv. as pastors/teachers . . . . v. in any other way (please specify) .....

B. *Nationals*

i. as evangelists . . . . ii. as pastors . . . . iii. as teachers . . . . iv. as pastors/teachers . . . . v. in any other way (please specify) .....

2. *To what extent has itinerant ministry continued?*

A. *Expatriates*

i. as evangelists . . . . ii. as Bible teachers . . . . iii. in any other way (please specify) .....

B. *Nationals*

i. as evangelists . . . . ii. as Bible teachers . . . . iii. in any other way (please specify) .....

3. *How do local FTWs relate to the elders/leadership?*

A. *Expatriates*

i. they are unrelated . . . . ii. they are recognized as elders/leaders . . . . iii. any other relationship (please specify) .....

B. *Nationals*

i. they are unrelated . . . . ii. they are recognized as elders/leaders . . . . iii. any other relationship (please specify) .....

4. *How are local FTWs supported financially?*

A. *Expatriates*

i. Traditional form of 'living by faith' . . . . ii. Salary provided by the local church . . . . iii. Combination of i. and ii. . . . .

iv. Any other arrangement (please specify) .....

*B. Nationals*

- i. Traditional form of 'living by faith' . . . . ii. Salary provided by the local church . . . .
- iii. Combination of i. and ii . . . .
- iv. Any other arrangement (please specify) .....

5. *What specific benefits have local FTWs brought?*

*A. Expatriates* (please specify) .....

*B. Nationals* (please specify) .....

6. *What problems have arisen as a result of using local FTWs?*

*A. Expatriates* (please specify) .....

*B. Nationals* (please specify) .....

7. *How successful are local FTWs thought to be?*

*A. Expatriates* .....

i. Universally successful . . . . ii. Generally successful . . . .

iii. Sometimes successful . . . . iv. Rarely successful . . . .

v. Never successful . . . .

*B. Nationals*

i. Universally successful . . . . ii. Generally successful . . . .

iii. Sometimes successful . . . . iv. Rarely successful . . . .

v. Never successful . . . .

- 8. i. What country are you reporting? . . . . ii. Is your report confined to one area? (please specify) . . . .
- iii. Approximately how many assemblies are you reporting on? . . . .

*Signature* ..... *Date* . . . . .

*thank you for persevering to the end!* PLEASE RETURN, IF POSSIBLE BY 1 JAN. 1985 TO HAROLD H. ROWDON, LONDON BIBLE COLLEGE, GREEN LANE, NORTHWOOD, MIDDLESEX, HA6 2UW, ENGLAND.

## APPENDIX 2

## MEMO

30.9.84

A striking feature of the Brethren scene in Britain in recent years has been the increase in the number of local churches utilizing the full-time services of men (and, occasionally, women) in a number of capacities. Some have served primarily as youth workers, others as evangelists or Bible teachers, or pastors, or social workers, or any combination of these.

The relationship of such local full-time workers to the existing leadership varies very considerably. They may be responsible to the eldership, form part of it, or, in one or two cases, act as pastors who are to all intents and purposes distinct from the body of elders.

Financial arrangements also vary—from 'living by faith' to a fixed salary, with or without free accommodation, pension rights etc., or a combination of these.

Some local FTWs are provided with a detailed job description, others have little or no idea of what is expected of them. Not surprisingly, misunderstandings and tensions have sometimes arisen between them and the leadership—even the church as a whole.

In an effort to provide help for the many Brethren churches in Britain which already have such FTWs (perhaps 30–40), others which are moving in this direction, and the men (and women) who already serve in this capacity or feel called to it in the future, the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship is arranging an extended consultation for July 1985. I have been asked to prepare a paper for this consultation surveying Brethren practice in the matter.

Of course there is nothing new about the phenomenon of full-time workers operating in a local church situation. There have always been such, throughout Brethren history. And it is clear—though not generally realized—that they are widely used in church-planting and missionary situations overseas.

It would be enormously helpful to me if you felt able to devote an hour (or less) to prayerful consideration of the attached questionnaire. Please answer as many of the questions as possible, and return it to me at LBC before 1 Jan. 1985. If you could persuade a *national* to complete the second form (independently), this would be a bonus. We hope to send a copy of the published findings in due course.

Harold H. Rowdon



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# BIBLICAL PRACTICES AND PRINCIPLES

**John Baigent**

*After his career in schoolteaching and teacher-training, John Baigent has taken early retirement in order to devote himself full-time to Christian teaching and training, divided equally between his own local church and wider ministry. Here in concise form is his analysis of the biblical teaching relating to full-time Christian ministry.*

## **Introduction**

Is the idea of a resident FTW biblical? That is the basic question that this paper seeks to address. By 'biblical', some people will mean, Is there a scriptural *precedent* for having a resident full-time worker? That will involve us in looking at the New Testament to discover the range and nature of ministry in the early church. The problem with this approach is that the New Testament evidence on this topic is scrappy and incomplete and does not lead to a comprehensive picture of church life in New Testament times. More seriously, it raises the question as to whether the New Testament is intended to provide a blueprint for church life. Are we compelled to copy what was done in New Testament times (as far as it is depicted)? Where scripture is silent on a particular matter, are we at liberty to do what seems best to us? Or should we look in the Bible for basic spiritual *principles* which can and should be applied at all times?

The approach adopted in this paper will be first to look at the New Testament picture of church life and to see what *practices* were current at the time, but then to examine the teaching of the Bible to discover the *principles* which underlay those practices and which should still control our church life.

## **Biblical Practices**

The New Testament depicts a considerable variety of ministries, some largely *itinerant* and others mainly *settled*. This distinction is not absolute, since those involved in itinerant ministry often settled for some time in one place. Perhaps the distinction should be between *local* ministries and *wider* ones.

## Itinerant ministry

Itinerant Christian workers in New Testament times included apostles, evangelists, prophets and teachers. The apostles were commissioned to go into all the world as evangelists and teachers (Mt. 28:19f; Acts 1:8). This might well involve staying or being based in one place for a considerable time (cf Peter: Acts 8:14, 25; 9:43; 12:17; Paul: Acts 11:26; 15:35; 18:11; 19:10; 20:18ff), but ultimately it was a roving commission (cf Acts 9:32; Rom. 15:18ff, 23f). Similarly, evangelists like Philip, whilst they might reside in one place for some time (cf Acts 8:5ff, 40; 21:8), were at the Lord's disposal to be moved about (cf Acts 8:26ff, 40). There is also evidence that prophets, although normally based in one place (cf Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 14:29), might travel about amongst the churches (cf Acts 11:27; 15:32; 21:10). Probably we should also include here men like Timothy and Titus who seem to have been apostolic delegates, based for a time in one place but with responsibility for an area, and yet subject to recall by their apostle (cf 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:15; 4:9, 13, 21; Tit. 1:5; 3:12).

We have little direct evidence as to how these itinerant Christian workers were financially supported or indeed whether they were in fact 'full-time'. It is quite probable that in many cases they engaged in secular employment, probably on a part-time basis, in order to support themselves (cf Paul: Acts 18:3; 20:33ff; 1 Cor. 9:6; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:7ff). On the other hand, 1 Corinthians 9:1–15 implies that at least some of the apostles received their means of livelihood from those to whom they ministered, and 2 Corinthians 11:8ff and Philippians 4:15ff point to the practice of some Pauline churches in sending gifts to their founding apostle.

If we ask the question, To whom were they responsible? we have even less evidence on which to base a firm answer. Clearly each of the Lord's servants is accountable ultimately only to God (cf Rom. 14:4; 1 Cor. 4:2–5), but that need not rule out some responsibility or answerability to other Christians through whom the Lord's direction might well come (cf Acts 11:22; 13:1ff). Peter felt obliged to answer criticisms of his actions (Acts 11:1–18). At the end of their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas reported back to the commending church at Antioch (Acts 14:26f) and then found it necessary to clear their evangelistic message and strategy with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal. 2:1–10). In 2 Corinthians Paul feels it advisable to explain and defend his actions to one of his churches. Presumably Timothy and Titus and other apostolic delegates were answerable to their supervising apostle (cf 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 4:2, 9; Tit. 1:5; etc).

## Settled ministry

Ministry in the local church in New Testament times was in the first instance based on a wide variety of 'charismatic' gifts (cf 1 Cor. 12:7–11) which were apparently exercised in an ad hoc manner (cf 1 Cor. 14:26) but which also led to certain people being recognised as fulfilling particular roles, eg prophet, teacher, healer, etc (cf Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28). In addition, some were appointed to a clearly defined 'office', eg elder/overseer, deacon (cf Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1:5ff).

The charismatically-based roles are unlikely to have involved 'full-time' ministry. If the recognised officials (elders, deacons) followed their counterparts in the synagogue, it is most likely that they also were in full-time or at least part-time secular employment. The main pieces of evidence for the possibility of full-time elders in New Testament times are 1 Timothy 5:17f, 1 Peter 5:2 and Galatians 6:6. The 'double honour' (1 Tim. 5:17) to be accorded to elders who do a good job in either administration or preaching and teaching is clearly a financial remuneration (or equivalent in kind). The fact that elders might be 'greedy for money' (1 Pet. 5:2; cf 1 Tim. 6:5ff; Tit. 1:11) suggests that they received some monetary reward, presumably on the basis of the principle expressed in Galatians 6:6. It would seem, then, that some of the elders, especially those who specialised in teaching, might not have had other employment or, at least, only a part-time job. The paucity of evidence will take us no further.

As with the itinerant workers, those in a settled ministry are in the first instance responsible to the Lord (cf Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:4). But again, that does not necessarily rule out some accountability or answerability to the local congregation and to an apostle or his delegate (cf Acts 20:17ff; 1 Tim. 5:19f).

## Biblical Principles

Even if we cannot be totally sure that there were full-time resident workers in the New Testament church, the practice of having them can be regarded as 'scriptural' if it is compatible with the principles contained in the teaching of scripture.

## Gifts and calling

If we ask, What should determine the nature and sphere of an individual's ministry? the New Testament seems to give us two answers.

1. In the first instance, a person's ministry depends on the gift or gifts that God has given: without the requisite gifts no one is able to fulfil any

spiritual ministry (cf Rom. 12:6ff; 1 Cor. 12:7–11; 1 Pet. 4:10f) and 1 Corinthians 12:28 seems to imply that possession of a gift constitutes a divine appointment to a particular role. It is no doubt expected that this divine appointment will be recognised and confirmed by the other members of the church.

2. In some cases, however, the New Testament speaks of a divine 'calling' to a particular role or office. Thus Paul received a direct call from God to be an apostle (cf Acts 26:16f; Gal. 1:1, 12, 15f) but also an indirect call via others to embark on a missionary journey (Acts 13:1ff). Timothy's call to service came through Paul (Acts 16:1ff; 2 Tim. 2:6), but also involved divine confirmation through prophecy, and congregational recognition through laying on of hands by elders (cf 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14). Elders (and deacons?) were appointed by apostles and apostolic delegates (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5), but this was probably seen as a divine calling and appointment (cf Acts 20:28; NB 'prayer and fasting' in Acts 14:23; cf 13:2f). What part the congregation played in this we are not told: presumably they were expected to recognise and endorse the people as divine choices.

If we then ask, What should determine whether a person's ministry is part-time or full-time? scripture seems to be pointing to two tests.

1. Can the person's gift/gifts be adequately developed and exercised for the maximum benefit of the church in his/her spare time or do they need more time and scope? Will the church suffer or be deprived if the gifts are not used on a full-time basis?

2. Is God calling the person to full-time service in a particular sphere and has that call been received or confirmed by the congregation and its leaders?

### **Elders and deacons**

The job-description of *elders/overseers* is clearly delineated in the New Testament: authoritative leadership and executive rule of the local church (cf Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:12,17; 1 Tim. 3:5; Tit. 1:7; Heb. 13:17); teaching and pastoral care (cf Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11ff; 1 Tim. 3:3; 1 Pet. 5:2f). (For an expansion of these roles, see the excellent series, 'Shepherd the flock', by Neil Summerton in *Harvester* Jan-Nov, 1985). Scripture seems to allow for the possibility that certain elders will specialise in the teaching and pastoral role (cf Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 5:17f) and it is this aspect of the elders' work which may well demand full-time (or at least part-time)—rather than spare-time—involvement. The scriptural principle of plural leadership would seem to entail that such a full-time elder is not regarded as '*the* pastor' but '*a* pastor' (ie that the other elders also share in the pastoral task, although probably to a lesser extent according to the gift

and time available), not as '*the* teaching elder' but as '*a* teaching elder' (ie that the other elders also share in the teaching, if they have the requisite gift and time). Above all, it means that a full-time elder has no independent authority or executive function, but only the corporate authority which he shares with the leadership group as a whole.

The role of *deacons* (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8ff; cf Rom. 16:1) is nowhere spelled out in the New Testament. It would appear from passages like Acts 6:1–16 (where, however, the word 'deacon' does not occur) that the main task of deacons was to act as 'assistants' to the elders (cf Rom. 16:1; Acts 13:5 uses a different word of similar meaning), although their title (*diakonos*—lit. 'servant') surely refers to their relationship to the congregation, not to the elders! In today's church the role of deacon may be differentiated into specific tasks such as treasurer, house-group leader, pastoral visitor, music leader, Sunday school superintendent, youth leader, etc. Most of these roles can probably be fulfilled quite adequately on a spare-time basis, but the youth leader, for example, might well need to be a full-time occupation. Again, it is important that such a full-time deacon should not dominate the corporate leading and decision-making of the deacons as a group.

### **Remuneration and responsibility**

The main responsibility for the financial support of any full-time (or part-time) settled worker lies with the local church (cf 1 Tim. 5:17f; 1 Thess. 5:12f). The scriptural principles are clear: 'the worker deserves his wages' (1 Tim. 5:18) and 'Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor' (Gal. 6:6). Presumably the Lord's command that 'those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel' (1 Cor. 9:14) applies to full-time resident workers as well as to itinerant apostles or evangelists.

The chief point at issue is whether scripture rules out the provision of an agreed periodic payment or salary. Some would say that the basic principle is that the Lord's servant not in secular employment should look directly to the Lord to supply his needs (cf Phil. 4:19), leaving God to guide others as to when and how much to give to him. This arrangement clearly makes demands on the worker's faith, but may thereby be a means of strengthening it; it may also result in unnecessary strains being placed on a couple in a situation where regular income is essential. A compromise arrangement would be where no promise or agreement is made with the worker, but the church commits itself to a regular gift or payment. On the other hand, one might argue that if it is not wrong for a Christian in secular employment to receive a salary, why is it wrong for one in full-time ministry? The basic scriptural principle is that the onus is on the local

church adequately to support those who give the whole or most of their potential earning time to the work of the local church. Arrangements may be worked out according to the particular wishes and needs of the partners involved without infringing any scriptural principles. The important thing is that whatever system is used it should not be so rigid and mechanical that no room is left for the Spirit to direct additional giving or other modifications.

In some circles the Old Testament practice of giving a tithe to the Levites (cf Num. 18:21ff) is taken as a precedent. All members of a local church are expected to tithe and all this money goes to the pastor and/or full-time elders. Giving to other needs both inside and outside the church must be additional to this tithe. This would seem to be a legalistic application of a provision of the old covenant and therefore against the spirit of the new covenant where the motivation for giving is gratitude and joy rather than duty and obedience (cf 2 Cor. 8 & 9). Nevertheless, it is a reminder of the responsibility of God's people to support those who give themselves full-time to the Lord's service.

Closely linked with the question of upkeep is that of direction and accountability. Do scriptural principles allow a contract of employment or should a full-time worker be totally free to follow the Lord's leading as he receives it directly from the Lord? The scriptural answer seems to be that whilst in the last analysis the Christian worker must be free to follow his own conscience and the guidance he receives directly from the Lord, he must also be subject to the local church he is serving and in particular to the elders (cf Eph. 5:21; Heb. 13:17). Scripture does not seem to encourage the 'free-lance' worker who simply 'does his own thing' (cf Acts 15:24). The Christian worker must expect to receive the Lord's direction through others as well as through individually received guidance, and to find that the two are in agreement (cf Acts 13:1ff; Gal. 2:1-10). If the worker is employed by his local church, he should have a contract of employment ('everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way'—1 Cor. 14:40) which should be flexible enough to allow for his own freedom of conscience. In the last resort he can, if necessary, terminate the agreement. If the worker is supported by ad hoc free will giving, he should not regard himself as independent of the direction and guidance of the local church. He is indeed the Lord's servant first (cf Rom. 14:4; 1 Cor. 3:5ff; 4:1ff), but he is also a servant of the congregation (cf Mark 9:35; 10:43ff; Phil. 2:4ff; 2 Cor. 11:8; 13:4; Gal. 5:13).

### Conclusion

It seems, then, that the idea of a resident FTW is biblical, not simply in the sense that some *precedents* can be found in the New Testament picture

of the early Church, but—more importantly—that it is compatible with the *principles* of church life taught in the New Testament. This does not mean, however, that a resident FTW is either necessary or even desirable in any particular situation, only that he/she is scripturally *permissible*. Each church must seek to discover the Lord's will for its own situation at any particular time. A resident FTW should be sought and adopted only if the Holy Spirit so guides and signifies (cf Acts 13:2).



BASIL MEEKING and JOHN STOTT (Eds.)

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## BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONAL

**David Clines**

*A cautionary note is sounded by David Clines, who holds a personal chair in biblical studies at Sheffield University, in this penetrating and questioning contribution.*

These reflections do not have as their aim a reconstruction of the church organization of primitive Christianity as a model or ideal to which our churches today should uncritically conform. Most Christians would allow that the commonality of goods, however precisely it was practised at Jerusalem, was something of a mistake; and many would further concede that even the Pauline instructions for church life not infrequently embodied an uneasy compromise between ideal and actuality and so cannot always have the status of definitive norms in settings remote from their own. But we have to agree nevertheless that in the continuing reformation of the church all the best ideas turn out to be inherent—whether express or latent—in the scriptures.

The tendency of the present paper, for it does not profess objectivity, will be to argue that the institution of professional religious persons in the church is out of sympathy with certain authentic strands in New Testament Christianity. There may be other strands with which it is in harmony, though I do not at present discern them.

### **Power**

Every human society confronts the issue of power. It is in equilibrium to the extent that it has resolved that issue, and at odds with itself while the issue remains open or is opened up by fresh circumstances. Churches are no exception. Christian churches display a wide range of power structures, from an episcopal, hierarchical structure where the locus of power is clear, to the consensual fraternity where its more even distribution leaves its position vague.

The present question is whether any particular mode of power-holding is more in accord with the spirit of Christianity than others. This is in

principle an easy question, for there are clear teachings of Jesus on this very subject. In the narrative of the disciples' dispute over power (Matt. 20:20–28 // Mark 10:35–45 // Luke 22:24–27), Jesus explicitly contrasts the nature of power in secular society with the structure of the community of his followers. His words are subversive of normal patterns of relationships in human society, in which it cannot make sense that the greatest is the slave (Mark 10:43). The question of power is equally addressed in his saying, 'Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' (Matt. 18:4; cf Mark 9:35; Luke 9:48), and in his action of washing his own disciples' feet (John 13:12–26). The Roman Catholic biblical scholar John McKenzie writes:

These . . . sayings are more than conventional exhortations to a vague humility. Children, lackeys, and slaves in ancient society were not the bearers of authority; indeed under most prevailing law they were not even persons. The saying of Jesus not only forbids self-assertion in general, but in particular that kind of self-assertion which is seen in the exercise of authority. Effectively his answer to the question of who is the greatest among the disciples is: no one . . .

If Jesus had wished to say that those in authority should rule with justice and kindness, there are a dozen ways in which this could have been said. But such words as 'rule' are exactly the words which he did not use. The sayings reveal a new conception of society and of authority, which must be formed not on the model of secular government, but on the mission of Jesus himself.<sup>1</sup>

In this respect Jesus stands in opposition to religious social norms of his own day, inherited from the social structures of ancient Israel and the Roman world. But there is not simply a conflict between Jesus and the Old Testament on this issue, for the Old Testament itself displays a radical questioning of traditional power structures. Such questioning is not incidental; it forms the theme, so it may be argued, of the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua—2 Kings) of Israel. That work sets forth the view that every institution of authority that has been known in Israel's history—military leaders, judges, priests, prophets, and kings—even when the institution has been introduced as a divine gift, has failed and has brought Israel into its present condition of exile. The indictment is not against sinful human nature in general but precisely against institutionalized authority, the structure of power. It is striking too that in several eschatological passages about rulership deliberately unmasterful and power-free imagery is used (Isa. 42:2, the servant does not lift up his voice; 50:4–6, the servant is disciple-like, and suffers calumny; Isa. 53; Zech. 9:9, the king is humble and riding on an ass). Equally significant is the absence of any messianic figure from the majority of depictions of Israel's future bliss; even an ideal authority figure is not indispensable in the eschatological society.

