

The Fraternal

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A Letter From The New Chairman



This edition — the first since my elevation to the Chair — gives me the opportunity of saying a few words to you, our readers. It also happens to be the 200th edition, which constitutes an event which should not be allowed to pass unremarked. May the future of "The Fraternal" be filled with blessing!

When we claim that it is unique — that no other publication offers such a blend of theological and practical riches; and when we stop to realise that it is read in many countries besides our own, thus exerting an influence which is very widespread; we may perhaps cease to take it quite so much for granted. At least once in its long career its very future was threatened, as a result of what is called the "economic blizzard". As it was then produced, it would have been impossible to carry on with it unless there were a sharp rise in BMF subscriptions, and, since that would have been unacceptable, we set about finding other methods of production. It was here that the hard work and expertise of Jim Clarke (our Trasurer now, but even then already our Magazine Distributor — a job which he still does), allied with the skill and equally hard work of our Editor, Michael Walker, and his Editorial Board, produced the solution: a new and more economical format, by means of a different process, and a reduction of the number of issues from four to three per year. The new method proved to be so successful that in a comparatively short time, we were able to increase the frequency to four again. To these friends we owe, therefore, an enormous debt of gratitude.

I also wish to offer my successor in the Secretaryship, Vic Sumner, my very good wishes for much fulfilment and encouragement in his task. Apart from the natural gifts which he brings to the work, he possesses an extra asset — he was Treasurer for some years, and therefore knows a great deal about the working of the BMF.

The thought of my predecessors in the Chair fills me with awe, but it is comforting to know that they relied upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the same grace is available to me. God bless us all; and — "Brethren, pray for us!"

W. Hargreaves Wragg

The Way Forward

In April 1980 I was invited to write an article for *Fraternal* on “What Baptists ought to be thinking about in the next ten years”. Twelve months later I was elected as David Russell’s successor in the General Secretaryship of the Baptist Union. Let that be a salutary warning to budding authors about the devious ways of editors and committees! In my heart I have exonerated them from all blame and dare to believe, humbly I hope, that it is all of divine providence. I also take heart from the apostle’s confidence that the God who calls us is reliable and will enable us to fulfil His tasks.

Now that I have taken up office the editorial committee has asked me to put pen to paper again with this brief — “to think about the state of the Union and where you hope things might go in the next few years”. Having re-read the 1980 article, I have no wish to withdraw any of it. I will therefore leave readers to peruse it again, while I concentrate in this article on going deeper into some of the issues and introduce other matters for consideration.

One of the important words of the New Testament is *KOINONIA*. Its variety of shades of meaning includes togetherness, sharing, partnership, communicating. It is to be expressed and experienced in worship, prayer, mutual support and encouragement, and the pooling of resources. Its essence is *agape* — love, the first fruit of the Spirit, without which all powers, gifts and policies are nothing. It is the *Koinonia* of the Holy Spirit, created and sustained by the Spirit among those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord, Son of God and Saviour. Here is the authentic life of the church, which continually experiences the renewing, empowering and leading of the Spirit. The same Spirit was at work in creation, brooding over the waters, bringing order out of chaos. He is the one Spirit of God, eternally the same, the Spirit of the Living Christ, making all things new and drawing us into His saving activity. In this way, Christians are committed to partnership with the Spirit and therefore to fellowship with one another, for the fulfilment of Christ’s mission in the Father’s world.

This is for me the theological focus of the local church, the Association, the Union, and the whole church of Christ. As Baptists we have always rightly laid stress on the importance of personal conversion and the autonomy of the local church. At its best this double emphasis leads to a faith of strong conviction and to responsible, committed church membership. At its worst it produces excessive individualism and extreme independence. Not a few of our ills stem from this for personal preference and even human pride and ambition take over at those points in our life together where the theological focus of *Koinonia* ought to prevail.

This makes me want to talk about triangles of relationships rather than lines of authority. In a triangle members, ministers or deacons, or local churches, Association and Union are bound together in an inter-related life with a common purpose and bond. A line leads from Baptist Union to Association to local church, or from minister to deacons to members, and inevitably raises questions of status and authority, to be imposed or resisted. The language and thought-form of the triangle is “us”; of the line it is “us” and “them”. Lines can be parallel but unrelated. They can cross and become confrontational. They can even start from the same point and move further and further apart until they are so far

separated as to appear to have no common origin. The nature of a triangle is unbroken unity. This is why I see it as a symbol of the *Koinonia* which is the theological focus of our life in the church. Is it, I wonder, pressing the point too far to reflect that the divine life and nature are trinitarian? *Koinonia* is of the essence of the Godhead as it is of the church. The more our common life is grounded in the unity of Father, Son and Spirit, the less will church, Association and Union be seen as an end in themselves, and the more they will become a natural expression of our life in Christ and the means of sharing in His mission to the world.

This seems to me to be the fundamental solution to all the current questions, frustrations, debates and exhortations about denominational life. The structures of denominationalism are under attack. Some argue that they are unscriptural; others that they are bastions of administrative conservatism. Some suspect their motives and policies, or complain of the lack of them. Many are frustrated by the slowness of their procedures and move out into para-church groups in which they claim to find new life and the structures to express it, and to which they are willing to give a level of support which they have never felt able to give to Union or Association. Inevitably, this has aroused cries for loyalty, followed by the immediate retort that truth and spirituality are the real issues at stake. So we are polarised into our lines, sometimes parallel but unrelated, sometimes receding into separation, sometimes crossing in censorious confrontations.