It cannot be said that the church, historically speaking, has had any

kind of success in realizing the teaching of Jesus or the expectations of the Old Testament in regard to the issue of power in the church. Every hierarchical system is structurally inimical to this gospel, however nice the people involved in it are. (I say the gospel, and not just the teaching, of Jesus, because his vision of society not organized according to power is itself a gospel of freedom from tyranny.) And every major Christian denomination is structured hierarchically.

A congregationalist church polity—however defective in other respects its adherents may be—is in principle and systematically a rejection of the power structures that are as typical of the Christian church generally as they are of secular society. It must be defended as an authentic expression of what is perhaps Jesus' most fundamental teaching on the church.

I would contend further that faithfulness to that teaching would also inhibit the concentration of power in the hands of any individual within the congregation. To godly servants of the Lord and the church engaged in full-time Christian work it may sound farcical to speak of concentration of power in their hands. But it would be burying our heads in the sand not to acknowledge that professionalism brings power, whether welcome or not, whether noticed or not. The continuity, experience, and growing expertise of the religious professional—whatever benefits there may be—cannot fail to develop his power *vis-à-vis* the congregation who not only (*ex hypothesi*) lack what they have engaged him to provide, but become progressively more powerless in proportion to his growth in power. I hasten to add that every such power-holder worthy of his office will do all he can to mitigate the effects of this syndrome, often with good success, but such mitigation should not cloud the fact that the professional power syndrome is in operation.

Suppose a congregation appoints a youth worker. They do so because they collectively feel unable to do for the young people of the church what they feel should be done. But they are different from another congregation which has the same need and the same incapability because they have money and the others have not. They hire a youth worker who already has experience and training, know-how and skills beyond the ordinary. If he is not very good, equipment he wants and visits he wants to organize will often be denied him and he will be relatively powerless. But if he is expert and successful he will acquire power, power with the congregation for getting what he needs for his work, thus—perhaps without even realizing it—entrenching himself further, making himself indispensable, improving his job security (which he has as much right to as members of the congregation have). The congregation thought it was buying a talent; but it was hiring a man—with a completely different relationship to the congregation from every other member: built upon the cash nexus is the professionalism, which is what the worker has to sell, and what the

congregation is buying. And with the professionalism they have bought a centre of power.

A simpler example: in my church A the last person out switched off the lights and locked the door. You could stay as long as you liked. In my church B we had a (paid) janitor. Everyone had to be out in time for him to catch his bus. You couldn't tell him that you would lock up for him because that would suggest his job was dispensable, that he wasn't worth the money. What's the point of paying a janitor if anyone could do his job? So he had the power to turn people out. He was embarrassed about it. His profession (confirmed by the cash nexus) gave him a power he didn't really want.

### Office

The question here is whether the notion of 'office' in the church is characteristically Christian. By the notion of 'office' I mean the idea that an individual may be so identified with a function in the congregation that he may be said to 'own the job' (as they say in the Australian civil service). If, as I will argue, it is not characteristically Christian it follows, I think, that a 'professional' ministry cannot be either.

It may or may not be relevant that Jesus did not apparently develop offices (or specialisms or titles) among his disciples. There are of course the Twelve, but they do not seem to be functionally different from the Seventy, for example, or from the wider group of disciples—who are often 'confusingly' inseparable from them. The only functional distinction appears to be of Judas, as the treasurer. Other functions seem to be discharged collectively or interchangeably.

Perhaps more to the point is the practice of the Pauline churches (excluding the churches of the Pastorals for the moment). Inasmuch as every function in the church is regarded as a divine charism, no individual can properly be said to function as a professional or expert or official. It is widely believed, indeed, that Paul worked with the idea of at least three offices or orders of ministry, apostles, prophets and teachers (cf 1 Cor. 12:28). This view, however, seems to me mistaken. For not only is it impossible to draw lines of demarcation between these 'offices' (which should be possible, even with our imperfect historical knowledge, if different persons filled different offices), but also the list of 'offices' varies in other Pauline writings (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers, Eph. 4:11; prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, 'contribution', acts of mercy, Rom. 12:6-8). This suggests that what is named are functions, rather than offices—activities that may be performed by different persons at different times rather than the official responsibilities

of designated individuals.<sup>2</sup> Such an understanding seems confirmed by two factors in the context of 1 Corinthians 12:28ff. One is that the matter of differentiation of ministries (functions) has already been raised in verses 4–11 under the heading of *pneumatika*, charismata meant to be practised within the context of congregational worship; these various utterances are directly manifestations of the Spirit (v. 7) and so not the differing contributions of differently designated church officials. The same is likely to be true of the ministries of verses 28ff; though they operate on a broader front (the whole life of the church rather than simply occasions of worship) there is a good deal of overlap and hence parallel (prophecy, healing, tongues). The second factor is the extensiveness of the list of verses 28ff. It is indeed conceivable, in theory, that Pauline churches had designated ‘teachers’ and ‘prophets’, but it is inconceivable that they had ‘orders’ or classes of miracle-workers or tongues-interpreters. The implication is that if ‘miracle worker’ was not an office, neither was ‘teacher’.<sup>3</sup>

I reach the conclusion that in the Pauline church at Corinth (and also in the non-Pauline church at Rome), at least, there were no designated ministers, no bishops, deacons, elders, teachers, prophets, healers as such—though no doubt such functions were being carried out. It is important what we make of this fact. It would be wrong to attempt to ape this particular form of primitive Christianity as an arrangement attested in the New Testament and therefore normative. What we need to know is whether such a structure of a congregation was perceived as embodying some characteristically Christian idea or belief. The answer is pretty plain: the diversity of gifts, their coming to expression in different individuals at different times, and their cumulative value for the life of the congregation, are seen as evidences of the Spirit’s activities. Even routine and inconspicuous functions within the church are perceived as executed through the specific apportionment of charismata. Not all, indeed, are speakers with tongues or healers (12:30), but any can be, if the Spirit chooses. No one is locked into a particular role, no one is designated a foot or hand or eye of the body, everyone may legitimately desire better charismata for they will not be doing someone else out of a job or invading their sphere.

Any congregational structure, therefore, that allocates specific roles to specific individuals is inimical to the operation of the Spirit—whatever else may be said on its behalf. And the more formal that allocation is—say by the engagement of a professional person who is appointed to his office by a religious ceremony of laying on of hands—the more the freedom of the Spirit is restricted and the more the church suffers the ‘routinization of charisma’.<sup>4</sup>

Christianity on this point is sharply discontinuous from the Old Testament. There the religious wellbeing of the community is dependent

upon the activities of a professional religious class of priests who act as mediators between the holy and the secular. Because they belong to the sphere of the holy, they themselves are 'holy', ie belonging to God, in a sense that the rest of Israel is not. In Christianity the distinction between professional, holy persons and the rest of the community is abolished, not by eliminating the category of the holy but by extending it. It is now the community as a whole who are the 'saints', 'the holy ones'. There cannot therefore be any group within the Christian church that corresponds to the Israelite priesthood; it is the community as a whole that collectively performs a priestly function (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). The analogy drawn already in 1 Clement 40—44 between the threefold hierarchy of high priest, priest, and Levite and the threefold Christian ministry points up the contrast between an authentic Christian structure of the congregation and one that lives under the shadow of alien institutions.

We should not of course overlook the fact that the Old Testament itself envisages a re-shaping of structures that is in line with this strand in Christian theology. The realm of holy, for example, is seen in Zechariah 14:20f as indefinitely extensible—as far as farm-horses and 'every pot in Jerusalem and Judah'; this implies the abolition of the distinction, in the new age, between priests and non-priests. The Joel prophecy of the pouring out of the Spirit on 'all flesh', with sons and daughters prophesying, and old men and young men alike (not differentiatedly) receiving visions, is explicitly viewed in the New Testament as characteristic of Christianity (Joel 2:28f; Acts 2:16—18). The idea of specific and regular roles cannot be integrated with the concept of the church as a community sustained by the Spirit.

What about the institution of elders, which, it cannot be denied, was an official role in some primitive Christian churches (though not in Greece or further west so far as the evidence goes)? Luke has Paul and Barnabas appointing elders in churches of Asia Minor (Acts 14:23), we find elders at Ephesus (20:17), and see Titus being commissioned to appoint elders in every city in Crete (Tit. 1:5); and of course the Jerusalem church has its body of apostles and elders (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 22; 16:4). The striking fact is that the institution never receives any theological justification in the New Testament (unlike the elaborate theological buttressing and refinement Corinthian church practice receives). It is a fact of (some) first-century church life, but it does not cohere with any specific Christian teaching. Of course, given that a congregation is governed by elders, it is the duty of those elders to exemplify Christian virtues and of an apostolic teacher to spell out what the requisite virtues are (Tit. 1:6—9). But that is not the same thing as saying that a church without 'appointed' elders is defective. The institution of elders was equally at home in Judaism and in

the local government of Hellenistic cities. 'It was only natural that the church, once organized as a collective body, should adopt the institution', writes M. H. Shepherd;<sup>5</sup> natural, yes, but not necessarily in accord with the radical Christian programme of a new conception of social structures. It had its values (like Paul's vow) in a society where it was a familiar organizational form, but it is open to question whether it has the theological staying-power to entitle it to last into our century.

The main issue here, however, is not the institution of presumably 'unprofessional' elders, but the questionableness of 'professional' roles within the church.

### Provisionality

It is a marked feature of the activities of Jesus and of the early church that an air of provisionality, of interim arrangements, surrounded them. I would suggest that permanent or long-term commitments by the congregation (such as church buildings and church professionals) tend to mask the theme of provisionality that is integral to the Christian message. However 'realistic' it is to assume that the return of Christ is not 'at hand', it is always taken for granted in the New Testament that an expectation of an imminent Second Coming is the only legitimate Christian posture. And however, 'realistic' demands for stability may be, the New Testament is everywhere promoting a shaking of the foundations. It may be forgivable to crave more solidity than the peripatetic rabbi or a roving apostle allowed themselves, but what is forgivable can only be a fault; and it is strange that the church should build into its structure elements that proclaim *sotto voce* that, to be frank, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

Jesus is an itinerant preacher who has foresworn family and home. In this he has no role model, traditional or contemporary (the Cynic travelling teachers can hardly be his model). His lifestyle can only be one deliberately adopted to enmesh the breaking in of the kingdom of God. He, and it, appear now here, now there; he encounters people with the message of the kingdom and calls for instant response. His hearers don't get second chances, time to think things over or bury their dead. The kingdom arrives fitfully, whimsically (according to its own will), presents itself as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and demands the risk of every certainty. Through all his preaching runs a sense of urgency and unsettledness.

As for his disciples, the very notion of sending them out in mission is a reversal of rabbinic practice in the direction of his own unsettledness (rabbis gather disciples into an academy). His mission-charges to the twelve or the seventy, which must also be the model for the Great



Commission of Matthew 28:19f, impose on them the same itinerant life, persecuted in one town and fleeing to the next (Matt. 10:23).

This strand of Jesus' way, even when it is expressed in mindset rather than in lifestyle, remains pervasive in the New Testament perhaps more in evidence than we at first notice. The church is a pilgrim people, without any abiding city here (Heb. 13:14). There are few pages in its scripture that are not composed in an eschatological key, and its finale is not a revelation of the distant future but of things which must shortly come to pass (Rev. 1:1). Even a seemingly down-to-earth tribute to the status quo like Romans 16 lets slip a sentence like 'the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet'—as if to jolt us into recognizing that the only future the church should contemplate for itself is its final destiny.

All this seems a long way from questions of ministry in the church. What I am concerned to urge is that no structures should be developed that by their nature stifle this delicate strain of otherworldliness, unrootedness and expectation beyond the odds that is quintessentially Christian. Efficiency, far-sightedness and orderliness are not perhaps anti-Christian, but neither are they typically Christian. The more we build such concerns into our church structures, the less recognizably Christian our churches become.

1. J. L. McKenzie, *Authority in the Church* (London, 1966), 30ff.
2. 'Paul was concerned [here] with gifts and functions rather than with persons and their status' (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [London, 1968], 295). It would equally serve my point if the 'apostles, prophets, and teachers' are not functions within the local congregation, but ministries within the wider church, and thus itinerant ministries; cf R. P. Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation* (Grand Rapids, 1984), 31f.
3. It is sometimes urged that the first three terms are to be distinguished from the others in being terms for the person rather than the ministry; but this argument fails in the light of the parallels, Eph. 4:11 where all the terms are personal, and Rom. 12:6f, where they are all impersonal.
4. The sociological term is Max Weber's; see, for example, the chapter 'Charisma: Its Revolutionary Character and its Transformation', in N. Birnbaum and G. Lenzer (eds), *Sociology and Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, 1969), 184–96, summarizing his statements in his *Economy and Society* (1922).
5. M. H. Shepherd, 'Elder in the NT', *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, 1962), 2, 73–75 (73).

# THE ROLE AND STATUS OF A FULL-TIME WORKER

Neil Summerton

*Neil Summerton writes as an elder of a church which has had experience of a FTW. An under-secretary in the Department of the Environment, he writes extensively on historical, ethical and ecclesiastical themes.*

The rapid move towards supporting full-time workers in Brethren churches represents a decisive break with tradition. It has not been made without a good deal of heart-searching in most places, nor without encountering serious problems in some instances.

Among the most important questions posed by the development are those of the role of such persons; of the impact which they have upon eldership as traditionally conceived; and therefore of the relationship between the full-time person and the eldership. Other essays in this volume point to the tensions which can be generated by the introduction of FTWs into congregations organized on the Brethren pattern. David Clines has sounded a warning about the dynamic effects which can result from institutionalizing ministry in the church. It is to this crucial group of issues that we now turn.

The principal purpose of this and the next two chapters is to give practical guidance to churches which have not formerly called someone to full-time congregational ministry, for there are a number of real pitfalls to be avoided. The discussion may, however, be of help to churches which are in the process of adapting to such a ministry. It may also be of relevance in other traditions—for example, to recently established 'Charismatic' fellowships which have evolved to the point of supporting people in full-time congregational ministry; and to fellowships which depend, as many congregations of independent church orders do, on periods of full-time ministry interspersed with longish periods of part-time or 'lay' ministry.

## Some underlying assumptions

Implicit in all practical guidance, however, is a framework of principle.

This is important. Tensions between FTWs and other congregational leaders often reflect problems of personality, lack of forethought, insensitivity and, on occasion, incompetence. But frequently there are also fundamental differences of understanding about the nature of Christian ministry and about the connexions between such matters as status, time spent in the work of the congregation, and sources of support in that work.

Elsewhere in this volume an effort has been made to catch the vibrant, multi-faceted, non-institutionalized nature of Christian ministry as it is depicted in the pages of the New Testament. It may be argued that one of the central issues facing any congregation in our day, *whatever the practical form ministry may take in it*, is how to recapture (usually) or retain the authentic biblical pattern of ministry. Specifically, the question which elders of Brethren churches are usually conscious of asking is how can a full-time ministry be introduced without cramping the opportunities for charismatic ministry and without professionalization. Those embarked on a full-time ministry may, however, see things from a quite different perspective. How can they exercise a spiritually effective ministry when there seem to be important constraints imposed by institutional tradition (of whatever kind)? These questions need, in my judgement, to be considered by reference to a number of points of principle.

First, concern to preserve the biblical character of ministry against professionalization should not lead us to undervalue legitimate authority and spiritual leadership when exercised with the humility of true servanthood. It is in the nature of fallen man to abuse power, but it does not follow that scripturally all exercise of power is wrong. Any ministry entails the exercise of *accepted* power and authority: its whole purpose is to *do* things for individuals or the congregation as a whole, and the recipients of ministry have to submit themselves to the person who ministers; they have to be willing to respect and be influenced by that ministry.

Jesus himself recognized the legitimate authority of the Roman procurator (Jn. 19:11) and Paul that of the chief priest (Acts 23:1–10). And it seems clear from the apocalyptic writings that in the Jerusalem of God, of which the church is the precursor, authority will be exercised subordinate to God (see, eg, Rev. 11:16; cf, Matt. 19:28) though the reign undoubtedly has a shared character (Rev. 22:5). Similarly, spiritual leadership, mediated through human agency, is accepted in the New Testament as in the Old: it is difficult to conceive that Jesus did not consciously invest Peter with authority as a leader among the disciples (Matt. 16:13–20). His position seems subsequently to have been recognized by the disciples (Acts 1:15–26) and by Barnabas and Paul (Acts 9:27; Gal. 1:18; 2:2, 9–10—see also Acts 11:1–18 and 5:6, 22). Paul's own leadership in evangelistic endeavour is undeniable; and his position and

authority as an apostle were vehemently defended in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Followership is of course essential to effective leadership: there must be those who are prepared to recognize the function of the leader. And function (ministry) plus recognition can be regarded as creating positional authority, ie, office.

Certainly, we must beware of institutionalization and professionalization in the church. There is no benefit in recognizing the office of elder or pastor, for example, if they are occupied by those without the necessary spiritual gift for the tasks. But it goes too far to infer that, lest an individual should, through gift and opportunity, exercise greater power and influence in the congregation than any other individual, he should restrain himself from doing more for the congregation than others can. Where a Spirit-filled ministry is capable of being exercised, surely it should be encouraged and recognized to the extent that the Lord prescribes in the particular case.

Moreover, if pastoral and doctrinal authority is to be exercised, the exercise of the requisite spiritual gifts must be acknowledged as authoritative, though I agree that there should be considerable latitude to vary the precise pattern of such authority according to gift and need in the individual congregation.

It must also be remembered that, even without office and a full-time maintained ministry, charismatic gift itself is institutionalized wherever it purports to be exercised by those who have neither the gift nor the presence of the Spirit in sufficient measure for the purpose. Brethren, please note: our history amply demonstrates that neither refusal to recognize office nor refusal to support a settled ministry in the home congregations make us proof against the exercise of gift in the letter but not in the Spirit!

Second, the following chapters assume that there is nothing in scripture which prevents an individual who is exercising a resident ministry in a local congregation from being supported by that congregation and/or others. This matter has been discussed elsewhere in this volume. Suffice it to say that it is incontrovertible that the apostles enjoyed the right to be supported by others in their ministry (1 Cor. 9:1-12a) and the Lord appears to have extended that right also to the evangelist (Matt. 10:9-13). It is not obvious why that right should be regarded as confined to the ministries of the apostle, the evangelist and the prophet, rather than being available in relation to any ministry in the church. Nor is it obvious why the right to support should be confined to those who are itinerant in their ministry and not available to those who, for the time being, are stationed in a particular congregation. The apostles themselves were resident in particular congregations for lengthy periods. The twelve remained in Jerusalem during the early years of the church and it is a fair inference that

they did not support themselves. Paul was himself resident, for example in Antioch, Corinth and Ephesus, for periods (though he did not normally exercise his right to support—see Acts 20:33–35 and 1 Cor. 9:12b–18); and it appears that his delegate, Timothy, was similarly resident, probably in Ephesus. And 1 Timothy 5:17–18 contains a strong, if not absolutely certain, implication couched as a principle, that certain (teaching) elders could be supported in their ministries. The same chapter implies a duty to support enrolled widows in their ministry (vv 5–6).

Third, if an individual may receive financial support in the exercise of his or her ministry, what are the conclusions to be drawn about the implications of that support for the individual's status and position in this congregation? Paul's practice of refusing to exercise the right of support leads to some relevant observations. Paul normally sought not to be a charge on the church to which he was ministering, probably for a mixture of reasons of principle (freedom of utterance and compassion) and prudence. Yet his authority and status were in no way impaired *since they derived not from the nature of his support but from his gifts and position as an apostle called by God*. On the other hand, it is clear that Paul's ministry was for him the *priority* in his life: at the stage with which we are concerned, his calling was to be an apostle, not to be a tentmaker—the latter task was simply incidental as the means of his support.

The conclusions to be drawn are that standing and position in the congregation do not derive from whether or not a man or woman is supported in his or her ministry by the local congregation or the church at large. Nor do they depend on whether or not their ministry is full-time or part-time (in one sense, Paul's was part-time). They depend rather on the calling, gifts, ministry and priorities of the individual concerned. But it follows also that if, for example, elders have other *callings* (whether within the church or outside it) which conflict with their calling to eldership and take prior claim over it, then there must be serious questions about their status in the congregation as against those who regard their ministries in the local congregation as their priority calling.

These conclusions are of much relevance in considering the practical problems associated with the role and impact of a FTW in a congregation which subscribes to plural leadership in the form of eldership of the kind commonly found in Brethren assemblies. It is to those practical problems that I now turn.

### **Priorities in calling a full-time congregational worker**

In Brethren churches which have not previously called a resident FTW, the leadership and the congregation may well have to invest much time and emotional energy in deciding to seek such a person. Hard biblical

study and discussion may be needed to convince those who are anxious that FTWs may not be consistent with either scripture or the traditions of the elders. Even those who have no objections of principle may be inclined to think that the need for a FTW reflects poorly on their own commitment and performance: 'if we were doing the job properly, we would not need a full-time person'. Such a statement is in itself revealing, because it suggests that calling a full-time person is in essence a second best, rather than the positive will of God and therefore an opportunity to be grasped. There may be something in this (as a matter of fact it has been observed in the United States that older, maturer congregations tend to need more full-time staff than younger, less mature ones—this may be a function of the general spiritual fervour and commitment of the congregation at large!). But such attitudes are in themselves relevant to the issues of the role of a FTW and his or her impact on the church.

If there have been intellectual and emotional struggles in coming to terms with the need for a FTW, once the decision has been made, there may be a temptation to relax and think that it is now only a question of finding someone to accept the position. More probably, the tasks of deciding whether to seek a full-time person and discussion of the possible role of such an individual will be undertaken in parallel rather than *seriatim*. There is then a danger that in the *mêlée* of discussion the issue of principle will be the focus of attention and thought rather than the more practical questions of role and selection. In either case, neglect of important preliminaries to the task of selection, and of the process of selection itself, may prove to be a recipe for disaster. It is essential that both the elders and the congregation devote adequate time and attention to these matters.

### **Prayer and guidance**

Some may think that the suggestions in this chapter and the next place an excessive emphasis on rational analysis. That is a serious point which deserves a two-fold response. First, the principles suggested are simple, even if couched in the language of modern management; using different words, they have no doubt often been applied in the history of the church. More important, however, is the point that no congregation can live other than by the grace of divine revelation. It remains true that in the past simple and unlettered men and learned ones alike have received direction from God as to who should undertake ministry among them and in what ways (cf. Acts 13:1–4); and in the absence of such leading from the Lord, all the analysis and modern management techniques in the world will lead to nothing, or, worse, to choices which are wrong. The task is to find the right person for the right role. So the first and continuing requirement in

selecting a FTW is for prayer for revelation as to the role which the FTW ought to discharge and the individual who is God's choice. Without this prayer the effort invested in defining roles and in selection may turn out to be an exercise of the flesh. In prayer, prophetic guidance and utterance of knowledge should be sought for the analytical task to which this chapter now turns.

### **Considering motives, objectives and needs**

In an environment of prayer and dependance on the Lord, the congregation should try to analyse its motives and objectives in seeking a FTW, and to assess its present circumstances and needs, with the aim of identifying the optimum role for the person being sought. The process of identifying the role has a three-fold aim. First, it should help to prepare the church and the elders for the presence among them of a FTW. Second, it should have the goal of drawing a template or target to assist in the search and selection. Once a fairly precise definition of the role has been drawn up, it will then be possible to ask what kind of person would best be able to fulfil this role—what age, what sex, what personal qualities, and above all what spiritual gifts will the person need in order effectively to discharge the responsibilities proposed? Third, if the role is properly defined, a number of practical points will probably become clearer as a basis for discussion with possible candidates: the accommodation, equipment and support services which the congregation can expect to have to provide, and the likely terms of engagement (hours, salary, etc.). The aim should be to draw up a document specifying the proposed role as a basis for advertisement (if that is intended) and discussion with possible candidates. In turn, that document can form the basis of a detailed job specification which, when a choice has been made, should be of help in two ways. Whether or not the FTW has recently been a member of the congregation, he or she can reasonably expect to know in detail what is or is not expected by the church. Equally, such a document should be made available to the church: as some may have had questions of principle, or about the merits of the person being called, the congregation should be in no doubt about what the FTW has been asked to do. The congregation should also be left in no doubt about what is expected of them by way of practical and spiritual support. If there are widespread misconceptions in the congregation or in the minds of key people on these matters, there will be a ready source of misunderstanding, and criticisms are likely to emerge that the FTW is doing too little, too much, or the wrong things; or that the congregation is failing to meet its obligations to the FTW either practically or with respect to the role promised to him or her. The result will be unhappiness, mutual suspicion and tension, and insecurity for the FTW.

Such emotions can be self-reinforcing so that a spiral reaction sets in, ending in disaster for the relationship and perhaps, in a very practical way, for the FTW.

### **Defining the role**

Elders and congregation should not underestimate the difficulty of defining the role in sufficiently clear terms to give the outsider an idea of the tasks which the particular congregation has in mind. Self-discipline is required to produce a satisfactory definition at a sufficiently early stage. In the Brethren context, the decision to seek a FTW may reflect not so much of the definite call of God (or of a recognition of natural progression for one individual within the particular church), as a rather unspecified feeling that the church is not making the progress which it should do and that those currently undertaking the ministry of the church are not meeting all the evident needs either quantitatively or qualitatively. Added to this may be the sense of guilt about poor performance already noted, or that the concept of a FTW in a single church situation does not conform to the practice of earlier years. This is an inauspicious basis for the innovative step of calling a FTW. It is likely to generate on the one hand unreasonable expectations of the results which a FTW might achieve; and on the other hand conscious or unconscious resistance to his or her work. It is probably much easier for a younger, lively church which has recently come together as a congregation to decide that the time has come for one of its number to be set aside full-time for work within it. Conversely, in the mature, second or third generation, it may be easier for a newcomer to make progress as a FTW: an insider may be too sensitive to, and therefore hamstrung by, its traditions.

This inauspicious background would in itself be sufficient reason for careful thought about the proposed role. But there are two further considerations. First, in the absence of careful thought, minds may move quickly to the nearest analogy, that of the pastor or minister in nonconformist churches of other denominations. Second, some of those seeking positions may have very consciously in mind not only that role but the relationships of leadership which are normally found in non-Brethren, nonconformist churches. (It may be that the existing courses available in Bible colleges tend to reinforce this view, ie, that there has been insufficient adaptation of attitude and course content to new views of ministry which are gaining acceptance widely in the churches.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, if the FTW is to be integrated successfully into Brethren churches in this country without losing the best of the traditional view of the nature of ministry in a local congregation, it may be necessary to establish training arrangements in which full-time and part-time workers and 'lay' elders can be trained together.)



Of course, it may well be that the immediate need of some churches, if their present decline is to be reversed, is precisely for an individual to discharge the role of the traditional pastor or minister of other nonconformist churches: the requirement for effective leadership, pastoring and teaching are so great that that is the best way of seeing that they are met. But Brethren churches have a very different tradition of ministry and great risks may be run if a congregation and a FTW slip into a relationship with concepts of role which are at wide variance. If this is the need, everyone in the church should be aware of it and consciously accept it, even if they have difficulty in embracing it emotionally.

But there are many other roles to be discharged in the live and growing congregation and the wide view of ministry traditional in the Brethren is consistent with a variety of role and combinations of role for the FTW. It may be that the full-time resource can best be applied in a role not traditionally associated with full-time workers in Christian churches, or at least not traditionally occupied by full-time people when the traditional role of the full-time person is being discharged by part-timers or by people in full-time secular employment. This last arrangement, and the relationships which it implies, may often be the norm in churches which are appointing a FTW for the first time. There are good grounds for believing that it can prove to be a very difficult relationship indeed. Because of common conceptions of the meaning of full-time service in a church, it requires considerable maturity on the part of the FTW and his 'lay' masters if the arrangement is to be fruitful—though it is perfectly common in secular circles and seems to provoke few problems there, eg, in local authorities (traditionally at least), in trade unions, charities and trusts for all sorts of purposes (perhaps it is a case of the children of darkness being wiser after their generation).

### **Analysing the need**

All this argues for careful prior analysis by the elders, in co-operation with the congregation, of the tasks which might best be discharged by a FTW. This should be done systematically by the elders, perhaps by arranging that each be asked to identify in writing the area of activity in which full-time assistance is most needed. Such a procedure might also be extended to the congregation—provided that the elders are prepared for some surprises about the congregation's perceptions of their current performance!

In any case, it may be helpful to analyse the congregation in two ways. First, the elders could list the character and quality of the spiritual gifts available in one and another member of the church, and to assess the manner and effectiveness in which those gifts are at present being used, and in which it might be practicable to use them in the foreseeable future. In effect, this represents the preparation of an inventory of existing gifts

and their deployment and possible deployment. Part of this task should be to identify the gifts which are lacking in the congregation, or which, though not actually lacking, cannot for whatever reason be deployed in a sufficient way to meet the needs of the congregation now and in the future. This step needs careful thought and prayer as it is normally easier to identify what is there than to identify what is missing.

Second, in parallel, the elders could consider the ways in which they believe the Lord is calling the church to develop in the next five years. What are the conditions required for such growth? To what extent is that development and growth likely to be constrained by lack of gift, or lack of time, commitment or personal circumstances (legitimate or illegitimate) on the part of those in the congregation who do have the requisite gifts?

Analysis of these two kinds should give the elders three options in defining the role of the future FTW. Either they may identify areas of gift which are lacking in the congregation and associated tasks which are not being discharged effectively or at all for lack of gift or available gift. Or they may decide that the priority is in the development of some areas of work in which there is ample gift, but where supplementary or substitute gift is needed. Or they may decide that the need lies in some appropriate combination of these approaches. In practice, some combination is the most likely outcome.

The first approach is bound to have attractions for churches with the Brethren tradition of ministry, because it implies that the FTW will be an *addition* to existing gifts and ministries of the congregation and will enable present members to continue to play a full part in the life of the congregation. But the gaps in a church's ministries may take a very odd shape, and result in strange and incoherent groups of tasks and an imbalanced and unsatisfying job for the FTW. While the 'lay' member may be able to tolerate a strange collection of tasks the full-time person will probably need a more coherent schedule of tasks.

The second approach will need careful and tactful handling in advance by the elders and a clear-eyed understanding of the probable impact of a FTW whose remit is to replace or duplicate existing gifts and tasks, especially as the people chiefly affected will be likely to be within the eldership itself. More will be said about this point later. But in the long run this approach may imply that some elders must be prepared to accept a very different leadership role in the church, and perhaps even that they should stand down altogether. This possibility needs to be understood and embraced from the start. It has moreover to be recognized that, even if the accent is upon seeking to give the FTW a role and tasks which are supplementary to those already discharged in the congregation, in practice the outcome is virtually bound to entail some replication of existing gifts and tasks.

The process of calling an individual to full-time work in an independent church can be fraught with difficulty and at best is likely to be lengthy. Careful analysis on the lines suggested above will take up precious time. But it can be a sound investment. In some cases, the result will be a definition of role which is rather different from that originally proposed. In other cases, it may even be concluded that the resources for the life and growth of the congregation already exist, whether or not a full-time worker is found. Careful review of the gifts and other resources of a congregation can be a valuable procedure in itself.

1. See Lyle E. Schaller, *The Multiple Staff in the Larger Church* (Nashville, Tenn., Abingdon Press, 1980) 59–61. There is much to be gleaned from this book about the opportunities and problems of deploying FTWs in local congregations.
2. As evidence of the extent of this change of attitudes, see John Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry* (London, CIO Publishing, 1985) especially 115–131.

# **PATTERNS OF FULL-TIME CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRY**

**Neil Summerton**

It is, in my judgement, imperative that the task of defining the role of the FTW should be undertaken with sufficient breadth of thought, or divinely-intended opportunities may be missed.

## **Possible roles and tasks**

There are in fact a wide variety of roles and tasks which a resident FTW might discharge within a congregation. Each has its own implications for the gifts, age, character, personality, circumstances, and even sex, of the possible incumbent. The following summarizes only the main possibilities, with some specific comments. It will be seen that some are obviously closely related to specific spiritual gifts suggested in the New Testament, while others require a wider range of gifts. The roles here described seem to me to be the main possibilities, but the list is not intended as exhaustive.

The first four are tasks which are closely related and which many churches may be inclined to regard as their chief priority for full-time assistance.

### *Teaching*

Many congregations recognize a need to move away from the fragmented teaching ministry which has in the past resulted from the practice of sharing teaching widely not only among members of the congregation (often, it appears, on the principle of Buggins' turn next) but also from neighbouring churches. Even where a church wishes to concentrate teaching in the hands of fewer gifted individuals among their own number, there is often a lack of people who can give the time to study and preparation which a more systematic and pastoral ministry requires. Moreover, Brethren churches have generally tended to define teaching much too narrowly, as that done from the platform in the full meeting of the congregation. There is, however, an important and sadly neglected

scope for nurturing young Christians and training those of all ages for individual tasks and leadership of specific activities in the congregation. As this generally requires teaching of small groups, and content closely adjusted to the immediate need, it is time consuming and often beyond the resources of elders and others in full-time secular employment.

### *Pastoring*

Many Brethren churches, and certainly elderships, would feel that there is an even greater need for more systematic, regular, prompt and effective pastoring to meet the varied and complex needs of the average congregation. It is this that an eldership of individuals in full-time employment often recognizes that it is least able to provide.

### *Strategic thinking and leadership*

Elderships, especially those in smaller churches, often lack individuals among them with the prophetic, visionary gift to see the way in which the Lord wishes the particular congregation to develop, and with the wider experience to know what developments in other churches are proving profitable for life and growth there. This gift and experience can be critical to the fortunes of a congregation and to that congregation's view of the competence of its eldership. It can sometimes be provided in respect of a number of churches by an itinerant pastor and teacher who is in an apostolic role with respect to those congregations. But in other circumstances, this may be a vital contribution to be made by a FTW.

### *Administration and co-ordination*

In other congregations, the central problem may not lie in the area of vision but of *implementation*. There may be no shortage of ideas as to what ought to be done to encourage life and growth, and no shortage of plans to put those ideas into effect. But the elders, deacons and others in the church may lack the time and energy to carry them into effect, as well as effectively to discharge all the other important tasks that appertain to these positions. This entails more than simple secretarial or clerical assistance, though some of that may be required. It may, for example, be decided that the teaching ministry should take such and such a shape, with a blending of contributions from gifted individuals inside the congregation and itinerant preachers as well. But the plan in principle and detail must be communicated promptly and effectively to the people concerned in order to carry it into effect. Or there may be a plan to develop a particular sort of outreach activity requiring the identification, co-ordination and training of

a number of individuals with suitable gifts within the church, and the plans fallow for want of an individual to invest the time in carrying it into effect. And, in addition, there is the blending of plans into a coherent whole and their presentation to the congregation as such. (Communication within the congregation is a role in its own right which is not considered in the present listing).

### *Evangelist*

Since one of the prime reasons that Brethren assemblies are turning to FTWs is to reverse their declining fortunes, many may incline to give priority to the role of evangelist in order to secure a new movement forward of the congregation and growth in numbers through conversion. This may not necessarily be a wise decision where the fundamental problems of the congregation lie in spiritual areas which call, as a precondition of numerical growth, for the gifts and roles already described. But where it is considered that evangelism is the appropriate role in which a FTW should be called, it is worth defining more closely the precise types of evangelistic task which are contemplated, as this should help in the identification of an appropriate person. There are at least three functional possibilities, though a particular individual may of course be gifted to work in all three ways.

*A 'preaching' evangelist* This is a role familiar in Brethren assemblies in the past. The main task of such an individual would be the direct proclamation of the gospel in meetings specifically convened for that purpose, ranging from meetings of the mission type convened by and on behalf of the congregation as a whole, to coffee mornings and other house meetings. When this pattern of evangelism is followed, the onus of contact with non-Christians rests very much with individual believers within the congregation and it follows that the evangelist or someone else must be capable of motivating the congregation as a whole towards personal witness and evangelism. Traditionally, such 'preaching' evangelists have maintained an itinerant ministry and it seems doubtful how far a ministry of this type could be concentrated in a single congregation unless either that congregation forms a base for a geographically wider evangelistic ministry for a considerable portion of the year or the ministry is combined with some other ministry within the congregation, eg, a pastoral role.

*Neighbourhood, community evangelism* An individual with suitable gifts and inclinations (which would need to extend well beyond preaching) could well maintain a resident ministry in a congregation if his or her role were to spearhead a programme of pre-evangelistic and evangelistic

activity in the neighbourhood. Typically, this might entail analysis of the neighbourhood and its spiritual needs, the devising of plans of action with suitable mechanisms for contact (eg house to house visitation, community action, and house meetings for neighbours and other contacts, as exemplified by Robert Scott-Cook's methods in Bristol<sup>1</sup>), and the nurturing of converts in groups separate from the main meetings of the church so as to provide the necessary teaching and social bridge into the full fellowship of the church. This is in essence a task of church planting, and the FTW would require the appropriate gifts. Insofar as it is carried out within a single congregation, it could be regarded as a task of replanting the congregation from within (very necessary in the case of some fellowships which, though considerable in numbers, may in effect be moribund evangelistically). In many areas, there may be opportunities for such a FTW to lead personnel from a live congregation in church planting operations nearby, eg, on an unchurched estate or in church buildings (Brethren or otherwise) which are in danger of falling out of use. In essence, this is a task of planting satellite congregations, and may again be combined with, say, a pastoral role within the base congregation.

*Youth evangelist* A further distinct evangelistic task, which might be especially suitable for a young FTW with definite evangelistic gifts, would be a remit to spearhead youth evangelism in the congregation, based either on existing youth clubs or new activities created for the purpose.

#### *Youth pastor or leader*

A congregation which has extensive youth activities in terms of youth clubs and outreach, or which is well placed to develop such ministry, could consider the appointment of a full-time youth leader or worker. This is specialised and demanding work for which some kind of appropriate training is desirable. To be effective, such clubs need to operate on more than one evening a week, and preferably on virtually every evening. Such is the character of this work that it is not reasonable to expect an individual carrying other heavy responsibilities in a congregation to undertake it. Often in the past in Brethren churches, youth work has been undertaken by, eg, a teacher in his or her spare time, and he or she has exhausted himself or herself in the process. It is therefore a suitable role to be undertaken on a full-time basis if growth and development is sought. Where there are a number of teenagers and young adults in a congregation, or where youth activities are successful in bringing young converts into the fellowship of the church, a full-time youth worker can be expected to grow into a position of leadership in respect of younger church members who will naturally look to him or her for pastoral care. It will be

wise, therefore, to look for leadership and pastoral gifts in a youth worker, as well as evangelistic ambitions and technical competence and training in youth work.

### *Community care—social worker*

In modern conditions in which many people have no natural disposition towards the Christian faith and church attendance, an essential precursor of effective evangelism is action to establish a congregation's credentials in the neighbourhood. This can take a number of different forms from involvement in the activities of a local secular community centre, through practical advice on the day-to-day problems which people may have with housing, employment and social benefits, counselling, to full-scale community care. Some work of this type may well draw on expertise available in the congregation as a whole (eg legal, accounting, or local government knowledge) but its effectiveness will be greatly enhanced if it can be led and organised by a full-time person with relevant training and experience.<sup>2</sup> And in the larger congregation the needs of elderly and sick members and others with practical needs may be great enough in themselves to take up much, if not all, the time of a full-time person; in that case, the role would in essence be that of a full-time deacon.

### *Musical director*

Some very large non-Brethren congregations (mainly Anglican) have found the burden of directing worship so great that it has proved worthwhile to support someone on a full-time or part-time basis to co-ordinate this aspect of congregational life, particularly the musical element, but embracing other aspects as well. In larger non-Brethren churches (200–300 members or more) in the United States it is common for a 'Director of Music' to be appointed as a supplementary full-time or part-time staff member alongside, eg, the Director of Christian Education (ie the individual responsible for the Sunday school, including adults, and training programmes of the church). Such developments are likely on the one hand to strike fear into the hearts of many people of Brethren background in the UK and on the other to suggest how limited are our tentative moves towards a single FTW in our congregations. In this context it is significant that at least some recently formed Charismatic fellowships are already moving towards the support of more than one full-time person for ministry within the home congregation.

Three further possible roles for a full-time or part-time supported worker are largely self-explanatory:—plant engineer/caretaker; secretary/clerical assistant; and treasurer. Where a congregation grows to large



numbers, especially if it finds it necessary to acquire substantial buildings and equipment, the pastoral leaders and deacons may well need at least part-time assistance and support to relieve them of day-to-day care for routine matters and to save them from wasting precious time in, for example, doing their own typing. Indeed, on the last point, once a FTW has been appointed, an early step should be to provide part-time secretarial assistance (and, quite apart from the appointment of a FTW, many elderships would be assisted if those with secretarial skills were to offer them assistance or, if necessary, their congregations were to fund such assistance).

### **Drawing a job specification**

A FTW may well be able to combine more than one of the different roles summarized above. But it is scarcely practicable for one person, however gifted, to combine more than two or three at once and discharge the tasks attaching to the role in a workmanlike manner. By the very nature of things a one-man ministry is bound to be stunted in comparison with the vision of congregational ministries which we can glimpse in the pages of the New Testament. In any case, such a one-man ministry is only likely to occur in the last years of the 20th century in the West because congregations allow it to happen by neglecting their own contribution to ministry.