With the local church I see the same dangerous trend. Frustrating tensions over ministry, leadership, discipline, worship and church meeting are leading in some places to authoritarian structures which may produce conformity but threaten true *Koinonia*. The results are often division and exclusiveness — in some churches, a subtle sort of excommunication. The line of authority leads to a legalism in which “the tradition of the elders” stifles the liberty with which Christ has set us free. It is no accident of history that has made Baptists consistently uphold the liberty of conscience before God. In its purest expression this always leads away from both individuals and authoritarianism, and enters into willing relationships with the Lord’s people. These relationships, let me repeat, are not an end in themselves. They are meant to be the means whereby we live and work together, in and for Christ.

Thus in the local church the way forward is not to abandon the church meeting or the diaconate, and to replace them by new forms of hierarchy. We must rather rescue both from the rut they are in, with their dull routine and false human democracy. We must discover together ways of their being transformed into living expressions of our *Koinonia* in Christ by the Spirit. This will mean that prayer, pastoral concern, evangelistic strategy, spiritual nurture, training and release for service in church and society will form the major part of the agenda. In this way a new sense of spiritual urgency will be implanted, and a new openness to the Lord, to one another, and to the world. There is another triangle of purposeful relationships.

Again, the way forward is not to abandon or opt out of the Association. The widespread feeling that Associations are not fulfilling their true function is generally justified. Committees and assemblies have grown too rigid. They spend a long time on routine — some would say arid — matters. A frequent complaint is that there is never enough time for major spiritual issues to be

discussed or brought to God in sustained prayer. The pattern of Association assemblies needs a new look. More open consultation, more prayer fellowship, more depth exploration of crucial issues and shared strategic planning, interwoven with inspiring worship and celebration, with communion and a deeper sharing — all this could rejuvenate Association life. Its relevance and spiritual purpose could become magnetic to ministers and members alike, and it could let loose a chain reaction of visionary encouragement to even the smallest church.

To pursue this beyond the writing and reading of this article, I will pose several questions. I hope that this may be fruitfully discussed at ministers' fraternals and conferences and in Association committees, or even in inter-Association sharing.

1. What steps must we take to ensure that constitutional business and routine administration are properly done without overwhelming the agenda and deadening the growth of new life?
2. Can we encourage each Association to examine its contemporary role and prayerfully set itself two or three specific policy aims for the next few years? (These should be made known, be set high on the agenda, with actively encouraged church participation and a constant review of progress).
3. How can the Association become an effective resource centre which is the focus of area strategy and wins the confidence of the churches?
4. What is the role of the General Superintendent in the Association? (Surely we need more than reports from him. He is also more than a trouble-shooter and minister-finder). Could we not enable him, in partnership with Association Secretaries and Pastors, to develop area strategy, to feed Union strategy into the Association and to feed back into the Union local thinking and needs?
5. How can we draw more key people, lay and ministerial, into Association life (not only on committees) thus using their particular skills and experience more widely, and reflecting church life of many styles? Is this the long-term way to bring new life and personnel into the Baptist Union Council and committees?
6. Perhaps the most important question of all — has this the potential to equip and release our churches and members for their calling in the world?

It is not coincidental that all these questions presuppose the triangular relationships of *Koinonia* between local church, Association and Union, and depend on a strong spiritual bond of missionary purpose.

The way forward for the Union is similar. We must discover relationships and structures which release us to serve God's purpose for today rather than inhibit and bind us to yesterday. We must have the will to allow the Lord to lead us to clear spiritual strategy with definite goals. These must not be inflexibly standardised in a way that will stifle local initiatives; yet they must be sufficiently comprehensive to inspire local participation. This is more likely to happen if there have been the following two features in the development of the strategy.

First, we need more effective channels of communication, with genuine consultation and sharing of experience. So many exciting things are happening as God works out His purpose with a rich variety of methods and in a wide range of contexts. In many places one finds a new air of spiritual expectancy. Elsewhere fresh insights into the role of the church in the community, and the

relevance of the gospel to social and personal crises, have led churches of varying theological hues into adventurous outreach. Among young people there is a strong surge of committed discipleship. It shows itself in ways as different as charismatic worship, eager bible study, committed service and an ardent search for a Christian understanding of political action. Our calling in Baptist Church House, it seems to me, is to draw upon all this experience and, in close co-operation, discover where God is leading us in the shaping of our corporate policy. Looking from the other end, so to speak, I feel that there is an urgent need for the churches to recognise us at headquarters as servants of the same Lord, who have been set apart for a special ministry, not simply of administration, and not of hierarchical authority. In this ministry we are given the responsibility to stand back and reflect on what is happening, look at the churches' work in depth, and by God's grace dream dreams and see visions which can be formulated into bold spiritual strategy. Then it is our calling to share this with an enthusiasm which is spiritually infectious, and with a prophetic challenge that carries the note of convincing authority. We shall then be clearly what I am sure we are meant to be, a resource centre for life and mission in Christ.