The shortcomings of the existing ministries in many congregations considering calling a FTW may well, however, present problems of choice. The elders may be able to see at least two or three major roles for such a person, and each of the main groups within the congregation may be inclined to press the claims of the role which it, for its own reasons, considers should be given priority. A moment's reflection, however, leads to the conclusion that it is not desirable to try to advance on all fronts at once. For, as already noted, each of the main roles described above has different requirements in terms of spiritual gifts, personal characteristics, experience, etc. An eldership must select between the various possible roles so that it may search for an individual who is appropriately fitted to discharge the chosen role in the particular congregation. Or, if it has an open mind as to the role, it must recognize that it is looking for different types of person for the different roles which it has in mind. Or if it is convinced that, quite apart from the role, it is being directed to call as a FTW a particular individual, then, in discussion with the individual concerned, it must define a role that is fitted to the particular configuration of gifts and experience of that individual. If it was to seek to impose on him or her a role for which he or she is not fitted, the results cannot be expected to be beneficial for the congregation.

Once a choice has been made, it is highly desirable that the specific tasks attaching to the proposed role should be listed in detail, ie, that a job specification should be drawn up. This will be of great assistance to possible candidates in helping them to understand in advance what may be required of them. They must form their own view as to whether the particular post is the Lord's calling for them. Where they are strangers to the particular congregation, it will help both the person called and the elders to plan the first few months of the individual's service with the congregation and to carry that plan into effect. Anyone carrying out ministry in a local congregation has a right to know what that congregation expects of them, and this is doubly so in the case of someone who is being supported materially by the congregation.

Second, a detailed job specification will be helpful to the elders in the search for the FTW of God's choice. However much time may have been invested in general discussion of the possible role for a FTW, the perceptions of different elders of the need will be bound to vary. Where there are important variations in perception, discussion with possible candidates and final selection may be fraught with difficulty and the candidates themselves are likely to be confused about the church's wishes and intentions in seeking a FTW. The preparation and agreement of a detailed job specification should go some way to educating the elders as a body as to the detailed role which they have in mind. Second, such a document should help the church to understand the role which is in view and will begin the important process of educating the church as to what they may reasonably expect and demand of the FTW once he or she is appointed.

### **Adjusting the job specification**

It has already been remarked that in all this careful thought both elders and congregation must have room to be surprised by some revelation or word of guidance from God which will lead them in a quite contrary direction to that suggested in earlier discussion. Likewise, a job specification should not be regarded as written on tablets of stone—a natural tendency whenever something is committed to paper, let alone to more durable materials of record! No FTW can be expected to fit the ideal identikit which has been prepared by a church; almost certainly its initial thoughts would out-stretch the capacity of any mortal anyway! Once a prospective FTW and the elders are confident that he or she is the person of God's choice, the original job specification should be reviewed to fit more precisely the gifts, experience and particular interests of the chosen individual. Moreover, the elders will become fully aware of those matters only as they work alongside the individual concerned. And the FTW will only become aware of the possibilities of the role and tasks as he or she

becomes closely acquainted with the congregation and its life and activities. It would be wise therefore to expect that the job specification will also need some adjustment in the early months of the individual's ministry.

In the longer term, adjustment will be even more necessary. A Christian congregation is a dynamic and, for all its institutions and traditions, a loosely-structured community. The FTW, it is to be hoped, will grow in the course of time; basic gifts will remain the same but those gifts should themselves develop with further use, and growing experience, both general and specific, can be expected to be accompanied by a growing maturity. As in all walks of life, work-rate and competence can be expected to increase, at least for a time. The same should be true of the wide variety of individuals in the congregation as a whole, as a result in part of the influence and impact of the FTW. In addition, there will be changes of personnel as a result of conversion, movement and death. The particular configuration of gifts, roles and tasks within any local congregation will change more or less rapidly with the passage of time.

For all these reasons the FTW's role and job specification should be reviewed and if necessary adjusted at regular but not too frequent intervals (a degree of stability will be needed if the FTW is to realize the potential of the particular specification at any time). At the extreme, the review may lead to the conclusion that the particular FTW's work is done for the time being in that congregation. In most cases, however, where the congregation grows in numbers, spiritual maturity, and the exercise of spiritual gifts hitherto dormant or neglected, the FTW may need to be less involved in the front line of the work himself and, for example, more concerned with encouragement, enabling, training and preparation of church members. With the hoped-for dynamic growth may come the need for the appointment of further full-time or part-time staff workers. In that case, it will be necessary to think carefully not only about the role and job specification of the new FTW but also about the interactive effects on the role and job specification of the first FTW.

Such changes in role and job specification should not be allowed to emerge willy-nilly under pressure of events. They should be anticipated and be the subject of careful discussion by the elders and the FTW in advance, with a view to agreed adjustments in the job specification. Where possible, the congregation's view could be sought. Even when this is not possible, the conclusions should be communicated forcefully and clearly to the congregation. Christians tend to be hard task masters and if a FTW begins to shift role and task before the church is informed, the FTW and the elders will probably find themselves the target for some stringent criticisms on the lines that the FTW is failing to do the job which the congregation supported him or her to do.

1. See 'Church Planting', in *Harvester* (Feb. 1984) 6–9 and 'Building Bridges for the Gospel' in *Harvester* (March 1984) 15–17.
2. See Fran Beckett, 'Serving the Community' in *Harvester* (Feb. 1984) 12–13 and 'Care and Counsel' in *Harvester* (April 1984) 10–11, or 'Running a Christian Advice Centre' in *The Caring Church* (Christian Brethren Review, July, 1985) 39–43.

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## **ADAPTING TO FULL-TIME CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRY**

**Neil Summerton**

It was argued earlier that what we would call full-time congregational ministry was a common practice in the churches of New Testament times. That it has been the norm in the history of the church, and that congregations have generally derived great benefit from it, is beyond dispute. To put the point at its lowest, an arrangement having the sanction of scripture and practice ought to be capable of being adopted with reasonable expectations that it will be beneficial even for congregations of Brethren background. It must, of course, be applied with due regard for the New Testament's understanding of the nature of Christian ministry and for the present circumstances of congregations—which are very different from those of most other periods of church history. This is particularly the case with respect to the ability of most church members to participate positively in ministry.

But observation suggests that Brethren congregations have not always been successful first time in integrating full-time ministry into their congregational life without serious strains and stresses. One important reason for these difficulties is the blithe assumption that full-time ministry can be introduced without giving rise to any significant changes in relationships, traditions and methods. At the risk of appearing negative, the principal purpose of this chapter is to identify some of the main problems which seem to have been encountered, and their causes, and to suggest ways in which they may be overcome. If the result is that some churches are able to avoid these problems and harmoniously to integrate full-time ministry into their life, so much the better since so many congregations are experimenting in this way.

### **Impact on the church**

The fundamental problem lies in failure to recognise the impact that full-time ministry is bound to have in a congregation and to adapt to it readily.

It has already been noted that a congregation may have mixed motives in calling a FTW. Whatever the case, the whole purpose is to secure some

specific and marked impact on the church. But it must also be recognised that in practice it is impossible to realise these hopes without other important but less expected effects.

Some of the roles outlined in the preceding chapter are likely to be more self contained than others. But a Christian congregation is a dynamic and organic entity—a community or society—in which the role and gifts of one member are bound to impinge to a greater or lesser extent on those of the rest of its members. For better or worse, there will be consequences and impacts which are unforeseen even by the most perspicacious members. As always, some members of the congregation will find these unforeseen developments disturbing and unnerving, if not a straight temptation to jealousy for their own position. Such fears in a congregation inevitably create tensions which can focus on the person of the FTW, who, rightly or wrongly, may be held responsible for these troubling developments.

It is therefore incumbent on the elders that, in calling a FTW, they should make sure that in good enough time they take steps to educate the congregation as to the likely impact of the FTW, the near certainty of unforeseen consequences, and the danger that the uncertainties engendered by the latter may produce a sense of disenchantment with the individual who is held responsible for them. This disenchantment may seem all the more acute, to the extent that it is preceded by a blissful 'honeymoon' period. The congregation needs to understand that in calling a FTW, especially one who is in a position of leadership, the need for change in important aspects of congregational life and practice is being accepted—there would normally be little point in introducing a FTW if changes of one kind or another were not to be expected.

There are likely to be innovations, and old activities, traditions and practices which have outlived their purpose may be altered—to the chagrin of those who may have had a hand in creating them (as, of course, more or less radical changes in their day!). The congregation needs to understand and accept that this is a process which is bound to occur, and is in itself desirable. Especially if the FTW is from outside the congregation, he or she is bound to bring new ideas and practices, at least some of which could possibly be applied. In itself there is nothing about this phenomenon which is specially attributable to the presence of a FTW. Wherever elders wish to see change as a basis of spiritual and numerical growth, they need to invest much time in preparing the group for the consequences. But a FTW is likely to accelerate the pace of innovation by the simple fact that he is able to devote more time and thought to planning and implementing new activities and practices. The degree of impact may inevitably outstrip a congregation's expectations even where there is careful preparation; the situation may be all the more explosive where no preparatory steps have been taken at all.

If the congregation needs to be prepared for the impact of a FTW generally, members need also to be prepared to appreciate the possible impact on them individually. This will vary between individuals. It is likely to be greatest for those whose gifts and roles are most comparable to those of the FTW. This will be considered at greater length in a moment in relation to the impact of a FTW on the elders. The congregation should understand, however, that to call a FTW will not generally be to relieve them of burdens which they are having difficulty in bearing. On the contrary, the presence of a FTW is likely to increase the demands imposed on individual church members. This will be so especially where the FTW is in a position of congregational leadership and his gifts lie in encouraging others to exercise their own gifts and to take responsibility for new ministries and activities. At a more mundane level, as in the case of an addition to the establishment in any firm or institution, the presence of a FTW can be expected to increase the expenditure of the congregation. This is not only because the FTW has to be supported but also because the new activities and ministries generated have to be funded! The congregation need to understand that the presence of a FTW may increase rather than diminish their individual burdens in a number of ways.

For his or her part the FTW needs to be sensitive to the increased stresses and burdens which his or her presence may impose on the congregation. Tact will be needed both in making it clear to the congregation that their situation is understood; and in forcing the pace of innovation and change. The FTW will be wise to find out as quickly as possible about congregational traditions and their origins, and in particular who among the existing congregation (or their parents!) had a hand in starting or developing which activities and practices. There may, of course, be occasions when the congregation are in such bondage to existing practices and traditions that it is essential to confront them boldly with the need for change. Normally, however, an indirect and tactful approach will be more profitable, especially if change and innovation can be achieved within existing forms, customs and nomenclature.

### **Impact on the elders**

Of greater importance for the fortunes of the FTW and the church will be the impact of his or her presence on the elders, and the way in which that impact is managed and in which the elders respond to it emotionally. This impact and the resulting relationship between the FTW and the elders can be expected to be all the more significant for the fortunes of the worker and the congregation when the presence of a FTW is a new and uncharted experience for the congregation. In these circumstances the probability is that the body of elders concerned will have been working together with a tolerable degree of effectiveness for a fairly long period. Each will have



developed an established and recognized role within the congregation; and some, at least, of them will be discharging definite leadership tasks.

The introduction of a FTW to fulfil virtually any role in the congregation will have a range of consequences for the eldership group. First, arrangements must be made for supervision or liaison on a day to day basis. This can hardly be done with the elders as a whole; one or two must be selected for this purpose, thus affecting their position within the eldership and the dynamics of the group. Second, most people who are suitable to be a FTW can be expected to exercise leadership and initiative within the tasks assigned to them. The tasks concerned are unlikely to have been neglected completely before the FTW was appointed, and one or more elders will have been taking responsibility for those tasks, if not directly discharging them. The introduction of a FTW will have a direct impact on those individuals and through them on the dynamics of the elders as a group. These effects will be all the more acute because the FTW can be expected to devote more time and effort to this work than any 'lay' elder could do, thus magnifying the effects in question.

If these impacts are the case as a matter of general principle, they must be expected to be all the more significant where the FTW is a person of maturity and experience of life and Christian work, whose gifts and role lie in the areas of teaching, pastoring, strategic thinking, and administration and co-ordination, as defined earlier. For these are the gifts and roles *par excellence* of the elder and it follows that to introduce into a congregation a major new resource for these purposes is bound to be replete with consequences for the elders as individuals and for their functioning as a group. Obviously, the impact will be greatest for those particular elders whose gifts and role most nearly match those of the FTW.

In these circumstances, a significant impact would be bound to be felt quite apart from the question of relationships, the dynamics of the group and the role of existing elders. For the FTW has by definition much more of the precious resource of time for the work of the congregation than does the 'lay' elder, and insofar as the 'lay' elders as a group have more time than the FTW, they have a problem of co-ordinating their action if, hour for hour, their combined work is to be as effective as that of the FTW. The latter can give more time to prayer and study; to thinking about the direction in which the congregation should be moving; and to pastoring and teaching. The latter two items will bring him into closer contact with the congregation than any individual 'lay' elder can hope to achieve, and all will tend to bring the FTW into prominence as a leader of the congregation where he has the gifts and personal qualities which favour that development. The result will be a change in the relative positions of the FTW and the elders as leaders in the eyes of the congregation both in terms of work and role and, more crucially, status.

It is difficult to see how this could fail to happen if the FTW has gifts and a role similar to those of the elders. If it was the will of God that the congregation should call on a FTW with these qualities and gifts, the consequences ought properly to be embraced gladly by the congregation, including the elders, as ultimately beneficial to it. But it is perfectly possible that none of this will be anticipated or understood by the elders (and possibly by the FTW). If it is not, it seems bound to be a source of deep tension and distress, and the evidence is that more than one relationship between a FTW and a Brethren congregation has broken down in consequence. This is a problem which occurs not just in the relationship between a full-time person and 'lay' elders. Similar problems can occur when a new and gifted individual is introduced into a team of full-time workers—associate ministers, for example, tend only to be young and not to stay long in churches where there is an established and dominant senior minister.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately it is a problem in group behaviour and interaction which requires much spiritual character to overcome successfully. Certainly on the part of the elders it often requires a considerable measure of the spirit of John the Baptist when he said of Jesus, 'He must increase but I must decrease' (Jn. 3:30).

But in the Brethren (and Charismatic?) situation, the problems can be exacerbated by a more or less sharp divergence between the concept of ministry and leadership held by many elders and those held by some (many?) of those entering full-time Christian service, especially where they have been educated in the existing non-conformist colleges. The elders' concept emphasizes the obligation of the individual, whatever his circumstances, to commit himself heart and soul in service to the limit of his capacity, given his own obligations. Accordingly, it would tend not to accord any special status to full-time work as distinct from part-time or 'lay' work in the church. Indeed, it has conceptual difficulty with the term 'full-time' work, since it would wish to emphasize the biblical notion of the full-time calling of every believer to the service of Christ. My own view is that some confusion and misunderstanding would be avoided if we were to substitute the term 'supported' for 'full-time' in the designation now common in the assemblies. Further, insofar as the Brethren tradition recognizes the idea of leadership, as distinct from gift and work, as the duty of the elder, it tends to see it as a vigorously collective rather than an individual function in the church.

The emphasis among FTWs can, however, tend to be on the special status of the individual called to full-time service, so that the full-time person is regarded as ordained by God in a sense that the 'lay' person is not; on the need for leadership as a function in the congregation; and on the individual rather than group character of leadership if it is to be effective. Where there is a marked theological divergence between elders

and the FTWs on these issues, tension between the two seems inevitable, however good relationships may be in personal terms. For whatever a job specification may say, each is likely to have a differing perception of the status and role of the elders on the one hand and the FTW on the other with respect to each other and the rest of the congregation. At the extreme it raises questions such as 'Is the FTW the equal of the lay elders? Is he their assistant or are they his assistants?' It may be that both elders and FTWs need to engage in some hard biblical study on the nature of Christian ministry, particularly as it relates to the questions of the time available for a particular ministry, the source of practical support for that ministry, and the significance of the source of support for the position, status and rights of the person concerned.

### **Managing the impact**

It is vital that elders should not sit idly by, observing these various impacts, but doing nothing to assist the congregation to come to terms with them. It is of the essence of leadership that the leader should be active in managing change, seeking on the one hand to neutralize its negative and destructive effects, and on the other to explore the opportunities which it presents for the benefit of the group for which he is responsible. If this analysis of the impact of a FTW on the elders, and of the difficulties of relationships which may arise, is correct, a number of more or less practical proposals for avoiding, or at least reducing, problems can be made.

1. It is essential that in selecting (ie jointly recognizing the call of) any individual for resident full-time work in a congregation, there should be a mutual exploration not only of character, gifts and possible role, but of concepts of the nature of ministry, of eldership, and of leadership. No doubt, each individual's ideas on these matters will vary in detail from those of the next person. But where there are marked divergences of view on these matters, the scope of tension should not be underestimated because they will inevitably affect the way the FTW does his or her job, and his/her relationship with and view of the elders. If the prospective FTW is to have a role in pastoring, teaching, strategy and co-ordination, it will be all the more important to explore these matters. (Elders might of course also usefully ask themselves whether their own views on these subjects are right, and whether those views are or are not having beneficial effects on their own ministry in the congregation!)

2. In the process of recognizing the FTW's call, not only should role and tasks be carefully specified, but so should the prospective relationship

with the elders and the congregation as a whole. Is the FTW to be an elder, or a deacon, or what? If not, what access is he or she to have to the elders, and on whose invitation? What freedom of innovation and initiative is the FTW to have in his or her area of responsibility, and what freedom to communicate with the church independently on those matters? What matters can he decide for himself with or without a subsequent report to the elders? In reaching agreement on these questions, it should be recognized that elders, the congregation as a whole, and FTW will change and develop with the passage of time, and the arrangement should be reviewed and adjusted at regular intervals (without constantly uprooting the plant to see how things are growing!).

3. If the FTW's main role is to be in pastoring, teaching, strategy and co-ordination, it is difficult to see how this role can be pursued in the Brethren environment effectively and enthusiastically but without resulting tensions, unless the FTW is an elder of equal standing with his colleagues before the congregation. If such a FTW is not an elder, either he will be hamstrung by his, to say the least, ambiguous position, or the position and role of the elders themselves seem likely to be called into question. The implication of this is that a FTW for such a role *must* have the qualifications and gifts for immediate eldership; this demands maturity and will often rule out those in their early twenties, if not early thirties. That in turn has practical implications in terms of, perhaps, abandonment of secular careers, and the need for the congregation to make adequate provision for financial support and accommodation, as such an individual will usually have a wife and family.

4. Many congregations feel that the difficulties suggested above may be more likely to be overcome if the FTW is an existing member of the congregation whom they enable to give more time to the work, by developing his or her existing roles. There may be something in this, but it should be recognized that the difficulties outlined above derive, in part, precisely from the fact that the individual is enabled to devote more time to his or her ministry than other key people in the congregation are able to do. It may be of significance that an American observer of churches with multiple full-time staff comments that, on balance, it is less satisfying to add an existing member of the congregation to such a team than someone from another neighbouring congregation.<sup>2</sup>

5. It is essential to provide the FTW with scope to develop his or her ministry. To put it at its lowest, there is no point in the elders' employing even a dog('s body!) and barking themselves. If God has called an individual to a full-time role in a congregation and that person has significant gifts, it makes little sense to leave those gifts under-employed while the work is done by less gifted individuals. And it certainly makes no sense to limit the FTW's scope in this way simply in the name of not

reducing the status of another elder or other member of the congregation. This point is of special significance in respect of a teaching ministry, because of its high public prominence in the congregation. But it is also relevant apropos high-profile leadership, and the offices of chairman and secretary of the elders. The point also extends to more detailed matters of executive action. The elders and congregation need to appoint someone whom they can trust to discharge (and not, without authority, to go too far outside) the role agreed. And they must then set that person free to exercise his/her ministry without constant detailed supervision and reference back to them, except on matters of importance and principle.

6. This leads to the crucial importance, whether or not the FTW is an elder, of good and constantly open communications between him/her and the (rest of the) elders, in order to minimize the risk of fear and suspicion by the elders of the FTW. Membership of the elders should in itself greatly help, for there should then be ample opportunity for report, discussion, and the sharing of ideas. In a group leadership, this openness and sharing of important information and intentions is of greater importance than under more managerial arrangements.

Where the FTW is not an elder, the elders should ensure that they give ample time for report and discussion. The younger FTW, especially, should never be left to feel that no one, least of all the elders of the congregation, is taking a real interest in his/her work. Attendance at the elders' meeting will be essential from time to time, but contact with the elders should not be confined to that. Elders in general should make sure that they express a regular informal interest in the FTW and his/her dependants.