The second need is united persistent prayer. There is an historically proven link between prayer and effective evangelism, between prayer and growth to maturity, between prayer and discernment of God's purposes. In the past year a useful tool for corporate prayer has been put into our hands and we have failed to use it — "God gives growth", the prayer cycle for use in all our churches. I would like to see a large army of personal intercessors using this all over our land. Each church too could use it to provide prayer material for prayer meetings, house groups, and church services. This would ensure an unceasing volume of prayer for associations, churches, colleges, committees, headquarters staff and many other aspects of our denominational life. This in itself would undoubtedly strengthen our *Koinonia* and prepare us for whatever the Lord will do among us, or through us. The last thing I would plead for is an ingrown prayer-life, concerned only with Baptist issues. As I have recently written elsewhere the priesthood of all believers commits us to costly intercession for the whole of God's creation. Our prayers are often not sufficiently earthed. But to say this in no way detracts from the importance of the Baptist family being bound together in heart-felt, continuous prayer for one-another, that our churches, Associations and Union may be where and what God desires.

I would be false to my convictions if I did not strike several warning notes. However much we want to see our Union strong and our churches bound together in mission and fellowship, we must not be narrowly denominational. God's ways always transcend our man-made limitations. We would be unforgivably blind if we did not recognise His hand at work in other churches and denominations. We would be stubbornly deaf to scripture if we did not grasp that the revelation of His eternal purpose in Christ points to a uniting of all His creation into perfect harmony. Therefore no church, no denomination has a monopoly of the truth; and none of us has yet glimpsed the full vision of His completed church. In this setting 1982 is likely to be a significant year. Some denominations will come to their decisions about covenanting for unity. Whether the covenant is established or not the church scene in Britain will never

be the same again. If it is established Baptists and Catholics will have to decide from a position of possible isolation how to stay in the mainstream of English church life. If it is not established we may have a significantly important role to play in ascertaining the reasons for the failure, and the new directions which may have to be taken to reach a totally new goal. 1982 will also be the year of the actual or postponed papal visit, with all the ecclesiastical and political implications it has raised. In this same year has come the ARCIC report on future Anglican and Roman Catholic relations, to be followed ironically next year by the celebrations to mark the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's birth. Whether we like it or not, our relationship with the whole church of Christ, is on God's agenda. Baptists must not act as if this were not so. We must not feel or create a false guilt, that to live in the ecumenical dimension is to play Judas. Here again the key to mutual trust, understanding and a common seeking of the mind of Christ is the true *Koinonia* described earlier in this article.

Finally, I plead for theology. For lack of it we are often shallow and superficial. Through fear of it we endure too much mediocrity. Through mistrust of it we stunt spiritual growth, lose convincing relevance, and are in danger of staying at the level of human exhortations. What we need is persuasion by the convincing utterance of God's word, and that calls for theology. Let me mention several fundamental words for the Christian church — kingdom, salvation, mission, reconciliation, body of Christ, servant, authority — many more could be added. We cannot be a true church without these words translated into action. Their full meaning must give content to our life and work. They must be at the heart of the message we declare and the faith we hold. They are a call to the mind as well as the heart. They demand theology alongside today's emphasis on heart-warming experience. We then need to learn that our various theological positions are partial and distorted versions of the one gospel, which have been caused by our alienation (lack of *Koinonia*). Our life and strategy need to be rooted in what Richard Lovelace calls a "unitive evangelicalism" which none of us has yet reached, but into which the Spirit will lead us together if we are willing.

Bernard Green

A Future for the B.M.S.

Perhaps some of you would feel that the title for this article should more honestly have been either "A future with the B.M.S.", or else the present title, but with a question mark at the end. The first would have declared my own vested interest whereby, after over twenty three years of pastoral Ministry, now my very livelihood depends on the ongoing life and financial viability of the Society. The second would have taken note of the basic and prior question as to whether or not there is a future for the B.M.S. in the contemporary world.

I make no *apologia pro sua verba* but rather an affirmation of faith. The B.M.S. has a future. It stems from the nature of God and His ongoing mission of love; it is part of the great purposes God has for all men, indeed for all creation; it is expressed in terms of partnership with God's people throughout the world as we seek to live under the lordship of Christ and by the power of His Spirit. Because all

**THE WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION
409, Barking Road, Plaistow, EL3 8AL.**

Dear Fellow Ministers,

Gladys was on the move! She was carrying a hold-all in one hand, and a colourful plastic bag in the other. "Where are you off to?" I asked — "Oh, I'm just going to spend a couple of weeks in Majorca" she replied. "Do you want to come, you look as though you could do with a holiday."

Of course, Gladys wasn't going to savour the delights of a Mediterranean Island, she was, in fact, moving some of her possessions from the temporary home of Rest-a-While into our new building, YORK HOUSE, which opened at the beginning of May. Her cheery courage typifies the attitude of our ladies as they were uprooted, yet again, from familiar surroundings. In my last letter, I asked you to pray for us as we moved into our new home. May I now thank you for your prayers. Things went remarkably well, and we have now welcomed a number of new residents, who are settling in very happily. There have been problems, and not a few "teething troubles" — but we believe that God is still leading and blessing us, and that there is a bright future for the ministry in York House.

I know from my years in the pastorate just how many requests for help are received, and I realise that many of them have to be refused — there simply isn't enough money to go round. In spite of this, however, I dare to ask you to encourage your folk to give their prayerful, generous support to this Baptist cause. The work of the Mission is still developing, and, more than ever, we need the help of our many Christian friends — so that it may be sustained and expanded. In these days it is more vital than ever that specifically Christian work should be encouraged and supported. I hope you agree, and if you do, that you will take "appropriate action".

Yours in His Service,

Trevor W. Davis

of this is of God, it deserves the utmost of our devotion and loyalty and demands our intelligent and sacrificial response.

Having affirmed my own conviction, it would be folly to go beyond and to claim that this view is not called into question by many both within and outside the Church.