Whether or not the FTW is an elder, it will probably be useful if one suitable elder acts as a liaison officer, to be available for consultation and to take a close day-to-day interest in the FTW and his/her work. In the larger congregation, and especially where there is more than one FTW, it may be helpful to form an executive group to meet weekly or even more often, comprising the FTWs and two or three elders, in order to ensure proper co-ordination of work and activities, prompt pastoral action, and to take decisions in day-to-day matters. Such an arrangement can be expected to be of help in alleviating one of the important petty sources of frustration for the FTW—the length of time it can take to make even minor decisions in the Brethren system.

7. It is essential that the elders and the congregation should recognize the peculiar pressures which can be experienced by those who have committed themselves to full-time Christian service. These may be practical. There may be uncertainties about the level of financial support which the congregation will provide, or uncertainties about whether the congregations will be able to meet the financial undertakings which it has

made. There may be uncertainties about the future, eg, about accommodation or how the individual's 'career' in Christian service will develop, or about the need to provide for retirement, even though it may be many years away. More important still, the individual may have difficulties in coming to terms with the powerlessness and statuslessness which are peculiar in a secularized society to the occupation of Christian worker. There may also be anxiety to exercise a successful ministry in the congregation, to demonstrate to them and to other Christian workers that the FTW's ministry has divine approbation.

It would be easy to criticise such sentiments as being unspiritual—as indicating concern to guarantee personal *securitas* (safety) rather than manifesting the *certitudo* (trust in God)<sup>3</sup> which ought to characterize the Christian. To be sure, it is difficult to live by faith (and the FTW must do so, even when he receives a salary from his congregation) and the temptation to lack of faith is commonly experienced, even by those who have long been in Christian work. It is not for those who live much more secure and prestigious lives to cast stones. They need, rather, to ensure that they give proper support to the FTW (and his or her spouse) in prayer, emotionally, and practically. Above all, they need to recognize that the FTW, like anyone else, requires pastoral care and support, and they must ensure that he or she gets it, either from within the congregation or from outside it. The informal interest in the FTW already recommended is crucial in this.

For his or her part, the FTW needs to recognize the peculiar temptations of full-time work and his or her need for pastoral support. And, in particular, they should be willing to receive that support even from members of their own congregation (it is in the nature of Christian fellowship and humility that the Christian worker should be willing to receive pastoral support from those for whom he or she has pastoral responsibility).

8. Finally, some of the possible difficulties noted in this chapter may arise precisely because there is only *one* FTW in a large congregation with an active eldership. Such congregations should, in my opinion, consider whether they should not call *two* or more FTWs to occupy differing or even similar roles. In any case, for their own good and growth, many larger congregations need to be thinking in terms not of one full-time person but a team, working alongside other church members. It is possible that where there are multiple FTWs, the dynamics of the relationship of the FTW with the (other) elders and the rest of the congregation will be different and more positive than where there is only one full-time person in this, for Brethren congregations, difficult and unaccustomed position.

The purpose of these observations and suggestions has been to warn of possible pitfalls and to suggest possible ways of avoiding them, not to

discourage congregations from calling individuals to undertake full-time work among them. There are many congregations of Brethren background which are demonstrating the value and opportunities of setting aside one or more persons for full-time ministry in the local church. To that end, I have suggested points which elders and FTWs need to bear in mind in order to increase the prospects that the benefits will be achieved in practice, rather than being frittered away in uncertainty about role and unnecessary tensions, by which Satan is always anxious to frustrate the building of the kingdom in and through the local congregation. To achieve an effective full-time ministry without impairing plural leadership and the exercise of charismatic gift would be at once a boon to the congregation concerned and an example to the church at large.

1. See Lyle E. Schaller, *op cit*, 122ff.
2. *Ibid*, 64–67.
3. The categories are, I believe, Luther's—not the least of his deep insights into the meaning of scripture. Cf. Matt. 6:31, which does not only apply to missionaries and itinerant preachers.

## FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME?

**Alfred Kuen**

*After a long experience of Christian service combined with a business appointment, Alfred Kuen lectures at the Institut Emmaüs near Vevez, Switzerland. This discussion of the respective merits of full- and part-time ministry has been translated from his book, *Ministères dans l'Eglise*, and is included here with his kind permission. *Ministères dans l'Eglise* (224 pages) is obtainable from Editions-Librairie Emmaüs, 1806 Saint-Legier, Switzerland, price Frs 15 (plus postage).*

### Introduction

The word ministry simply means service. The New Testament always envisages ministries in the setting of the body, that is to say in a plurality of differing and complementary functions. Jesus encompassed the three principal offices of the old covenant: priest, prophet and king, and through his Spirit he confers these on all believers who are now priests, prophets and kings (Acts 2:17-18; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

Under the new covenant, there are thus no longer priests who become the intermediaries between God and men; rather, all are priests with no distinction between officers and ordinary members of the church, clergy and laity, serving and served. All true believers, members of the body of Christ, have also received one or more gifts for general usefulness (1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10) and are thus called to exercise a ministry within the local church.

This doctrine of the 'universal priesthood' of believers, to which the Reformers paid lip service, has been applied by the Brethren from the beginning of their history. The spiritual and numerical growth of our churches is linked to our ability to mobilize the gifts received by the greatest possible number of our members in the service of God and others. The primary task of the elders is to identify and recruit fellow-workers by engaging them in a multiplicity of useful jobs. At the same time, they have to train and develop them 'for the work of the ministry' (Eph. 4:12), that is to say in the achievement of their service for the body.

As well as the all-person ministry, the New Testament mentions ministries specially directed towards the establishment of churches—



apostles and evangelists; for edification—prophets and teachers; for guidance—elders or bishops; pastors, leaders and chairmen for oversight; and deacons, male and female, and widows for undertaking various practical tasks.

The church recognizes the validity of the gifts exercised within it by formally conferring upon those so gifted an official approval of their ministries acknowledged by all. The two local ministries most often cited are those of elder and deacon. They are chosen by the church on the basis of their spiritual, personal, family and social qualifications and of the gifts which they have been able to show in the life of the church. They exercise their functions collegially with the authority of Christ, whether they are full- or part-time.

### **Forms of pastoral ministry: full-time or non-professional?**

All the historic churches and most of the gathered churches have a full-time pastoral ministry. Brethren churches of Anglo-Saxon origin have usually rejected this form of ministry. A certain number of them are beginning to adopt it. The majority of the Swiss-romande assemblies have returned to this style which was that of the dissident assemblies arising from the Geneva revival before the teaching of J. N. Darby had deeply affected them.

What are the respective advantages of a full-time ministry and a non-professional, part-time ministry?

### **The advantages of a full-time pastoral ministry**

#### *Availability*

The FTW is able to devote the whole of his working day to the Lord's work in the church. In the secular world, professional demands become more and more exacting, with the result that few have the time needed for thorough preparation of addresses and Bible studies, or for teaching the various types of church members (such as children, youth, new converts, young marrieds and future elders). Visits are also needed to those who are ill, older people, backsliders etc. Meetings have to be held, outside contacts established and administrative tasks accomplished. A full-time pastor will always be available for those seeking counsel, those who need urgent help during the course of the day, for work on behalf of the church, for committee meetings, funerals, marriages etc.

#### *Qualified teaching*

Those who have learned their work from competent teachers will provide a service of better quality than a 'handy-man'. This principle is true in all

fields. Education, whether biblical or secular, is no exception to the rule. To be able to provide Christians and their children with useful learning, such 'teachers' should spend much time in studying the Word of God and in developing a systematic plan for teaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) to the different age groups and varied categories of members.

In order to ensure a thorough preaching and teaching ministry, well structured and adapted to the needs of the hearers, time must be devoted to meditating on the Word, to prayer, to setting ideas in order, to illustrating them etc. Those who wish to accomplish this ministry seriously will spend long hours over and above immediate preparation. This expenditure of time is hard to reconcile with the demands of most secular jobs. If qualified teaching is desired, it will be necessary to consider releasing the teacher from his professional obligations.

Paul anticipated the need for the financial support of elders responsible for teaching and preaching. He laid down that 'anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things (or 'share a part of his goods') with his instructor' (Gal. 6:6); 'those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel' (1 Cor. 9:14); 'the elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour (or 'double remuneration'), especially those who work (or 'labour') in preaching and teaching. For the scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the corn" and "The worker deserves his wages"' (1 Tim. 5:17-18). In another place, Paul uses the same quotation to support the right of apostles to be maintained by the churches, which he is discussing in the preceding verses (1 Cor. 9:9).

### *Competence*

This flows from gifts, from training and from experience. In the case of training, to be able to commit several years to the deeper study of the Word of God and to prepare oneself for the different aspects of the ministry is a privilege—unfortunately not at the disposal of all members of a church. Experience comes with practice; the pastor who can preach several sermons each week will master this technique more rapidly than the occasional preacher.

The same considerations apply in relation to caring, to counselling baptismal candidates, those about to marry and believers in difficulty. Our century has taught us the dangers of amateurism. Highly qualified specialists are called for in every field. Furthermore, a church with a full-time pastor inspires more confidence in the minds of our contemporaries than a church led by 'lay persons'.

### *Co-ordination and training*

According to Ephesians 4:11, the pastor-teacher, like the apostle, the

prophet and the evangelist, has above all a role of co-ordinator and trainer. He is there to prepare members for the exercise of their ministry and to develop their ability to do so as well as possible. The verb *katartizo* means to put in order, to make ready for service, complete, prepare for work. This implies, on the one hand, an organization of the different services and, on the other, the training of members in the exercise of their gift. Organization calls for much reflection—as well as a clear mind—and for time. The many aspects of member training (biblical, techniques, pedagogy) also demand competence and available time.

N. Summerton writes in *Leadership in the Churches*: 'The practical experience of many local churches today is to define the main function of the paid worker as a task of identifying, encouraging, developing and organising the deployment of all the charismatic gifts of the whole congregation, so that the church begins gradually to function in the manner which the New Testament suggests to us.' Gibbs and Morton in *God's Frozen People* affirm: 'The training of the laity constitutes the basic development on which the future of the Church depends; the training of pastors should be conceived towards this end and in its service.'

### *Continuity*

A competent man with stimulating qualities will be a long-term asset to his church. Firm leadership, concentrated in one person's hand, assures continuity in the execution of a programme, in teaching and in the development of different activities. If one man is responsible for the preaching ministry, he can teach systematically the different aspects of Christian doctrine and handle a Bible book, expounding it chapter by chapter, in order to feed the members of his church in a balanced, rounded and solid way. This kind of continuity is hard to ensure when several preachers share the task; it is impossible when preaching depends on visitors or itinerant preachers who know little of the real needs of any given church and can only rarely follow up their teaching by personal contacts.

### *Contribution from outside*

In the early churches, elders were chosen from the members of the local fellowship. However, we also see Timothy established for a time at Ephesus, where the church had already been in existence for several years (1 Tim. 1:3) to help the fellowship cope with a difficult situation. A 'neutral' person coming from outside of the local oversight can bring very real assistance in solving longstanding problems in which friendship and family links among church members prevent their correct resolution by local leaders. In the case of such difficulties, elders should not hesitate to call on qualified and neutral persons capable of giving an objective view on

conflicts which are interminable because no one dares take an initiative which might upset someone else.

Again, an experienced pastor in church leadership can make many proposals which could lead to the renewal of a fellowship's life.

### **The advantages of a non-professional pastoral ministry.**

Those who hesitate to commit themselves to a full-time pastor do not lack arguments in favour of a non-professional ministry. It is said by them to hold a number of advantages.

#### *Avoids the danger of clericalism*

Clericalism arises from a distinction between clerics and laity; and the pastor, in current thinking, is part of the clergy. He appears with catholic ecclesiastics and Jewish rabbis in official listings. He has studied theology and received ordination with special privileges and powers. It is he who administers the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; who conducts marriage services, confirmations and funerals; and who goes to pray with the ill and the dying. For the most part, people today draw little distinction between the pastor of a gathered church and that of an institutional one.

This ambiguity arises from the fact that our contemporaries use the term pastor in its sociological sense. Believers may have restored its biblical meaning, but they allow themselves to be influenced in their practical definition of the duties of a pastor by all that the members of 'mainline' churches expect of their spiritual director. All this gives rise to a certain mismatch between the pastor's understanding of his work and that which the members hold about his obligations. The gap between the minister and the ordinary folk that is clericalism is often widened by the exemption of the minister from ordinary professional duties. The FTW lives in a world apart where he can freely control his time. Again, professional life is a discipline from which the spiritual life benefits. It calls for discipline in the use of time and provides practice in taking on responsibility, attacking problems, deferring to masters, communicating with people, knowing their day-to-day problems, being involved in their interests and collaborating with others. This is often a hard school, but it produces fruits which remain in the form of valuable skills.

#### *Independence*

Paul greatly valued his privilege of preaching the gospel freely (without surrendering his right to receive payment, 1 Cor. 9:15-18), depending not on man but on the Lord. This independence allowed him to declare the whole counsel of God without asking whether it pleased his hearers and

supporters. Many FTWs behave similarly and are not intimidated by the possible reactions of the members to the teaching of truths which might displease them.

However, it takes a great deal of faith and courage to brave the displeasure of those who are maintaining you when your material situation is precarious. The pastor who undertakes his ministry on a voluntary basis enjoys a much greater liberty.

### *Sharing of tasks*

If no one is paid to undertake essential jobs, it is necessary that someone assumes them. The absence of a FTW is a strong stimulus for voluntary activity. The church cannot exist unless each member is ready to make the sacrifices which voluntary ministries impose on them.

### *Witness*

Professional life provides a wonderful opportunity—and a good school—for witness. We have ready-made relations with those who observe our lives every day.

### *Rational management of financial resources*

In order that the Lord's servants might 'live by faith', others must 'give by faith'. Thus in breaking new ground in missions overseas or in our own dechristianised land, we need people who can undertake pioneer work full-time. Since the resources of a church are limited, for each FTW maintained at home there will be one less elsewhere. So the question for each church is: where will our support be most useful and where is it indispensable?

We have learned through experience that a church without a professional pastor can devote up to 80% of its resources to missions.

### *Avoids a monarchical pastorate*

When a church appoints a full-time pastor, he will tend to remain in this post until the size of the church exceeds his capacity to serve. The church will then revert to the classical plan which has prevailed since the second century of the Christian era. In the earliest days of the church, there were always several elders or bishops in one congregation. If a church elects one full-time pastor it will be difficult, after two or three generations, to return to the biblical model. 'A full-time ministry involves certain risks for the fellowship, especially on a long term basis. The availability of time and an adequate training leads to a competence which has also an opposite effect; there is a temptation to concentrate responsibilities and decision-making power in one person because he appears to be more capable than others.' (J. Blandenier, *Semailles et Moisson*, March 1981)

### Can one reconcile the advantages of the two forms?

The advantages in both cases are real and important. For this reason we should look for the possibility of bringing the positive elements of both options together, while avoiding the corresponding disadvantages.

*How can the advantages of a pastored church be secured in a church without a full-time pastor?*

*Availability* of the full-time pastor can partially be compensated for by the involvement of a larger number of people and by elders and deacons devoting all of their available time to the service of the church. The one problem that remains is that of availability at any time of day. Only if the church can use the capabilities of retired folk will this be solved.

*Teaching* This problem can be resolved by dividing the preaching and other forms of teaching among a certain number of men released from other forms of service. None need preach more than once a month or every two months. This will allow him time to renew himself personally, to profit from the addresses of his brethren and to prepare his own seriously. This is the kind of diversity which we find in the pages of the New Testament.

*Competence* This will be acquired by a genuine course of training for all who show some disposition for a ministry within the church, and by putting to work those with these capabilities within limited groups.

Similar training could be undertaken—possibly with a group of those interested from several churches—on such topics as caring ministry, marriage counselling, organizing youth work, Sunday school classes, children's clubs and pioneer evangelism.

*Co-ordination and training* It is possible to share these tasks among several people, provided the church possesses enough mature and competent believers. In a small church, co-ordination is less complex. Training standards can be maintained by brethren undertaking theological studies and then returning to their employment, or by agreement between several churches. Theological education by extension is the best training method for church members engaged in secular jobs or in family life.

*Continuity* This can be ensured by a systematic plan for preaching and Bible study to which the various preachers conform. Continuity in leadership can be safeguarded by a sensible organization of the body of elders and deacons.

*How can the advantages of a non-professional ministry be secured in a pastored church?*

The danger of *clericalism* can be avoided by means of sharing out both spiritual and material tasks among all those who have received the appropriate gifts and who are walking in the Spirit. The pastor is only one

elder among others; he is simply more available and perhaps more able in some aspects of the work. This implies that the pastor is to encourage those whom the Lord has endowed for a ministry to take up various preaching tasks, and to train them so that they can ultimately do as well as himself. He will oversee a scheme of rotating all the pastoral activities among the elders, such as presiding at the Lord's Supper, conducting baptisms, chairing meetings of members, of elders and of deacons, and being responsible for external relations of the church. Otherwise, in spite of his protestations of equality with his brethren, his acts will speak louder than his words.

If, moreover, the pastor has worked in a profession before taking up full-time ministry, it will become easier for him to give up the 'Jack-of-all-trades' role and to transpose his learned disciplines into his new estate.

But, as J. Blandenier remarks, 'the best protection against clericalism without doubt is the existence of a living, vigilant church made up of born again believers who are mature, responsible, committed' (*Semailles et Moisson*, March 1981).

*Independence* To assure this, the FTW needs to remind himself that he depends on God alone. This autonomy partly depends on the way in which the funds provided by the church are passed on to him. If they reach him indirectly by the hands of a council of people responsible to the church for their management, the Lord's servant will feel more free than if they came directly from the offerings into his hands. Whatever method is chosen, the church must ensure that the pastor remains totally free to use the money given to him in whatever way his conscience leads, in the same way as any other Christian. This means that the members give their money *to the Lord* and refrain from judging the way in which the Lord's servant uses that part which is given to him.

*Sharing of tasks* If, after several years in a church, a pastor still undertakes most of the work, it is often because he prefers to do so—or has not taken the trouble to share out the work. To find capable collaborators and to develop and supervise them is, certainly, an additional task to be added to all the rest, and one that does not yield immediate returns. Sometimes it will be necessary to redo the work himself, or find someone else to do it, or give so much time to supervision that he might as well have done it himself in the first place. But after the second or third attempt, things will improve and he will be able to unload progressively some of the more absorbing tasks and thereby give to others a sense of effective participation in the life of the body. Alongside the regular preaching and teaching, sharing out is the main and most absorbing task of the FTW. It is better to be a good orchestral conductor than a 'one-man band'. A great man, it is said, is not one who does the work of ten men but one who puts ten men to work. That is the primary and specific function of pastors.

*Witness* If the pastor manages, with God's help, to stimulate the witness of the majority of the church members in their place of work, the overall result will be better than his own witness alone, however exceptional he may be. To train witnesses, to provide them with 'ammunition', to respond to different objectives, is an important and time-consuming task. It will be all the more effective if the pastor has acquired his own experience in previous employment.

*Management of financial resources* The resources of any one church are, of course, limited, but not the number of workers. If, through the effective ministry of a FTW, the church is able to double or triple itself in size, then the resources will grow in the same proportion and the part given to outside causes will be maintained or even increased. What would be even better, without affecting generosity towards these outside ministries, would be for the church to take on several part- or full-time workers for its various activities.

*Monarchical pastorate* Here, everything depends on whether having a single pastor in each church is seen as a passing phase or as the final and ideal situation. When a church engages a part- or full-time worker, it would be a good thing to agree at once with the worker and with the whole church that, God willing, this first step is only one phase towards the engagement of several workers released from ordinary employment. Thus the appointed pastor would not gain the impression of a lack of confidence or a breakdown in contract when a co-worker joins him. Thus, right from the start, he would be able to work towards this goal with his eyes open for others who could work with him, initiate them into various activities, and motivate them so that they might possibly leave their job for God's service and dedicate one or two years to training in a Bible school or by extension courses.

In apostolic days, church workers were recruited from the local church. This avoids improprieties such as the 'parachuting' of a pastor into a church which he does not know. If each church arranged for two, three, or even four elders or deacons—male or female—to be released for service in the church on a part- or full-time basis, each could have his clearly defined sphere of responsibility as, say, pastor-teacher, evangelist or administrator. If several elders of a church were prepared to reduce their professional commitment in order to give more time to the church, this would call for a financial contribution to be offered to them to compensate for their shortfall in earnings. Finally, with the progressive lowering of the age of retirement, new possibilities in voluntary service to the church open up. Mature men and women are made available who can bring into the Lord's service an invaluable experience of life and Christian testimony. At the same time, this solves for them one of the thorniest problems linked with the ending of professional work: they can still feel useful in



something. It is in the fields of visitation, caring ministry, secretarial and accountancy work and in co-ordination, that the assistance of experienced Christians is particularly appreciated.