Bid Farewell to Overseas Missions

When we look to the increasing difficulty that there has been in obtaining visas for missionaries to be admitted to India, Brazil, Bangladesh etc. in recent years it could well seem that God Himself is working to shut the doors to the traditional overseas missionary activity.

Even greater force of argument has come from the understanding within the Church, voiced by Stephen Neill as well as by many others, that the age of missions is dead and the age of mission has arrived. This is illustrated in the way in which that long standing bulletin of missionary thought and activity has in recent years lost the “s” from its final word to become the *International Review of Mission*. What has been emphasised is that mission is a fundamental aspect of the Church’s life and is to be exercised in all six continents. It is not an optional or peripheral activity of a people of God who should really be busy doing something else. Some have even voiced it as strongly as “the Church is mission”. Taking this view, it would seem totally inappropriate to continue with separate missionary agencies, thereby setting mission apart from the life of the Church as a whole.

It was surely a measure of the emotional involvement in overseas missions that many in the Western World were surprised and deeply hurt by the plea that has come from younger churches, “Missionary, go home!”. This understanding has been at the heart of the ‘moratorium’ debate which has been a mushrooming presence in the world church for the last two decades. Leaders of the younger churches have expressed the growing conviction that the presence of expatriate missionaries inhibited national Christians, prevented or slowed the growth of a truly independent and mature church, and maintained a paternalism on the part of the sending churches and a dependence in the lives of the receivers.

From within the British churches we have heard a questioning of the rightness of trying to evangelise people of other faiths. John Hick, in his *God and the Universe of Faiths* and *God has many Names*, emphasises the religious pluralism of our social scene. He indicates how the presence in Britain of increasing numbers of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs has made us more aware of the religious life and worship of these people, so that we may no longer talk glibly of folk in “heathen darkness”. He cites the discovery that in other forms of worship, “the same kind of thing is taking place in them as in a Christian church. That is to say, human beings are coming together to open their minds to a higher reality which is thought of as the personal creator and Lord of the universe, and as making vital moral demands upon the lives of men and women”. Realising this similarity of worship, do we not need to recognise that the different groups are yet worshipping the one God? And that the truth of the matter is in the scripture from the Bhagavad Gita, “How so ever men may approach me, even so do I accept them; for, on all sides, whichever path they may choose is mine”? This being the case, we set aside our Christianity-centred religion, we cease our dogmatic proselytism of folk of other beliefs and we engage with them in dialogue so that

we may enrich each other in a God-centred faith.

When we add all of this questioning thought to the pressure upon the local congregation in Britain simply to meet its own obvious needs and to survive, it is not surprising that its concern for the world as a whole diminishes. The keeping of its financial head above water and the witnessing to and serving in a society where even the plurality of religion still leaves the majority of folk as non-committed to any path of faith is more than enough for most. The greatest practical responses that are made are to the aid agencies — Christian Aid, Tear Fund, Oxfam etc. Even taking this into account, one of the Church bodies more closely knit than Baptists, has been able to establish that, while the overall giving to work in the wider world has gone up appreciably, in the last decade, the percentage of that over against expenditure at home has halved. If we were to put the Church accounts of our separatist Baptist congregations to the same test, should we not find a similar shifting of balance?

The Baby in the Bath Water

Noting the inner questionings and the outer pressures, we can understand the hesitance of some concerning the future of overseas missionary work. But the cautionary words “look before you leap”, do not mean that you never launch yourself joyfully and daringly into the air! In all the abandonment of wrong understandings and misunderstandings of our part in God’s mission of love, surely we can never doubt that He *is* engaged on such a mission? The “baby” of this certainty we dare not throw out with the dirty bath water of our outworn ideas of mission. We need to look again at His work and at our share within it.

The surge in giving from Christian people to the aid agencies is an illustration of how there has been an increasing grasp of the breadth of God’s concern. The missionary activity that was confined to the “saving of souls” was a continuing denial of the Ministry of Christ Himself. In our Lord there was the offer of life in all its fulness. The hungry of body and mind were fed, the sick were healed, there was the discovery of wholeness through the saving love of God. Recent decades have seen the setting aside of a large measure of the contempt some had for “the social gospel”. There has grown, within varying shades of theological thought, a desire for the proclamation by word *and deed* of the wholeness of the Gospel. When our local congregations have given generously to aid but seem to have set aside worldwide mission concern, the balance has been wrong, but not the compassion shared with Christ that the needs of men shall be met.

The engaging in dialogue with men of other faiths for mutual encouragement is neither an original nor a particularly revolutionary idea. Its present strength comes from a right sense of humility in the face of others’ sincerity and quality of life, now apparent as folk of differing belief become literally our neighbours. But dialogue involves basic assumptions and aids. Fundamental, is that there are others who are willing to be involved in open ended encounter yet Stephen Neill makes clear this is not at all easy. “It has often surprised me that Christians alone should be required to be tolerant in a world in which no one else is prepared to be tolerant. The dedicated Marxist regards himself as a man with a mission ... The convinced Muslim is equally of the opinion that he has the whole truth, the final word of God to men, and that this truth must prevail over every other kind of truth

... To the Buddhist there is only one way ... All these are propagandist religions and make no secret of it. A Christian cannot be regarded by them as anything other than conversion-fodder." Dialogue may be honestly engaged in if we are able to discover willing partners, for our own faith calls us to search for truth knowing that ultimately its source is the God whom we love and serve. To be genuinely open to this encounter involves risk to our life and faith, but if we keep the integrity of our own ultimate faith, this latter must be basic to what we say and we must look not only to the Holy Spirit showing Himself to us but also converting our partner. As Leslie Newbiggin puts it "The Christian who enters into dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies is accepting the risk. But to put my Christianity at risk is precisely the way by which I can confess Jesus Christ as Lord — Lord over all worlds and Lord over my faith. It is only as the church accepts the risk that the promise is fulfilled that the Holy Spirit will take all the treasures of Christ, scattered by the Father's bounty over all the peoples and cultures of mankind, and declare them to the church as the possession of Jesus."