### **Conclusion**

The issue of a professional ministry appears to me to be more a question of circumstances and inner attitudes than of principle. It can enable the church to respond, at one and the same time, to both the biblical model and the demands of today's world. Although not itself a church, the Bible school where I work—like all Bible schools—provides for the churches an example of collegial, full-time ministry which demonstrates that it can work well.

## A LOCAL CHURCH VIEW

Gerald West

*A local church elder, and an architect by profession, Gerald West looks at the question of the appointment of a full-time church worker from the point of view of the steps needed to be taken by the church concerned and its leaders.*

In this paper I consider the attitudes and motives which seem to be leading Brethren churches to make arrangements of the kind we are considering, the way in which a church may decide to take this step, and having made such a decision how it is implemented. This last matter requires a view of some of the practical considerations that immediately arise as soon as the church has found the right person.

### Motives of the church

It must be asked why, at this particular time, a significant number of Brethren churches in widely dispersed parts of the country are inviting individuals to exercise a full-time ministry within their fellowships. Even though it may not represent a change of principle it represents a change of emphasis and practice which might be thought somewhat unexpected. This phenomenon is not the result of a single sided set of circumstances. It takes two, at least, to bring it about and both parties must feel that their faith is leading them in this direction. Colin Holmes will explain some of the considerations which have led those already engaged in a full-time ministry to seek to exercise it within the orbit of a single church. My task is to look at things from the angle of the local church.

Such evidence as I possess suggests that it is usually amongst the elders of a church that the initiative first arises for such an arrangement. It is not usual for it to come from church members. It would also seem that it is amongst elders who feel keenly the importance of their responsibilities that the suggestion is seriously considered. Bearing in mind the fact that such a proposal runs across the grain of the Brethren tradition and that it is unlikely to be a reflex response either by elders or church, it is natural to enquire what it is that brings elders to such a consideration.

I believe that by far the most important reason is the sense of

inadequacy that many elders in full-time secular employment feel when faced by the pressing pastoral and spiritual needs of their flock. This inadequacy is not necessarily one of ability or gift but one of availability. There is little doubt in my mind that the pastoral demands of the typical assembly have increased. I also believe that there has been a great increase in the expectations both of the church fellowship and its elders regarding pastoral care. This inadequacy is also felt in the area associated with the ministry of the Word. The pattern a generation ago of a weekly conversational Bible-reading, supplemented by monthly and annual conferences with attendance drawn from a wide region has largely collapsed. The situation has worsened as a result of the decline of the itinerant ministry. Church secretaries now find it difficult to secure the services of gifted ministers of the Word of God on a regular basis. Furthermore, the emphasis in many assemblies is on consecutive Bible-teaching ministry which calls for thorough preparation. Few are so adequately trained and gifted that they can exercise such a ministry without considerable expenditure of time.

If there is a sense of inadequacy amongst elders and a feeling of responsibility only partially discharged, this is made more severe by the other demands that are often made upon the time of an elder. We seem to have complicated the administrative tasks associated with church oversight. Perhaps I am mistaken, but my memories of childhood do not include my father spending frequent evenings in oversight meetings, sub-committees and so on. The corresponding brother booked a speaker for the gospel service and that was it. Perhaps we need to look at the growing bureaucracy of oversight, stewards, deacons, etc.

Apart from such demands there are the needs of wife and family. Although the home is serviced with labour saving devices there are no domestic servants in the middle class household to lift the burden which both husband and wife expect to share. Parents are conscious of the need to devote proper time and attention to their children if they are to exercise a responsible Christian parenthood. Older children and grandchildren demand, and have a right to expect, time.

Leadership in the church is often exercised by those who are leaders in their secular employment. The demands of such employment have grown. Increasing mobility brings increased travel demands. Business travel takes the elder away from home as do the legitimate demands of family and friendship.

Perhaps we might dismiss all this as mere excuses, symptomatic of a lack of commitment. In my view that would be a mistake. The pressures *are* increasing, and not only in the ways I have suggested. Pressure also comes from the church and the world. We are more questioning than we were a couple of generations ago. This is partly the result of changes in

society generally which are reflected in the educational system. An effective ministry of the Word will be judged by high standards in regard to its intellectual content and its preaching style. The TV has brought the highest standards of presentation into the ordinary home. Whatever the message conveyed by a TV commercial, the manner of its presentation is likely to be highly sophisticated. Such standards of presentation are the result of much effort and expenditure. Elders are likely to be familiar with such standards and effort in their secular employment. Is the Lord's work to be served with a second best?

The questioning generation has questioned authority. All authority figures are under pressure to justify themselves. Leadership in the church relies increasingly on an ability to elicit consent rather than command it. This requires time and effort.

Apart from the inadequacies to which I have referred there may also be a perceived lack of gift whether pastorally, in evangelism or in ministry of the Word.

The challenge to elders and oversights in such circumstances is primarily a spiritual one. How are they to respond? In prayer, that God will provide for his people?—yes! In faith, that God will provide for his people?—yes! In searching the scriptures, to see how God has provided in the past?—yes! Obviously many have come to the conclusion that if time is the root problem, then more time must be made available. It is only a short step to the conclusion that someone with the requisite gift should be set apart for the work.

### **The role of the church in the decision**

At what stage in the thinking of the leadership about this matter should the church be consulted? It will assuredly need to be consulted—and convinced. The needs of a church and the shortcomings of the leadership in discharging its responsibilities are not necessarily clearly understood by the fellowship. They will naturally wish to know why the elders are proposing such an arrangement. Are the elders opting out? Are they shuffling off their responsibility on to a 'pastor'?

If the person concerned is already well known and exercising a respected ministry within the church, these questions, and others like them, may not arise. If, however, the proposal is first raised with the church in a theoretical way it would be surprising if they did not arise, and with them a number of fears and concerns. These are likely to include the ingrained fear of a 'one-man ministry'; the fear that opportunities for exercise of individual gift will be curtailed; and apprehension regarding the financial demands that such an arrangement will impose.

Elders would do well to prepare their case carefully and to rehearse the

matter thoroughly with the church. The support of the church is vital to success and the spiritual resources of the church must be harnessed to the decision making process. This is not a matter that can be dealt with hurriedly or under pressure.

### The search

For the church which feels the need for additional gift to be exercised within it and which believes that the need will be met through a full-time ministry, the pressing question will become—how do we find the right person? There are circumstances in which happily this question answers itself as soon as it is asked. Someone well known to the church, who already exercises a respected ministry and who can become more available, is a natural choice. This does not seem to be the general pattern, but the search should begin with the fellowship (Acts 13:2).

The search is for a person. Do we know who we are looking for? Man or woman? Age? Married or single? What kind of person? What will he or she be expected to do? What gift is to be exercised? What status will he or she have in the church?

Some churches have spent considerable time and effort in answering such questions; others have not done so. There is no doubt that careful consideration should be given to them before any arrangement is entered into, but it is not clear that such thought and care is a guarantee of a correct decision. There is a danger of describing a role which is only the sum of the gaps in the church's gift. This is unlikely to describe a real role that could be exercised by a balanced individual.

As in all such matters, there must be give and take between the gifts and qualities of the individual and the perceived needs of the church. The most important element of the arrangement must be the sense by both the person concerned and the church that the Lord is calling them into the arrangement.

How do churches seek for such a person? There are two principal means. Personal introduction is probably the most important method. Personal knowledge of an individual's spiritual capabilities and gifts should not be underestimated. It is important, however, not to rely too heavily on a single such assessment. Those who are aware of individuals who believe the Lord is calling them to such a ministry should themselves be prayerfully concerned to act as links between church and individual.

I believe some churches have advertised. I suspect that many have shrunk from such a frank appeal to the unknown! It would be interesting to know what experience churches have had in such circumstances.

If there are difficulties in bringing together the individual and the church it is not necessarily because there are no such individuals. For

generations, Brethren churches have accepted, recognised and commended those whom they believe God has called to exercise a full-time ministry on the overseas mission field. We probably all know men whom God has called out of Brethren churches to exercise a full-time ministry in churches of other persuasions. It has not been the case that God has not called, but that assemblies in the UK have found no place within their fellowships for those whom God has called.

In these circumstances we can consider the likely sources of supply for such men and women. There are men and women who are already exercising a ministry within one of the para-church organisations, such as Counties Evangelistic Work; Operation Mobilisation; Gospel Literature Outreach; Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, and Scripture Union. Such organisations provide opportunities for full-time service which can lead to a settled ministry within the compass of a local church. Such individuals have experience of full-time work and may well also have received relevant formal training.

A second source of such individuals is missionaries who have returned permanently to the UK and who are still active in the Lord's work. This situation arises quite frequently. Missionaries return to educate their children, to care for elderly relatives, or through changing circumstances on the mission field.

A third potential source is early retirement from secular employment. A changing economic climate now makes retirement at 55 or earlier a more frequent occurrence and possibility. Individuals with an appropriate gift, particularly where they have already been exercising an acceptable ministry within the church, can use the opportunity of early retirement to move into a full-time ministry. Such individuals have the benefit of experience and an established status in the church.

Finally, there are those, mainly younger men or women, who feel called by God to fit themselves for Christian service either at one of the Bible colleges or by a short period of full-time Christian service. This latter group may work for a year with one of the para-church organisations such as British Youth for Christ, or Gospel Literature Outreach. Initially they may not envisage themselves moving into a permanent full-time ministry, but their experience during this period may reveal unsuspected gifts which could lead to a full-time ministry. Their training and experience, though limited, can provide a valuable resource to a local church.

The Bible college student may not be clear when embarking on a course of training to what form of Christian service it will lead. A young man or woman leaving Bible college in his or her early twenties is likely to find difficulty in obtaining an opportunity for full-time service in a church.

I have little doubt that from these various sources there are those seeking opportunities to exercise a ministry within assemblies. I have the

impression, however, that those seeking such opportunities do not always find them and, as a result, move out of the Brethren orbit. This in itself should cause concern. It is not a sign of spiritual health if a significant proportion of those prepared to devote their lives to the Lord's service are unable to do so within the churches in which they have been nurtured.

We need to consider the implications of our haphazard arrangements. Many questions, outside the scope of this paper, need to be thought through if we are to make sure that the scriptural injunction (2 Tim. 2:1-2) to ensure a proper continuity of ministry is honoured.

There are a number of important and relevant aspects of the matter which should be mentioned in this context, however. The traditional mechanism of 'commendation' seems to have broken down. Elders need to be looking for, and churches commending, those whom God is calling into his service. In the home situation there is nobody fulfilling some of the useful and necessary functions undertaken in the overseas context by the editors of *Echoes*. This may seem to some an unfortunate model to choose when discussing such matters but I wish to underline the total lack of any mechanism which, however informal, provides a bridge between the Lord's servants, the commending church and the receiving church. Is there any difference in principle between the home situation and that overseas?

The problems of those leaving Bible colleges raise important questions regarding commending, calling, type of training and, not least, the age and secular experience of those contemplating full-time service. I have heard it suggested that a significant period of secular employment prior to full-time service is often appropriate, as is also a form of apprenticeship in Christian service.

### **Selection and decision**

Assuming that the church has decided that the opportunity to exercise a full-time ministry should be provided and that possible individuals have come to the notice of the church and/or elders, how should matters proceed?

If the 'candidate' is already well known to the church the whole process is greatly simplified. It is, however, important not to fall into the trap of believing that because the candidate is well known the arrangement can be made casually. It is vital not to drift into a situation in which there are misunderstandings about the expectations of the parties. The following comments deal with the more difficult circumstance when church and candidate do not know each other initially.

It seems to me essential that initial contacts should be channelled

through a limited number of the church elders (probably two, not one only). The way this is done will depend on the method selected for contacting 'candidates'. Whether matters have been arranged formally (by advert; application form; and curriculum vitae) or informally (by grapevine), the object of the initial contacts should be to enable both the representatives of the church and the individual to make a clear and honest assessment of each other without commitment. It seems to me that only rarely will either party be able to define their requirements sufficiently clearly in advance to make the initial contact simple and quick. On the contrary, a careful and relatively cautious approach by both parties seems to me necessary and appropriate, with a clear understanding that conversations can be terminated on either side and at any stage without embarrassment. During this stage the elders will endeavour to determine whether the candidate is suitable in terms of age, domestic circumstances, experience, temperament and gift. The opportunity to consult mutual acquaintances should be sought whenever possible. These initial contacts will be approached by all concerned with prayer and in a spirit of openness to the Lord's leading.

Given these circumstances, if in the initial contacts the calling of the individual seems to match the expectations of the elders and the church, the situation is likely to develop to a more formal stage. The whole body of elders will become involved and the 'candidate' will be given an opportunity to get to know the church. It is important that such an opportunity should be given at an early stage, if possible even before the whole church is aware of the candidate's identity. Churches vary widely and the candidate needs to be able to assess the situation in unbiased circumstances.

If the church is looking for help in a clearly defined area, such as youth evangelism or social work, the elders will naturally seek evidence of appropriate experience and gift from curriculum vitae and referees, as well as from interview. Such referees—and there should be more than one—should be properly consulted, preferably by face-to-face conversation. If elders feel unqualified to make a complete assessment they may wish to consult an appropriately experienced and qualified person in whom they have confidence.

Where the ministry required is not so easily definable, particularly if a pastoral ministry or ministry of the Word is envisaged, the situation is more difficult. It is essential that the candidate should have an opportunity to minister the Word to the church on a number of occasions over a period of time.

It is particularly important for the elders to establish that the temperament of the candidate is such as to promote harmonious working between the candidate, the elders and the church. The nature of the



situation is likely to require those qualities which are conducive to team working including flexibility, diplomacy, and a willingness to accept responsibility within an understood role. Not everyone is able to operate within a team structure. Secular experience suggests that 'gift' and 'talent' are not necessarily associated with such qualities. Furthermore it seems to me that those who announce they have been 'called' have a tendency to display a certain individualism which is hard to reconcile with a team situation. These are matters which are dealt with more extensively elsewhere in this volume, but their importance cannot be ignored during the selection process. The elders must consider carefully the implication of these matters for their own methods of work and the example they set to the church.

During the selection process the church will be increasingly informed and consulted. In my judgement a decision of this kind, even if it is technically made by the elders, must have the full concurrence and support of the church. It is the responsibility of the elders to exercise their gifts of leadership so that this result is achieved! This may prove a further reason for a preliminary and short-term trial period. There are of course obvious difficulties with a trial period—particularly from the point of view of the candidate—and these must be carefully weighed. Nor is a trial period necessarily a reliable guide to what may happen later!

Personally, I see no way in which these matters can be dealt with quickly, nor can a decision be rushed. It may well be that some temporary arrangement should be made before the final decision. This in itself simply underlines the difficulties which arise when church and candidate start 'cold'.

I have no doubt that the most satisfactory selection procedure arises when the church already knows the candidate well. Indeed in such circumstances it is hardly appropriate to discuss the matter in terms such as selection and candidate. Perhaps we need to seek to develop a sufficient variety of opportunities for part-time and full-time ministry so that more such 'natural' situations can develop.

### **Terms of service**

The technical aspects of this are discussed in appendices 1 and 2 at the end of this volume, but something must be said here about them from the angle of the responsibility of the local church. When a candidate has been selected the relationship must be placed on some formal basis. This may be more or less elaborate but the basis of the relationship cannot be left wholly implicit. Some matters must be made explicit. I suggest that these include:

1. Some description of the task to be performed. This description will

include a statement of the time/availability expected. 'Full-time' in practice usually means 'most of the time' and this should be recognized from the beginning.

2. A definition of the appointee's status within the formal structure of the church. Depending on the church, this structure may include deacons, stewards, elders. The relationship to the elders is particularly important. Such status must be acknowledged by the church by whatever method is appropriate to the local tradition.

3. A statement regarding the term of the appointment. An unlimited term is unlikely to be wise but the length of the term is likely to be more difficult. It should not be forgotten, however, that current employment legislation allows a 'permanent' employee to terminate his employment relatively easily.

4. A definition of the legal relationship. If the individual is to be an employee, this matter requires very careful consideration. The status of the individual in relation to both tax and employment must be established. Further details are given in appendix 2, but there are two points which I wish to emphasise:

First, the law relating to employment is complex and if elders have no personal experience as employers they should not enter into or allow the church to enter into such obligations without properly understanding their responsibilities. Those who have such experience will pause before taking such a step. Who is to be the employer? Is the legal relationship of employer/employee appropriate? (including as it must a contract of employment and involving formal rights regarding termination, unfair dismissal, etc). How is the necessary administration to be arranged? Most elderships are not organized to undertake such a task.

Second, whilst self-employment is in many ways, in my view, the appropriate route, it will be necessary for the individual to establish his self-employed status with the tax authorities. This is not necessarily easy, and expert advice is needed, both by the church and the individual. The church must be careful not to destroy by its actions this self-employed status. Such self-employed status does not of course imply independence but possibly a contractual relationship akin to professional and client. In such a relationship clients' instructions are 'taken'.

5. An understanding of the accommodation necessary for the appointee and how and where this is to be provided. There are many possible options, extending from accommodation wholly provided by the church to accommodation wholly provided by the appointee. The implications of landlord and tenant legislation requires careful thought when the accommodation is provided by the church. In areas where property values are high some form of mortgage arrangement or possibly equity sharing might be possible. Expert advice is necessary.

6. Financial support. The Brethren tradition regarding financial support for the Lord's work was largely shaped in the early years of the movement by the examples of George Müller and Henry Craik at Bristol. Their example led to a fixed view that the Lord's servants should 'live by faith'. This has been taken to require the Lord's servants not to make their needs known and not to require a financial commitment from the Lord's people.

This spiritual tradition, although undoubtedly powerful and valuable, emphasizes the matter from the point of view of the Lord's servant. The tradition has become distorted over the years and has resulted in a failure to teach the Lord's people to discharge their responsibility to meet the needs of those whom the Lord calls. The faith of the Lord's servants is to be matched by the faithful free will offerings of the Lord's people.

The strength of these traditions seems to me to be waning. We need to relearn the spiritual truths that the examples of Müller and Craik convey, and put them into practice in a more balanced way. There is ample scriptural support for making proper financial provision for those who labour in the Lord's work and for using appropriate means to assess and make that provision. The elders of a church will do well if they teach the church to face up to these responsibilities before they undertake them.

Whether the appointee is employed or self-employed the church must make an assessment of the appropriate salary/fee. Circumstances vary considerably but the Lord's people would do well to be generous in such a matter. The average manual worker earns approximately £10,000 per annum, though this might not be considered an appropriate comparison! In addition provision must be made for appropriate expenses in relation to car, telephone, books, correspondence, equipment, etc. Other costs will include statutory payments in connection with National Insurance, pension scheme, and any cost associated with the provision of accommodation.

We no longer live in a society in which these matters can be dealt with on a personal and informal basis. In many cases the law requires them to be dealt with in certain ways and Christians must not allow themselves by ignorance or thoughtlessness to fall into the position of being less honourable than the world requires.

7. Last, there should be explicit provision for periodic joint reviews of all these matters.

It may be felt that in all this welter of detail the strategic spiritual objective which led to the arrangement can easily become overlooked. But it is vitally important that these objectives should be established from the beginning by the church and with the elders. Unless this is carefully and prayerfully done the possibilities for later confusion are such as to make that outcome almost inevitable.

## A PERSONAL VIEW

### Colin Holmes

*Colin Holmes, an experienced evangelist, has served as an itinerant and has also been involved in local church-based evangelism as a resident FTW. He has served two churches in this capacity, in one case combining the appointment with some itinerant work. He shares his thoughts and feelings about the FTW, with special reference to his present appointment.*

‘What is it?’, Grumpy was asked. ‘A woman’, snapped Grumpy, ‘and I don’t like them’. ‘Why not?’, questioned Doc. ‘They are full of wicked wiles’, returned Grumpy. ‘What are wicked wiles?’, asked Sleepy. ‘I don’t know’, Grumpy replied, ‘but I am against them!’.

This extract from the story of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs seems to me to sum up the numbed mentality of many elders regarding FTWs. But the concept of a FTW who is resident in one place is a biblical one, and even if it were not, sheer commonsense demands it! My changeover from being a full-time itinerant evangelist going around from church to church and from place to place to becoming a residential FTW does not involve a contradiction. It is simply a change of position in the game.

When I went to Chiltern Church there was a sense in which I interviewed the leaders. Having had some experience I went armed with about 20 questions. They included these: What do you see as the need for this locality? Could you give me a breakdown of age and sex in the membership of the church? Has the church grown at all during the last three years? Is the church one-hundred-per-cent behind the idea of a full-time worker? Does the church suffer from any environmental problems (eg very few children, all elderly people)? What is your purpose in wanting a full-time worker? Do you have a good relationship with other churches in the area? What other churches are there within a two-mile radius? Would you see me as meeting with you as an elder, and, if not, would I meet elders on every occasion when they meet or just now and again? Could you define the nature of our work more specifically as you see it, and do you see us shaping and spearheading the work in the future? What is the state of the youth work and the children’s work at this moment? What do you see as the need for the church—pastoral, evangelistic,

teaching? What percentage of the pulpit ministry would you expect me to do? What is the church's attitude to the gifts in Romans, Corinthians and Ephesians? Can you see any problem that may arise between one worker leaving and another arriving, in terms of personality and style (they had a part-time youth worker just before we arrived)? When would you expect us to start? For how long a period? Would you expect us to take other bookings (eg houseparties)? What about schools in the area for our children? What about housing? In what way will you maintain us? How much will you pay us? What part do you allow women to play in the church? These were very important questions as far as I was concerned.