As soon as we look at the call, "Missionary, go home" and enter the 'moratorium' debate, we must take seriously the comment from the All Africa Conference of Churches, "We speak of moratorium *for* mission not a moratorium *of* mission". The withdrawal of the foreign missionary and his help is for the emergence of the national Church in its independence and its own strength, for the sake of mission. We cannot deny this, nor the reality of the situation with some churches that have grown from overseas missionary activity nor may we deny the nature of the Church as a whole. Independence, national integrity, are essential — but often we talk in these terms for younger Churches. It is absolutely right for there to be no expatriate presence and no outside funding in some places. In other areas, to leap to this situation would be the equivalent of abandoning the baby on the hillside. Rather, the help to independence of life needs to be offered sensitively and only for as long as is necessary. This is to recognise also the nature of the Church, that we are one body under the Headship of Christ and we are related in life and task. This is seen where the national Church has grown from dependence on overseas strength to a genuine independence. From within such, it now sees the Church of Christ as inter-dependent and it is glad to express this by sharing in *partnership* in mission.

It is inappropriate to set mission apart from the life of the Church as a whole. It is also true that, as Newbiggin says, "The Church must in every generation be ready to bring its tradition afresh in the light of the Word of God". But, as Baptists, have we ever, at heart, sought for separation of Church and mission? The B.M.S. was, from the earliest days of partnership between Carey and Fuller, the servant of our Churches in their sharing God's concern for the whole world, and so it remains! That world is still in need and God would still warm it wholly to Himself by His love. The variety of that need is seen not only in the physical hunger of countless millions but also in the experience of those great nations where other faiths are supreme in influence — the natural development of 'militant' Islam as David Janses rightly calls it, into the situation in Iran — the inability of the Hindus' enlightenment to deal with the needs of the teeming millions of India — the hunger left by socially successful Maoism so that the Christian Church in China is not only alive and strong beyond our imaginings, but is being besieged by enquirers. What we see challenges us to be committed to thorough engagement

THE BAPTIST INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
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To the Readers of the Fraternal

Dear Friends,

“K” is for “Keep it in the Family!”

The reaching of “K” in my insurance alphabet provides an opportunity to touch on the reasons for the denomination having its own Insurance Company, and for it being supported by the Churches. We were founded in 1905, but were preceded by the Methodists, the Anglicans, the Congregationalists and the Irish Catholics, all of whom have their own Insurance Companies, as has the Salvation Army, who entered this field after us. There is a rightness about applying the principle of insurance and shared risks within a particular community, so that the losses of the few are borne by the many.

The Articles of Association require that a director of our Company has a unique bias towards the needs of the Baptist cause. As compared with most insurers we are a small Company with a small staff, but this enables us to give a close personal service with real knowledge of our clients. We take pride in our speed of response. Of course we do not always meet our high standards, and we are receptive to constructive criticism. Our size does mean that comment on our performance good or bad makes an impact. Although small, we have built strong financial reserves by charging competitive but realistic premiums. This was never more important than in recent times, when the damage to property by the weather conditions of December 1981 and January 1982 has been described as the largest series of claims in respect of a natural disaster recorded in the Country. We and our clients can face such a situation with confidence.

These I feel to be sufficient reasons for Baptists to insure with us. The icing on the cake is that after a minimal fixed dividend to shareholders, profits can only be distributed to Baptist causes and, for example, since 1970 £50,000 has been given in this way.

Yours sincerely,

M.E. PURVER
General Manager

with God in His loving the world to Himself. Being realistic about the world and Church situation, the B.M.S. still offers a means of this engagement.

Forward Looking

Where does this lead? After only a few weeks in office, any comments about the future must be both scant and tentative, but some lines seem clear enough. The Society will continue to accept candidates for service overseas and support them as they travel in the cause of the Kingdom. The spirit of their going will be that of the humble offering of themselves to others in the name of Christ and of His people. John Hick seems to put it admirably "From now onwards, the Christian mission in lands dominated by any of the other world religions must rest upon the positive attraction of the person and teaching of Jesus and of the life lived in discipleship to Him, and not upon the power of an alien culture seeking to impose itself upon politically vulnerable or economically less developed peoples."

The nature of the work overseas will continue to be partnership. This is being reviewed continually and is modified in the light of the ongoing relationship with the Christians in the countries where we serve. So then, the personnel whom we send go only at the invitation of the national Churches. The major part of any funds sent are "block grants" at the disposal of the Church Councils. The roles fulfilled by missionaries will vary from pioneering work for which the local Church

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feels unequipped or ill-equipped, to the upbuilding of the Church by assistance in training where the Church itself feels we have a contribution to make. That our contribution is welcomed is indisputable and we continually fail to meet all the requests made for assistance. On the Society's part, the partnership we seek to exercise is with such understanding that we discern and act decisively in those situations where we have properly "worked ourselves out of a job".

The support from the Church at home is a *sine qua non* in all this. The new team of B.M.S. Home Staff will be eager in its effort to educate and involve for mission. We shall hope to see some remedying of the woeful lack of thinking about mission within these shores — but that is a long term aim and hardly solely one for B.M.S. We shall hope for increasing numbers of congregations sharing in a continuous programme of learning about mission and then of supporting such work. We shall hope for greater dedication to the support of *Mission* beyond these shores, that is in terms of concern for the *churches* overseas, as opposed to just support of individual missionaries.

Properly to address ourselves to this task, we shall be looking afresh at our relationship to the Unions that we partner in the British Isles. We shall be looking for a cementing of these relationships. This may lead to the literal bricks and mortar situation of a joint Headquarters with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. You know that both partners remain committed to this search and the present delay is because of planning difficulties, which limit the use and disposal of the Southampton Row site. But we need to beware the urging for joint Headquarters which sets aside the parallel issues of relationship between the Society and *all* the unions — in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland — and the relationship between the unions themselves. The important factor is that we shall be embarking upon a strengthening of ties that will surely lead to a greater sense of mutual involvement in God's work enabled by a mutual commitment to each other.

One of the recent publications from our Society had the title *It all depends upon the Minister*. The role of the Minister as enabler and leader is crucial. He is the one best fitted to lead his congregation into theological awareness and personal commitment. The Society has always thrived because of such engagement and support and looks to a future that will be built upon it still.

R.G.S. Harvey

Ministerial Training at Regent's Park College

Too many Baptists think that because Regent's is in Oxford it is merely interested in the academic. This is not the way the College sees or does it. Our primary concern is to serve the Church of God and to prepare those who are called for ministry.

The relationship between the College and the University brings many benefits to the training at Regent's and therefore to equipping for ministry. As a Permanent Private Hall, Regent's enrolls its students as matriculated members of the University. This means that they are able to study for Oxford degrees and be examined by University examiners to a high standard. Oxford courses have a strong Biblical and Doctrinal emphasis and, in their teaching, Regent's tutors continually try to relate the studies to pastoral and contemporary contexts. The students also enjoy other University facilities: tutorials with different University teachers besides the College's own tutors; lectures and seminars; superb libraries and the opportunity to meet students of other disciplines.

Most ministerial students study for the Oxford B.A. in Theology. Others seek to develop further their skills and knowledge by research in Biblical fields, Theological issues or Church History and thereby earn an M.Litt. or D.Phil. More recently a smaller number have studied for the Oxford Certificate in Theology. This course is shaped by the local theological colleges specifically for ministerial training and is validated by the University. It includes possible papers in Counselling, Sociology of Religion, Worship and Mission, along with Biblical and Doctrinal subjects.

With the Oxford approach, students literally read their way through their studies. Each week they are given an essay theme and a recommended reading list. A week later, after working their way through the literature and writing their essay, students read it to their tutor on an individual basis and the issues are discussed together. This approach is very valuable, especially in theological studies. Since ministers have to listen to and contend with views other than their own and, frequently, to counsel Christians wrestling with opposing opinions, the Oxford system is a useful preparation for this. Its helpfulness lies in the combination of the range of reading plus the thoughtful and critical exercise of writing an essay followed by the opportunity to discuss the subject and any problems with sensitive and understanding tutors. In addition, the approach encourages each student to give more careful and thoughtful attention to the contents and nature of Scripture and the Christian faith and to develop his or her personal faith in response to the truths discerned.

Alongside the degree work, the College offers a practical pastoral training programme which consists of five main strands: weekly sessions on specific themes; worship and sermon classes in various forms; experiential placements; and on-going personal dialogue on the student's understanding of ministry and courses before and after settlement centring on issues relevant to that experience.

Some pastoral training work is in groups to which the students are assigned at the beginning of each year, for example worship and sermon classes for first year students. Most of the visits to churches, hostels, hospitals, other institutions and structures are organised on a group basis and are discussed afterwards in that setting.

The pastoral training programme is arranged in a continuing three year cycle of sessions, new students joining at different points but eventually covering the whole course. During the week before the official University beginning of term, two or three days are taken over for a more concentrated look at some aspect of pastoral work which also provide an introduction to the sessions ahead.

The first of these days in the autumn is taken up by visits to churches, hostels, hospitals, etc. on which the students are asked to reflect in theological terms. Questions are raised about the points of contact between the Gospel and the specific situations experienced, where God may be discerned to be at work in those settings and what he has to say to and through them.

For the first part of the autumn term, students meet in year groups in separate sessions. For first years this is a time to work together on the conduct of worship and preaching; a "workshop complement" to the Principal's lectures throughout the term on worship and preaching. Second year students look at patterns of ministry, having spent time during the previous vacation exploring three different expressions and settings of ministry. For final year students the same part of the term is taken up with worship, preaching and sacraments in the pastoral context.

During the remaining part of each autumn term, the College has the Westlake Pastoral Week, when a visiting minister addresses the students on a previously agreed set of themes and is available for informal discussion and counselling over coffee in student rooms. After this, each year follows a "rolling" programme.

In one year the pastoral training sessions start with a serious examination of the general situation, considering especially adult life, its pressures and inner pressures; an area demanding so much by way of ministry. Then follows more intensive attention to marriage, including preparation, problems and breakdown, with a series throughout the spring term on ethical issues. For the summer term the sessions are concerned with a minister's relationships and pastoral opportunities in relation to healing and health.