It is said that a need does not constitute a call, but the call certainly came for me out of several needs, both in what I saw and also in what I was. I commenced my work at Chiltern Church on 1 September 1982 (the day that Bobby Robson became England Football Manager: and I often make the parallel as to our progress). But the build-up to the day is important, because it is only as you look back that you can see how God has been guiding you.

So I must go back a few years, because of the need in my own life as an evangelist. I was involved in evangelism with Counties Evangelistic Work from 1970 to 1982. As an evangelist, my diary had drifted into what I called a convenience-without-conviction diary, with bookings two or three years ahead. Now to me that was not a good thing. I know that there are others who will quite happily accept bookings two or three years ahead, but I had the feeling about that time (it was the early middle seventies) of being on a spiritual treadmill. This meant that there was often a lack of sharpness in my ministry because of the security of a full diary for the next three years. At times, too, I felt that I was becoming too professional and almost bordering on the slick in what I did and how I handled things.

During this time, the Lord seemed to be saying to me: 'Look. I am more interested in what I want to do *in* you rather than *through* you.' That time in my life was very important, for God was beginning to change my thinking.

This also reflected the need, as I saw it, within the churches where I was working. I was working particularly among about 50 assemblies in Hampshire where I saw some cases of planning without commitment, activity without conviction, and missions rarely going to grassroots level. A mission seemed to be little more than an administrative exercise, something that they felt they had to arrange in order to fill in the church diary. It was very much a battery-booster for the church, and the pattern became very familiar. It involved a build-up, a boost-up and a breakdown. When I came and took a mission everything had to be good—really good. And because of my work, and my experience, and the material I had gathered together over the years it *was* good. It was the best I could

achieve, and I did the best for the Lord, and of course that was not wrong in itself. But it was so different from what they had been used to. So, instead of permanently boosting the Sunday school, or the church, or whatever, it brought it down because people saw the great gap between what had been done during the mission and what was done normally.

A more sustained, spontaneous, overall approach seemed to me to be needed, with a good co-ordinator in the church, someone who had time to give and was prepared to give it. Here was the embryo of a FTW coming to birth in my mind in the mid-seventies.

I wrote a paper at that time and circulated it to all the assemblies in Hampshire, trying to assess my own frustration and my feeling of inability to get to grips with the real need for Christians and for non-Christians in the area. I just tried to assess concisely on a few sheets of paper exactly how I felt. It met with quite a mixed reception! I can't really remember what I wrote, but I know that at the time it was all very real to me.

I also saw—and still see—the need for the Christians I was working with to be 'prepared for works of service' (Eph. 4:11–12). I believe it was at this point that God was saying to me: 'Look. Your task is not just to preach as an evangelist but it is also to bring out the gift within other Christians.' I began to see another ministry that the Lord was calling me to—in fact it was part of the ministry that I had neglected. So during that time I got involved in things like Evangelism Explosion. The training was an immense help to me personally, and it enabled me to develop training ministries in various churches in Hampshire. There were also houseparties as a teaching aid for young people. And there was a 'Teach, Reach, Preach' programme that we put on at some of our tent crusades, with twenty or thirty youngsters joining us. We used to have a teaching seminar during the day, and the young people used to go out with us into the streets of the villages and towns, evangelizing.

We also had a preachers' weekend. I wrote to all the assemblies in Hampshire, trying to find out how many people under the age of twenty-five had occupied the pulpit, and discovered that it was less than ten per cent. So we designed a preachers' weekend and tried to develop gift in these people. We also had training days. One felt very deeply the need to train others and get them involved in Christian work.

Other things were beginning to come up that shaped and influenced me towards taking up work at Chiltern Church (which I had never heard of at that time). By the late seventies we had two boys who were then five and three years of age. I felt very strongly the father and the family man in me, and I was aware that I was careering here, there and everywhere. I concluded that it was important that I should begin to get reins in my own life for the family's sake. Also I was beginning to feel that my gift was developing into a pastoral, teaching role as well as the evangelistic one, so

when in 1978/79 I was asked to spend 70% of my time working with a single church (not Chiltern) I jumped at the change. It seemed to be a perfect compromise and I thought that I would be able to have my cake and eat it too. But it wasn't all that rosy and I found a lot of salt in the cake! But it was a very valuable experience and I learned a lot about leadership in team work. I also learned a lot about myself and—most important of all—I learned more about God in the four years I was there.

In the midst of all this, and despite all the good that was coming out of it, a verse from the Bible spoke very clearly to me. It ran: 'Depart, depart, go out from there!' Now I know that that was not written for me in the first place. It was written by Isaiah for the people of Israel. But I knew it was a message for me also. And the very next verse had a message for me: 'But you will not leave in haste or go in flight: for the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear-guard.' This was at least two years before we left, and it kept us from going back into secular work.

Then in March 1982 came a letter from Chiltern Church, Sutton, inviting us to join them. They defined the role they had in mind for us, and it was virtually everything we were looking for. But Ruth, my wife, and I felt a sense of caution as well as excitement that the Lord was intervening at this stage. Parallel with it were two or three other possibilities of going into full-time work with churches, and so we were very careful. I used my 20-odd questions in the interview, and we both came away with the distinct impression that this was not the place for us. Our reasons began with the size of the church. It was not very big. We counted less than 30, mainly elderly, when we actually went in September. It was also a very intellectual church which I sensed then—and have confirmed since—must give it a strong image of intellectualism in the neighbourhood. And it was a very posh church which I would describe as upper-middle class (by my standards, anyway) in a very posh area where it would be very expensive to live. Other alternatives were coming in. We just didn't want to move, yet eventually we felt a very clear inward conviction that this was where God wanted us to go. So in the light of all that we came to Chiltern Church three years ago in September.

Now with the benefit of hindsight we can say, 'Yes, it was the right thing to do, and it has been a tremendous three years.' Someone said to me that a FTW goes through a three-stage process in a church—the honeymoon, the nightmare and the reality. We have certainly not been through the nightmare, and we knew the reality of it before we went. We have been very fortunate, and I think one of the reasons for this is that we meet regularly—about once a fortnight—as elders, and share things in what is very much a team ministry. Training and equipping others, leading consecutive Bible study (I take 75% of the teaching and preaching ministry) and seeing the church becoming servants of the community in

which they are situated have been tremendously rewarding aspects of Chiltern during the last two or three years.

I was due to leave in September, when my three years were up, but in fact I am staying on. I am at the point which all Christian full-time workers get to when they need to know for certain that it is right for them to stay where they are. I need the same conviction to continue, as I needed to commence. This is particularly important for me as I see myself basically as an innovator, a pioneer, a get-in-and-get-out sort of person. I am not a stayer, a plodder. I think, maybe, that work at Chiltern has made me more of a plodder and less of a get-in-and-get-out sort of person, but I still feel that we need to be clear about what we do, and do it only because we know that God has called us to do it. That is what it has been like at Chiltern, and long may it continue.



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## **SELECTION AND TERMS OF SERVICE**

### **Chris Bocutt**

*A member of a church in Basingstoke, Chris Bocutt is involved in inter-church evangelism in the town, following on from Mission England. He and his wife help with pastoral counselling in their church. Chris is a civil servant.*

#### **Introduction**

A number of churches are considering employing full-time workers. If you are one of the leaders of such a church, the following discussion of selection procedures and a range of non-financial conditions of service may help you to find someone suitable. Although many of the issues mentioned apply primarily to the worker who is an employee, they will need to be considered for someone who is self-employed. In following the procedures set out below, you should not lose sight of the fact that the primary qualifications are spiritual.

#### **Selection**

There are three distinct stages in selection: establishing the job to be done, finding suitable candidates to interview, and interviewing them.

#### **The job**

Identify the tasks to be performed; eg evangelist, pastor, social worker. Draw up a specification of the work which you want the person to do. Rank the different tasks; ie essential, desirable, or merely optional. From this list produce a detailed job description. If the job is for a limited period, decide how long it should be; eg 2 years.

#### **The qualities required**

Against each major element of the job identify appropriate qualifications, experience and/or personal qualities. Distinguish the essential from those that are only desirable.

## **Finding suitable candidates**

Take the initiative in looking for suitable candidates. Use more than one of the following approaches:

1. Find out if someone in your church wants to enter full-time Christian work.
2. Contact other churches in case they have such a member.
3. Advertise in Christian magazines; eg *Harvester*.
4. Contact Bible colleges: eg LBC, MBC. Careers services in Bible colleges are not as highly developed as in other colleges and universities, but they may be able to make known your requirements and help you draw up a short list of suitable people.
5. Contact Christian organisations who may have staff looking for new work; eg Counties Evangelistic Work, London City Mission. But do not poach!
6. Contact missionary societies in case there are missionaries coming home from the field (eg for children's education).

There is no equivalent to the dedicated professional recruitment agency of the secular world. However, there may be a role here for an existing Christian organisation; eg CBRF might be enhanced to provide such a service.

## **Information for candidates**

Provide potential candidates with as much information as you can about what is expected of them. This will save you time later; you will receive fewer enquiries from unsuitable candidates and avoid the embarrassment of finding out, too late, that your appointee misunderstood your requirements.

## **Shortlisting**

Check that the person(s) you interview do have the qualities you need. If there is a significant amount of preaching/systematic teaching, look for clear evidence of capability. References from previous churches, college staff, etc should give some assurance on this. If the job is mainly social work, you will probably need someone with professional qualifications. In this case, ask for professional referees.

## **Interviewing**

Do not rely solely on your own judgement. Ask other people from within your own or another church to help you interview the candidates either as

a single board or separately. In the latter case, review together the merits of the candidate before making up your mind.

### Conditions of Service

If you prepare a clear statement of conditions of service, both parties to the employment will have no doubt about what is expected of them and it may prevent later misunderstandings. But what should be included in such a statement? Employees in secular work are entitled to a minimum set of conditions under the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (EP(C)A 1978). You may like to use them as a model. (More details can be found in *Contracts at Work* by Erich Suter, IPM.)

### The Contract

There is no requirement under Common Law that a contract should be reduced to writing. However, the EP(C)A 1978 obliges the employer to give the employee a written statement of conditions of service within 13 weeks of starting work. This statement is not in itself a contract although it can become one if the employee signifies acceptance of the statement as a true record of the agreed contract.

### Terms of Service

The EP(C)A 1978 requires the statement of conditions of employment referred to above to cover certain particulars:

1. The parties

The 'legal employer' is probably the trustees. The legal status of the trust deed may have to be amended to ensure that the trustees constitute a legal entity. The elders would continue to be responsible for day-to-day matters.

2. The date when employment began

3. Job title

The title should be broad enough to cover the range of duties that you have agreed with the individual. EP(C)A 1978 does not require you to include a job description but there are advantages in doing so.

4. Method of calculating pay

What is the rate of pay, and when and how will it be paid?

If the employment is for longer than a year, what provisions will be made to review the rate of pay?

5. Hours of work

When are the duties listed in the job description to be performed? What about time off during the week?

6. Entitlement to holidays including public holidays and to holiday pay  
How much annual holiday is allowed and how does it accrue?

Will all holidays be paid or is there a provision for unpaid leave? What about arrangements to deal with holiday not taken during the year?

7. Sickness and sick pay

Unless specifically excluded, the employee is entitled to sick pay. Sick pay schemes often cover such things as: minimum service qualification, production of a valid medical certificate, contributory insurance schemes.

8. Pensions and pension schemes

9. Notice of termination required by either side

Length of notice on both sides; the EP(C)A 1978 provides for one week for the first 2 years of employment and one week per year thereafter up to a maximum of 12.

10. Rules and disciplinary procedures

The statement must include a note about any disciplinary rules which apply to the employee; eg teaching false doctrine, so that the employee is not dismissed without a fair hearing.

11. Grievance procedures

If the employee has a grievance, what procedure should be followed to resolve it, and to whom is the individual answerable (eg church meeting or the elders)?

### **Non-Contractual Conditions**

Finally, you may like to consider making provision for some non-contractual matters.

1. Status

What will be the position of the full-timer with respect to the elders? Will attendance at the elders' meeting be normal or only as necessary?

2. Training

Will time be allowed for this? How will it be arranged (eg time spent with an experienced elder in the same or another church, occasional courses at Bible college etc)? What might be covered (eg pastoral counselling)?

3. Outside occupations

What scope/limitations for accepting commissions from other churches and other organisations (eg preaching engagements, free-lance writing)?

4. Review of progress

How will the elders review the worker's progress on the jobs set out in the job description?

## EMPLOYED OR SELF-EMPLOYED?

### Alec McIlhinney

*After working for 11 years in the Inland Revenue, Alec McIlhinney is now Group Taxation Manager for Rowntree Mackintosh, plc, York. He has had wide experience of local church life.*

Whether or not an individual is an employee, as distinct from a self-employed person, is crucial to the determination of rights and obligations in taxation, National Insurance Contributions (NIC), redundancy pay, health and safety and sick pay (and maternity rights). Third parties, such as insurance companies, may need to ascertain status in relation to liability to injury.

Care should therefore be taken that the agreement between church and FTW is comprehensive and unambiguous; failure to make the correct deductions or pay the appropriate contributions can lead to recovery proceedings for several back years.

The Inland Revenue (IR) has recently published a booklet (IR56) entitled *Employed or Self-Employed?*. This is a helpful but by no means comprehensive guide to the factors that must be taken into account in deciding whether a person is an employee or self-employed.

Other useful general publications:

Employers' Guide to PAYE (P7),

Employers' Guide to NI Contributions (NP15).

If in doubt, the local tax office or DHSS office should be consulted.

Two preliminary warnings: first, many tax allowances and rates change annually, as do state benefits and NIC, and maintaining up-to-date information is important; second, the notes which follow do not pretend to be anything like comprehensive and the importance of enlisting professional help must be emphasised.

### The Employee Worker

The employer has a statutory obligation to deduct income tax under PAYE rules, and to account for it to the collector of taxes; and to ensure

that Class I NICs are also paid by both employer and employee to the collector.

It may be thought appropriate to provide for the FTW's retirement by ensuring that contributions towards a private pension are also made by both parties. There are rules governing the approval of schemes and the amounts of allowable contributions (see IR pamphlet 12). Employee contributions are deductible for tax.

Some employers provide life assurance cover, as well as the more usual benefits relating to transport and residence. Employers' liability for accidents, etc, must also be covered.

In any event, it must be clear who pays what: car purchase and running costs, gas, electricity, telephone, rates, rent/mortgage, etc.

Tax under Schedule E is charged on the 'emoluments' of an office or employment, including 'all salaries, fees, wages, perquisites and profits whatsoever'. Lest any doubt should remain, where inclusive earnings are £8,500 or above further legislation ensures virtually every benefit in kind, whether convertible to cash or not, is also assessable.

It seems reasonable that the FTW should earn at least the average of all male workers, or perhaps, as some churches have decided, the average of the incomes of all members in employment. If so, it will often follow that his earnings (which for this purpose include the value of all benefits) will exceed the limit of £8,500 (unchanged since 1979) above which the FTW becomes a 'higher paid employee' (sic).

Benefits in kind (often referred to as 'fringe benefits') include, eg, the provision of a car and petrol (both taxed on a fixed scale, changed annually), a loan at a reduced or nil rate of interest, accommodation, payment of mortgage interest. A return of benefits must be made annually to the IR by the employer in form P11D, and by the employee in his tax return. IR booklet 480 gives guidance.

The employee is entitled to deduct from these amounts any expenses 'wholly, necessarily and exclusively' incurred in the performance of his duties—words which are notoriously rigid and restricted in their operation (and in contrast to the more liberal allowance of expenses to the self-employed).

In practice, the 'business' proportion of expenditure will be allowable; some relief should be given for a room in the home set aside for study/counselling; but the cost of home-to-work travel is not allowable, nor would be the purchase of most books and journals (or the CBRF subscription). The Revenue will need to be persuaded of the reasonableness of amounts claimed—and attitudes may vary in different tax offices.

Other points which might arise include:

1. The FTW's freedom (need?) to earn elsewhere: the status of this money can be difficult to determine.

2. Gifts other than salary: these are taxable if they arise out of the employment but not if given in a personal capacity—a fine distinction.
3. Working partly abroad and partly in the UK—again tax complications can ensue.

### The Self-Employed Worker

The self-employed person in a profession or vocation is not subject to 'Pay as you earn'. Instead he pays tax under Schedule D direct to the collector of taxes in January and July annually some considerable time in arrears: for example, tax due on the earnings of the year to 30/6/86 will, in the normal case, be payable in two equal instalments on 1.1.88 and 1.7.88.

He is charged, not on 'emoluments' but on his 'profits or gains' (comprising incomings less outgoings). The 'necessarily' test does not apply and he may claim expenses 'wholly and exclusively laid out or expended for the purposes of the profession or vocation'. Clearly this gives him far greater scope than the employee enjoys.

Again where there is a private element (as with car expenses, telephone, study room etc) an apportionment will be agreed. Allowances for depreciation on some capital assets (eg motor car) may be claimed.

The *total* earnings of the FTW's spouse are tax-free up to £2205 (about £42 a week), although some NIC may be payable. Wages paid by the FTW to his wife can be claimed as an expense provided these can be justified by the duties carried out. Reasonable remuneration should not be difficult to substantiate. Where, for example, do you find someone willing to be on duty at all hours for £40?

Class 2 and Class 4 NICs are due from the self-employed. In 1985-86 these would amount at most to £821, and one half of the Class 4 contributions (£303 maximum) can be deducted for tax. (By contrast, the employer's and employee's Class I contributions can together amount to £1,240 in 1985-86.)

A self-employed person is entitled to relief for contributions made towards an annuity for retirement. The maximum level of contribution allowable is 17½% of annual earnings (less capital allowances)—a little more than that when nearing retirement.

There are, however, other consequences which flow from self-employed status, and these should be weighed carefully alongside the likely financial benefits.

1. The self-employed do not come within the ambit of the EP(C)A 1978, and thus have no statutory rights as regards, for example, sick pay. Fewer state benefits are available.



2. Pension provision is the responsibility of the individual. This is a matter which should command diligent and early thought by both parties.

3. For the self-employed FTW (if not for the church or churches among whom he moves) there is a significantly greater burden of record-keeping. A simple cash-book recording all receipts and payments should normally suffice provided it is kept scrupulously up to date (ie, *not* written up every other week!).

At yearly intervals the inspector of taxes will ask for a statement of income and expenditure. Receipts or written evidence for expenses should be retained in case they are asked for and details of 'business' and 'private' car mileage jotted down. As with the employed FTW, uncertainty *can* arise over the status of sums received. It is particularly important that the source of 'private' money banked should be recorded in case a query arises later.

### Some Conclusions

Comparison of the treatment of the employee with that of the self-employed can provoke differing conclusions. Some may feel that the administrative burdens and strict rules inherent in the PAYE system are onerous, and favour the self-employed route. On the other hand, there is some measure of certainty and immediacy which may be welcome. In other respects, however, the balance of advantage may lie the other way (eg employment protection and pension arrangements). Again, therefore, the message is clear: the contract must be meticulously thought out in advance, with input from both parties, and preferably also from a Christian professionally engaged in a relevant discipline.

Overall, though, it may be suggested, on balance, that, provided proper care is taken over non-fiscal matters, the self-employed route is preferable, and an agreement should be drawn up accordingly. This is not just a question of trying to secure the most favourable financial position: in most cases, it will accord more nearly with reality. It is unlikely that in church/FTW relationships there will exist the measure of detailed control over the way he carries out his tasks to establish a master-servant position. If, however, it is clear that there is truly an employee position, then all the consequences must be accepted and the authorities informed accordingly.

The expression of intent in the agreement will be an important, though not necessarily conclusive, pointer towards the character of the relationship. As a general rule, greater significance is attached to an expression of intention where there is confidence in the bona fides of the parties.

Finally, and obviously, there must be a cheerful prior commitment to regular giving in the church—and the treasurer should persistently press the advantages of deeds of covenant.

## IMPACT ON ITINERANT MINISTRIES

**Stephen Short**

*Stephen Short, who engages in a widespread Bible teaching ministry, reflects on the implications of the appointment of resident FTW's for the itinerant minister.*

The purpose of this brief paper is to provide some reflections on the impact which is made on those who engage in a full-time itinerant Bible teaching ministry among Brethren churches of the growing practice of appointing in Brethren churches a FTW. The writer has been engaging in full-time itinerant Bible teaching among Brethren churches for thirty-three years, with a limited, though not insignificant, amount of his time being devoted to his own church.