The succeeding year's sessions deal first with the place of children in the Church and work among children and youth. This is followed in the spring by a course on adult education and a series on the relationships between Church and Society. The final term of the year turns to leadership, lay training, structures, relationships, administration, etc. in the local church.

In the last year of the three year cycle the early sessions are on the theme of communication, both theory and practical opportunities. During the next term, attention is given to the Mission of the Church and evangelism in personal, local, inter-church, social and worldwide perspective. Pastoral

care and counselling occupies the remaining third of the year's sessions with time given to particular issues and to the nature of counselling for the ministry and beginning with a series on dying, death and bereavement.

Apart from these sessions, the Principal holds classes on Baptist principles and history. There is also an inter-college course on pastoral psychology.

Throughout the course and in close connection with the sessions, we make times available for students to share experiences and insights and to discuss the issues and review the course. Each year, too, time is given to the question of spirituality and to the maturity of each student's spiritual life.

Worship and sermon classes at Regent's are divided into sessions which consider an aspect of worship or preaching, and sessions which are assessments of students' own preaching and conduct of worship. The first group includes sessions on the use of music, drama, dance and visual aids in worship and a termly exegetical seminary. In this a tutor generally leads the study of a Scripture passage, by a thorough exploration of its meaning and application, ending with discussion on possible approaches for preaching. The assessment classes are, for first year students, held in local churches in the setting of Sunday worship and are attended by two tutors and the group to which the student leading worship belongs. Assessment immediately follows the service, the local host church fellowships frequently providing refreshments. Worship and sermon class is held for second year students in the College Chapel with all the ministerial students and tutors present. Final year students are subjected to what has been described as a 'consumers' assessment: the College has an arrangement with certain churches for worship and sermon classes to be held during one or two of their services each year. These churches have a selected, trained assessment panel which meets with the student and the Pastoral Tutor at the end of the service.

We recognise that a ministerial student needs a genuine variety of experience. Where possible, vacation placements are arranged to broaden understanding of church situations and patterns of ministry. If a student has a particular interest or wishes to explore the possibility of a specialised and experimental form of ministry, the College encourages this and does all it can to help.

Longer term pastoral placements are in nearby churches and normally cover two of the student's three years in College. Because so many churches in the Oxford area have very few members, they may offer only limited opportunities to work in a close relationship with deacons, elders and pastoral teams or to experience a full range of church life and activities. The first of these placements is usually in a church where the student can observe the work of a full-time minister, a diaconate, church meeting and other church groups and work alongside the minister. We are developing the idea that each student be given a support group from the church with which to work on a specific and assessable project. At the time of this placement the student is also provisionally allocated one for the second year, usually in a smaller church where he or she will have a greater measure of responsibility.

Ideally there should be some connection between the first church and the second. The student is encouraged to make himself known to, and become

acquainted with the situation at the second church during the course of the first year placement. This is important in order to help towards some continuity in the work in the smaller church. Further, it is recognised that a succession of students, with the tendency for each to 'do his own thing' can have an adverse effect on the leadership and morale of village churches in particular. Therefore a move is now being made towards an approach which evolves a continuity of strategy, developed with the membership and to which the student commits him or her self. Again there is a support group with which the student must work.

The remaining two strands of the pastoral training programme are the position paper on ministry and the pre- and post- settlement courses. The paper is an annual exercise and forms the basis of a personal discussion with the Pastoral Tutor. The pre-settlement course is held each year for three days at the end of the summer term for those who will be seeking settlement throughout the coming academic year. It includes sessions with the Area Superintendent and a minister to speak about settlement, the probationary period, the first ministry and personal and spiritual disciplines. There are also sessions on finance in the pastorate, on ordination and visit to Church House and Gloucester Place. The post-settlement course is held alternate years and provides an opportunity for informal discussion on points raised at the request of those attending. The first of these lasted from Wednesday until Friday midday and was attended by ministers who had settled into the pastorate one and a half to three and a half years previously. A senior minister acted as chaplain and helped in discussions. He and the College staff were also available for private conversations.

The total pastoral training scheme, and particularly the programme arranged for the various sessions, cannot hope to cover all the issues and challenges which may arise within a ministry, nor can it hope to deal with all the possible variety of ways through which ministry can be exercised. It would not be possible even if the time were limitless simply because the scope of the work of ministry is as varied as each experience of the call of God, as each minister, as each person and situation a minister must serve. Regent's therefore does not set out to attempt everything nor to create '*the* pattern of training for *the* minister'.

Our objectives are to try to encourage the kinds of insights and skills basic to any Christian ministry and to open windows into the meaning and scope of ministry. We believe it would be wrong to encourage any idea that there are techniques to be had which simply need to be learned and applied. For example, there is a great deal of interest today in counselling techniques but a few hours spent on these do not in any way turn a student or a minister into an expert. They do, however, need to be able to understand some of the methods and to see some of the pitfalls and especially to recognise signs which show that a person needs more expert help. At the same time we also look at the similarities and differences between various types of counselling, therapies and pastoral work.

Another example of the approach is this spring term's course on the Mission of the Church. Day visits were made to Chelmsley Wood and Kingston-on-Thames Baptist churches, Swindon ecumenical church and

St. John's Anglican church, Harborne in Birmingham. The term's session included, among others, an approach to mission in the inner city, a strategy for village churches, Church Growth, "Evangelism Explosion" and the contribution suggested by Liberation Theology.