It stands to reason that a Brethren church which has undertaken the financial responsibility of appointing a FTW has less funds available for calling on the ministry of full-time Bible teachers where a financial responsibility is obviously involved. Furthermore, such Brethren churches as appoint a FTW can hardly do other than make use of him for a significant proportion of their preaching services, with the consequence that other preachers who have served the church in this way over the years are either only thenceforth invited occasionally, or not at all. Some of these churches may have received in the past a good deal of systematic scripture instruction through such Bible teachers, and a number of 'Paul-Timothy' relationships may thus have become formed. This tends to cease in the case of churches with a FTW; but, doubtless, systematic Scripture instruction and 'Paul-Timothy' relationships are then acquired in other ways.

There must be several itinerant Bible teachers who regret the severance (for this or any other cause) of this kind of link with churches which they have regularly served for two or three decades, and with which they have developed very affectionate links (which one believes are mutual); but as against this, when one door becomes shut, the Lord, in his goodness, opens up other doors of opportunity; and new affectionate ties become established, and systematic Bible teaching can be given, in these fresh spheres of service.

If the question be asked, 'Does the appointment of a FTW in certain

Brethren churches affect adversely the financial situation of the itinerant Bible teacher?', the answer is 'No'. Itinerant Bible teachers look to the Lord alone for the supply of their needs. If one normal channel of God's supply tends, for any cause, to dry up, God provides another one. This is demonstrated in scripture (in the story of Elijah), and it has proved itself true again and again in the experience of those whose trust is in him. He is always faithful to them. Sometimes he causes them to pass through a period of testing for their own good; (this is not resented); but it has been the experience of thousands of the Lord's servants, whether labouring for him in the homeland or abroad, that 'they who trust Him wholly, Find Him wholly true'. For this, we praise his name. We serve a good master; and though the circumstances of our service may be subject to various changes, he himself never fails. And he never will.

# IMPACT ON PARA-CHURCH EVANGELISM

## Roger Chilvers

*Roger Chilvers, a full-time evangelist with Counties Evangelistic Work, divides his time between itinerant evangelism and work with one particular church. He has been deeply involved in Mission England, serving as national training officer for year three. He considers the implications for para-church evangelism of the use by local churches of resident full-time workers.*

Para-church evangelism has various forms. These include:

Work at a distance where money and sometimes workers are provided by the local church but where the work is done by others: eg Operation Mobilization, Scripture Gift Mission, Soldiers' and Airmen's Scripture Readers Association, and some overseas missionary work.

Para-church work where an organisation with whom we are broadly in sympathy provides a service we gladly use in a local context: eg, Covenanters, Scripture Union.

Inter church work where evangelism is undertaken on a very large scale: eg, Mission England, Mission to London.

Local inter-church work where churches combine for evangelistic activities.

It is this last group which, generally speaking, is more affected by the FTW joining the local church and which we will be thinking about in this discussion.

It must surely be accepted that the unity of the people of God, as members of the same body, is not simply a theory but a reality to be expressed in practical terms. As John Newton once said, 'If a man will love Jesus I will love him, whatever hard name he may be called by. My differing from him will not always prove him to be wrong except I am infallible myself!'

For the non-Christian community, who have little understanding of doctrinal or historical differences, any expression of unity is a valuable part of the gospel which is a reconciling message. It is, therefore, an extremely helpful thing for Brethren churches to participate in para-church evangelism, centred as it is, in the person and work of Christ.

Perhaps it is for this reason, together with a generally more 'Arminian' view of the gospel, that Brethren churches have in the past taken a lead in so many para-church evangelistic activities. Sadly this is not nearly so clearly seen today.

A number of factors, however, have not always helped Brethren churches. Para-church evangelism has usually meant 'bigger' (bigger meetings, better known speakers etc). This has its own special impact on enquirers and new Christians who, in most cases, will naturally want to continue with an atmosphere and style similar to that in which they were converted. Small churches can rarely provide such an ethos. This in turn leads to one of the problems of para-church activity, ie, in most cases the churches that benefit most are already the strongest and largest. Smaller and weaker churches can sometimes be made even weaker through para-church activity. The problem is often compounded by the fact that the inter-church evangelism has usually been under strong, clear leadership which is often sadly missing from Brethren churches.

Whilst the term FTW can and often is used to describe a great variety of gifts and abilities in Brethren churches, in these churches the FTWs are more frequently evangelists or at least people who are expected to make their biggest impact in the area of bringing folk to faith in Christ. Rarely are workers taken on as teachers, pastors or administrators etc as is often seen in other churches. Where pastoral work is seen as a necessity, it is usually amongst the unconverted fringe that the activities of the FTWs are expected to be concentrated. This means that the impact of FTWs in Brethren churches is likely to be seen mostly in the evangelism and outreach of the church. Several areas are affected.

1. *Realism* A FTW in evangelism will help the church to think realistically about evangelism: eg What impact does the 'every Sunday night' Gospel Meeting have? Why is it that the 'Morning Meeting' is such a big barrier to growth in some of our churches? Long cherished ideas may sometimes be seen to be unrealistic. This is often a very painful process.

2. *Programme* The church will be able to plan the best ways to reach both the immediate neighbourhood and further afield: eg church planting in housing estates.

3. *Development of gift* A FTW will both encourage and provide opportunities for evangelistic gift to be developed and used.

4. *Follow-up* One weakness of para-church evangelism is that the new Christian seldom has the opportunity to talk with and continue to learn from the evangelist who led him to Christ. There is an immediate problem in linking people with 'substitute spiritual parents'. This major difficulty of follow-up does not arise where the evangelist is resident in the church.

All this has both negative and positive effects on para-church evangelism.

## Negative effects

1. *Motivation* If a church has its own evangelist with a well structured and realistic evangelistic programme, planned with both the unconverted of that neighbourhood and the gifts of the Christians in mind, there is less likely to be great enthusiasm for poorly thought out evangelistic projects that are organized locally. When we have been concerned at the type of work that our young people get involved in, we sometimes forget that it is because there is little alternative evangelism with the local church.

2. *Finance* Higher financial priority is likely to be given to the home church work and its worker than to inter-church projects about which we may be sometimes less than enthusiastic.

3. *Time* Because of the planning that is more likely with a FTW the church is less able to be involved in sudden or short-term evangelistic projects that local groups may organize.

However, all these points are far outweighed by the positive effect that a FTW can have.

## Positive effects

1. *Status of evangelism* In practice, though not in theory, many Brethren churches give a low priority to evangelism. This is radically changed when there is an evangelist in the church. In practice, this means that the church with an evangelistic heart will be the most enthusiastic supporter of efforts to reach the lost. Practical involvement, however, will not be automatic, but will depend upon careful assessment in the light of a full church evangelism programme. Such involvement will be more committed, dependable and thorough in every way.

2. *Quality of evangelism* Churches with a full evangelistic programme will clearly have members whose evangelistic gifts have been developed, have experience in evangelism in different circumstances, and know the area well with its different needs and opportunities. This will be an invaluable resource and task force for para-church evangelism.

3. *Planning and advice* Local workers are clearly the essential foundation for any lasting work which is to penetrate the local community. With plans to be made both in the churches and in the neighbourhood, the wise evangelist (or group organizing evangelism) will want to seek the help and advice as well as use the skills of the local worker.

4. *Follow-up* For reasons outlined above follow-up work, which is always difficult, is greatly assisted by the FTW who can provide continued help and leadership.

## **Conclusion**

The addition of a FTW will mean that para-church evangelism is strengthened and helped where the work is carefully planned and rooted in the community and where gift in the church is used and not just exploited.

The addition of a FTW will not help para-church evangelism where the work planned is at short notice, without sufficient research ('we've always done this'), and where the local churches are simply being used to serve the method or system rather than the community needs.

# **THE WIFE OF THE FULL-TIME WORKER**

**Rosemary Jennings**

*On the basis of interviews with the wives of full-time workers Rosemary Jennings, who is a social worker, comments on a number of aspects of their position and offers important recommendations.*

## **Introduction**

This paper is based on six interviews with the wives of resident FTWs in Brethren churches in the south-east of England, who have been involved in full-time work for a period of time varying from under a year to fifteen years. Four of these couples had known the church they are now involved with prior to going full-time, two had not. Of the wives interviewed three were working full-time in secular jobs, two were working part-time and one had been commended to full-time work with her husband. The aim of this study is to highlight both positive areas and areas of concern which might be of help to other churches when considering having a resident FTW

## **Expectations**

It would appear that wives were often not involved in the initial discussions when their husbands were being considered as FTWs by churches, and on occasions this has later given rise to some confusion regarding the role of the wife. It does seem that it would be helpful both to the church and to the couple for the wife to be involved in at least some discussion prior to starting the work. It was clear that good communication with church elders was greatly valued by those who had experienced it.

## **Supportive Role**

All the wives interviewed saw their primary role as one of support to their husband rather than one of joint leadership and felt that it was very



important that they should be available to give encouragement and support to enable their husbands in their church work. I felt that this support was sometimes being given at considerable emotional cost to wives and it would seem that this is an area where churches could learn to be more sensitive and loving, particularly when areas of disagreement arise between FTWs and other church leaders.

### **Finances**

Most of the wives I interviewed were involved in full- or part-time secular work, and in most instances this was because it was necessary in order to keep the household running, as the amount being earned by the husband was not enough to maintain an adequate standard of living. I am aware that the amount which churches can afford varies but there is a need to recognise that, frequently, the area of finance not only places considerable strain on wives but requires sacrificial support from them in order to enable their husbands to continue to be involved in full-time Christian work.

### **Hospitality**

All the wives interviewed felt that hospitality was a very important aspect of their role and wished to be able to entertain widely in their homes and have a home where church members would feel free to call. Some also felt able to use their homes as a bridge for non-Christians, who had some church contact, to discuss Christian matters over a relaxed meal. Nevertheless entertaining, however simply, is costly and adequate financial support is needed to enable this to be possible on a regular basis. Awareness is also needed of the limitations which family demands can place on entertaining.

### **Pastoral Care**

Most wives did feel that they could have some degree of involvement in pastoral care with their husbands, although the level of involvement varied widely. Most are or had been involved in pre-marriage and marriage counselling and saw this as an area where they could work together to help other couples both within and without the church. Some wives were also involved in regular contact with some of the older people in the church who needed practical and emotional support.

### **Other Areas of Church Work**

The level of involvement in other church activities, such as children's

work, youth work, women's meetings, varied according to pressure of time, family demands and personal preferences. Some wives feel that they have something to contribute in one or other of these areas, but there needs to be recognition of the fact that individual gifts vary and that people should not be automatically assumed to have something to contribute because their husband is a FTW.

### **Family**

Not all the wives interviewed had children but it was clear from those who had that at times their children can be under extra pressure as a result of their father's role—some church members have higher expectations of their behaviour, which is unrealistic. There is also the problem that church activities often take place in the evenings which means that children see less of their father, thus placing mothers under extra pressure. Churches should bear this in mind in terms of demands placed on FTWs.

### **Holidays/Days Off**

The importance of time with one another as couples or families needs to be recognised, both in terms of a regular day off each week and also holidays together. Practice seems to vary widely as regards days off, but I felt that wives would value having more time to spend relaxing with their husbands, while recognising some of the difficulties in implementation. Holidays together were valued and enjoyed but were not always possible in view of financial constraints. Churches do need to be aware of the demands that full-time church work places on couples, and enable them to relax together.

### **Isolation**

As with the wives of elders, wives of FTWs are often placed under some strain in terms of what can be shared of problems and difficulties within the church. I realise the need for confidentiality and prevention of gossip within churches, but do feel that churches must recognise that this can make those in positions of leadership feel very isolated. Wives are often the only people with whom church leaders can share and this can be stressful to wives. Some of the wives I interviewed were also very aware that some church members could feel threatened if close relationships were developed with some people and not with others. As a result it seems that it is often difficult to have close, sharing, supportive friendships within their own fellowship, which can lead to feelings of isolation. Some

couples have managed to make friendships with couples in similar situations in other fellowships but churches could perhaps lend a helping hand by encouraging meetings of FTWs and their wives on a regular basis, perhaps with an occasional residential conference.

### **Conclusion**

From these interviews it is clear that the wives of FTWs feel that they have an important role to play in supporting their husbands in their work, both practically and emotionally. However, I became aware that some of the demands which are placed on wives are both physically and emotionally draining. Some of this stress is related to financial worries and some to unclear thinking on the part of the churches about their role. It was clear to me that stresses were less in situations where there was clear and honest communication between the elders and the couple and where there was adequate financial support. Churches also need to remember the phrase 'Who helps the helpers?', and recognise the need to give wives of FTWs loving and sensitive support.

# RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN A GROUP LEADERSHIP

**John Boyes**

*After a long and varied career in management education and consultancies, John Boyes is executive director of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship. Here is his distilled wisdom on the subject of relationships within a group leadership.*

This short background paper summarizes some aspects of the dynamics which affect the performance of groups of leaders in different decision-making settings. It should be recognized that merely bringing together a number of individuals, however personally capable, does not constitute an effective group. There is a clear need for growth into a team relationship in which members can exchange ideas freely and clearly, and feel involved in the decisions and processes of the group. Nor is its effective functioning dependent on the leader alone. Contributing to the total task of leadership is the responsibility of every member.

Perhaps the most apparent leadership body for readers is the eldership or oversight of a local church—a plural college of peers with supportive and complementary roles to perform. There are, of course, other leader groups within the church—the deacons, the Sunday school teachers, the fabric committee, etc—each with its own distinctive set of objectives to achieve in corporate working and decision-making. There are certain recognizable aspects of behaviour shared by all purposive groupings of people in any setting. A simple model consists of three of these aspects:

1. *Task achievement:*  
processes which enable the group's aims and tasks to be accomplished;
2. *Group maintenance:*  
processes which enable the groups to work together supportively and to stay the course;
3. *Individual needs:*  
processes which are self-oriented and impinge on other members and the group tasks.

These aspects of behaviour interact with each other and must be balanced to achieve satisfactory working; they throw light on the positive and negative forces which bear on the group at work. The first two are

described as 'functional' in that they build together the two main progressive aims of the group: to get the work done and to hang together as an integrated body. The third aspect is often called 'dysfunctional' in that such behaviours detract from the others and thwart the growth of teamwork.

In the first category of task achievement, activities would include *initiating*: proposing tasks and goals, defining problems, suggesting procedures and ideas; *informing*: seeking and offering facts of relevance to the problem; *clarifying, elaborating, summarising*: interpreting issues, defining terms, indicating alternatives, restating discussion, etc; *decision seeking and taking*: invoking procedure when the group is ready. But by majoring on these processes alone to the exclusion of other aspects, a working group can soon become an unattractive decision-making machine, susceptible to manipulation by some of the members.

In the second category, there are important social behaviours which encourage the group to remain in good working order, with a good climate for task work and maximum use of member resources. These would include processes of *harmonizing*: reconciling disagreements, reducing tensions, exploring differences; *gate keeping*: opening channels of communication to facilitate taking part, sharing with others; *encouraging*: warm, friendly, responsive acceptance of others' contributions; *compromising*: modifying views in the interest of group cohesion, yielding status in conflict; *standards*: setting and testing levels of group satisfaction with its work.

Groups newly established or with new members need to spend some time in these dimensions of behaviour before confidence and trust has grown sufficiently for task processes to become efficient.

The third category of self oriented behaviour is, perhaps, the most recognizable aspect of groups at work and the source of much impediment to group achievement and satisfaction. They would include *dominating*: attempting to assert authority or superiority in manipulating the members' decision making; *aggressing*: stubborn blocking of others' ideas and suggestions or attacking them as persons; *recognition*: help-seeking calling for sympathy in confusion, insecurity, deprecation, thus holding up the group action; *pairing up*: forming sub-groups to force through particular views, pleading special interests as a cover for prejudice or stereotypes desired by some members only; *withdrawing*: removing sources of discomfort by psychologically leaving the group.

These problems of self-oriented behaviour arise mainly for certain individuals in their roles as group members, based on problems of

1. *identity*:  
who am I in this group?

2. *goals*:  
do the group goals coincide sufficiently with my own?
3. *control*:  
how much will I be influenced by others for good or bad?
4. *intimacy*:  
how much of myself am I expected to put at the disposal of others?

We cannot afford to ignore these undercurrents, and a good group learns how to integrate its members' needs with its corporate objectives. Thus it develops high cohesiveness (attractiveness to its members) and works towards *consensus* decision and not by imposed, minority crushing processes.

However, in many highly cohesive groups, another collective dysfunctional behaviour often manifests itself. In its search for authentication and security, a group can easily obscure facts and ignore situations which are essential elements in its decision-making. This danger is known as '*groupthink*' and is a drive for consensus at any cost, suppressing dissent and appraisal of alternatives. It tends to occur when cohesiveness is high and members are insulated from external influences; it often occurs in authoritarian leadership situations even when members do not wish to conform.

Some of the symptoms of this syndrome are: illusions of invulnerability, discounting warnings, belief in inherent rightness of group's views, pressures on members against dissent with group 'loyalty', self-censorship by members of their inclinations to doubt and deviate, illusion of unanimity ('silence means consent?'), emergence of self-appointed mind-guards who protect the group from adverse information which might shatter shared complacency, etc—perhaps a moderate level of group cohesion is best, so that solidarity is not confused with conformism and that members can be themselves and not 'yes men' to others. It has to be realised that 'complete conformity is as unpractical as complete individual freedom' (McGregor).

Learning to live with differences and to handle them effectively is a continuing group responsibility. We need to understand the positive aspects of conflict of views and learn to avoid 'win/lose' situations which fracture group cohesion.

There are three basic strategies available for handling differences, of which the first two are not to be commended in this study:

1. '*divide and conquer*' in which the 'boss' discourages inter-member exchanges and coalitions. His is the preferred viewpoint which he promotes in a vertical, one-to-one direction with weak colleagues who are only nominally members of the group;

2. '*suppression*' by ignoring or declaring 'irrelevant' arbitrarily the issues which members raise. The chairman calls for 'objectivity', urges 'rally

round', 'let's not be divisive' and so the group ends up as an agenda processing machine with formalized procedures in which the members protect their interests;

3. '*working through*' which calls for a mature, committed *team* who have learned trust and role responsibilities. This may well be a slower process with decreasing need for leader arbitration and voting procedures. It calls for tolerance of ambiguities and a true release of innovation and creativity, with relationships which avoid mutual antagonisms, secret planning, playing politics, currying favour, ego-defences, needs for 'checks and balances', etc.

Striving for this kind of all-member, resource-using teams is worth a lot of hard work by those concerned. There is sound experimental evidence that it is the members' abilities and interactions that are the main determinants of corporate success—the leader alone cannot determine the group's effectiveness no matter how skilful, capable, competent or even 'charismatic' he may be! There are many other aspects of group development issues which cannot be included here in this summary study, eg, sensitivity training, organisation development among others, but for those who would study further in this field, the following introductory texts are suggested:

1. J. Boyes, 'Corporate Leadership in the Oversight', *CBRF Journal* No. 30 (1980)
2. P. Honey, *Face to Face; a practical guide to interactive skills*, *IPM* (1976)
3. I. L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, Houghton, Mifflin, Boston (1972)
4. D. McGregor, *The Professional Manager* McGraw Hill (1967)
5. E. Schein, *Organisational Psychology* Prentice Hall (1972);  
E. Schein, 'Process Consultation' Addison Wesley (1967)
6. N.W. Summerton, *Harvester* articles May/June 1985
7. Training Information Paper No. 4 *The T-Group* (P. B. Smith) 1969 HMSO; TIP No. 7 *Interaction Analysis* (Dyar & Giles) 1974

## **PARTNERSHIP**

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**Partnership** is an association of individuals committed to the service of Brethren and other churches wishing to avail themselves of the facilities it offers.

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**Partnership** is an initiative of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship which was founded in 1963, has conducted many conferences and seminars, publishes a journal, now known as *The Christian Brethren Review* and has a variety of other publications to its credit.

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**Regional seminars** have been held in Bournemouth, Bristol, Cardiff, Bangor, Birmingham, Martlesham and Northampton. Seminars are planned for other locations. Enquiries are invited from anyone interested in the possibility of arranging a local seminar.

**Tape recordings** are available of most of the addresses given at seminars.

#### **Surveys**

A survey of church growth was undertaken in 1978. An analysis of the results was published by Paternoster Press under the title *'The Brethren' Today—A Factual Survey* (ed. G Brown and B Mills).

A survey of resident full-time workers in local churches was conducted in 1984 in preparation for a consultation held in 1985 and the publication of this volume.

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