The recent course on dying, death and bereavement included time for the students to reflect on their own experiences of loss. We watched a film about a person dying and discussed this with someone who had shared with her husband the knowledge that he was living his final months. There was a visit to a Hospice; sessions on the minister's role in counselling the bereaved and a lecture on the theology of death and eternal life.

Throughout the pastoral training sessions we try to ensure that our approach is essentially related to people's needs and situations and to examine these in Biblical and Theological terms. At the same time we look at the help that can be gained through human studies in other disciplines.

So far a description has been given of Pastoral Training facilities that are already offered at Regent's for full-time students. It remains to write about a new development which is planned for next September.

The relationship between a college and the churches nearby is of great importance. One way in which Regent's tries to encourage and develop this relationship is through the pastoral placement arrangements. Another is by the College's Diploma in Contemporary Christian Studies, launched last autumn, which offers lecture-study courses to any seeking to equip themselves further for their part in the ministry of the Church. The new Regent's In-Pastorate Training scheme adds a further dimension to this relationship.

As a scheme it owes a great deal to the Northern Baptist College and to the Ministerial Training Scheme devised by the Anglican diocese of St Albans. We aim to enable men and women to train for Christian ministry while being involved in the actual work of ministry in a church, or, as an alternative, while providing assistance to pastors of a larger congregation. It seeks to ease the financial burden, especially for older candidates with families and where grants are not available or are small, of the costs of the training period. Also, a specific part of its purpose is to give pastoral oversight to churches which would probably not be otherwise able to have it.

In-Pastorate Training is a three year course. Throughout the three years the student is placed as a student minister in a church within fairly easy travelling distance from the College. It involves study for the Oxford University extra-mural department's Certificate in Theology; a course of seminars in addition to this; the practical training programme already used for existing students and supervision throughout of their work in the church placement by both a more local panel and the College.

The Certificate work will be taught by lectures and seminars and be assessed by means of essays written for each of the eighteen courses required. The teaching will mostly be by the existing staff of Regent's and the assessments by appointed external examiners. Students will come into College for lunch on Mondays returning home after tea on Tuesdays each week during term time and in this period will attend the lectures, seminars, the pastoral training session and interviews in connection with their pastoral

MEN'S MOVEMENT

Baptist Housing Association LTD

The following is an extract from a letter the Association received from a tenant in one of the recently completed schemes.

“On behalf of all residents we would like to place on record our very grateful thanks for the lovely accommodation and surroundings at

We would also say how very kind the Minister the Secretary, the Local Management Committee and members of the Church, and the Warden and her husband have been in helping the tenants to feel so much at home in so short a time.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who has made the project possible.”

The Association now has 47 properties, a total of 900 flats with over 1400 tenants; building is proceeding at twelve other places in England and in Wales and the work is still expanding. All the schemes are managed by the local church or churches.

Please ensure that this ministry is included in *your* Church prayer calendar.

Baptist Church House,
4 Southampton Row,
London,
WC1B 4AB.

Spurgeon's Homes

SPURGEON'S ARE SPREADING CARE THROUGHOUT BRITAIN.

Wherever you go in Britain there are children suffering through family problems. Sometimes it's divorce, sometimes parental illness, bereavement or imprisonment and so often this means the children cannot be cared for at home. Spurgeon's are providing family homes to care for such children. We have already established homes in Bromley, Bedford, Coventry and Luton, with a purpose built Day Care Centre at Coventry.

This service to the community is dependent upon the financial help we receive from churches and our many friends. We hope you and your church will help us meet the needs of these unfortunate people with your prayers and gifts of money.

Write to: Peter Johnson.

SPURGEON'S HOMES
14 HADDON HOUSE
STATION ROAD
BIRCHINGTON
KENT CT7 9DH.

DEATHS

We commend all those who mourn the loss of these loved ones to the comfort of our Heavenly Father.

Wilfred John Bradnock

Dorothy Gertrude May Carter (wife of Sydney)

Amy Cox (widow of Herbert W)

Margaret Cook (widow of John McLaren)

P. Douglas Hamilton

Isa Rose Lewis (Deaconess)

Ronald Scott (husband of Nancy)

Gordon Robert Snelling

Herbert J. Taylor

Mary Temple (wife of William Ewart)

Gladys Maud Wood (widow of Clifford)

NEW PASTORATES

May our colleagues know His grace in their new ministries.

Richard Allwood, to Oaklands, Surbiton.

George Balmer, to Station Road, Orpington

Dennis Banfield, to Ferndown United Church (Baptist/URC)

Brian Durkin, to Bluntisham and Somersham.

David Hawker-Lewis, to Hill Street, Swandicote

Michael Hawden, to Bethel Hawthorn and Beulah, Pontypridd

Graham Licence, to Gorleston, Norfolk

John Antony and May Elizabeth Lloyd, to Immanuel, Southsea

William McIlory, to Trafalgar Road, Horsham

Brian Nichols, to Mansfield Road, Nottingham

Andrew Rollinson, to Westgate Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Lewis Rushbrook, to Elm Road, Beckenham

Robert Smart, to Hemel Hempstead (team ministry)

Peter Stevenson, to Shirley, Solihull

Arthur J. Swaffield, to Oakham

Iorwerth Thomas, to Tabernacle Baptist Church, Hengoed (lay-pastor)

Keith Twining, to Leckhampton, Cheltenham

William West, to Newton Abbott

Gordon E. Whittle, to Cherry Hinton, Cambridge

Colin Weller has returned from his two years serving with the American Baptist Churches as "minister at large", and is now back in this country and is free to serve the churches.