

Appendix

Case studies on leadership

The three cases and questions which follow were prepared for small group study at the one-day seminar on *Leadership in the churches* held at the London Bible College on 21st October 1978. The discussions followed the presentation of Brian Mills' paper and preceded John Boyes' paper and a panel discussion of general issues. Other cases dealt with the problems of individual church members which required pastoral care and counsel. Through discussion participants of the seminar were encouraged to identify the issues which their individual experiences and studies had shown to be significant and to re-examine their own values and priorities in the light of viewpoints which differed from theirs to greater or lesser extent in concept or expression. In this way, it was hoped, the challenge to abstract thought presented in the papers would be complemented by a challenge to attitudes and actions.

- (1) Frustrated leadership
- (2) 'What mean ye by this service . . .?'
- (3) Evangelism and growth

(1) Frustrated leadership

Fred Smith, youngest son of the leading elder in Bankside assembly, professed faith in Christ in the Sunday School, was baptised and came into fellowship at the age of twelve. A somewhat shy teenager, he nevertheless made occasional contributions to open worship, was a regular attender at all the meetings, and taught a Sunday school class. It was in the youth club and summer camps that he was in his element. He proceeded from school to the Linden Bible College where he studied for three years, gaining a degree in theology and developing a promising preaching gift. His pastoral concern for his fellow students was outstanding. While at college, Fred felt a call to devote himself full time to some form of Christian ministry, but became disillusioned with the concept of itinerant ministry, partly because he became engaged to a fellow student, but partly because he doubted its effectiveness. Returning to his home church, he shared his concern with the elders (who had never initiated any discussion of his spiritual development and who had not received training themselves). Fred felt that his approach was not treated seriously, though he was presented with the following reasons why his ministry would not be acceptable on a full-time basis:

(a) It is not scriptural for a man's ministry to be exercised exclusively in one church.

(b) The church could not afford to support him, since it had a re-building scheme on hand which still required £10,000.

(c) The elders ensured that the platform was occupied, and were quite capable of caring for the spiritual needs of church members.

(d) An evangelistic campaign, planned for next year, would absorb all their energies.

(e) In any case, he was too young and inexperienced.

Fred got a temporary job, married and started a family, joined an independent church, and three years later took up the pastorate of a church where his ministry was highly successful.

Questions to discuss

1. Is every form of full-time ministry in a local church ruled out by scripture? If not, what are its advantages and disadvantages?
2. How valid are reasons (b)-(d) put forward by the elders?
3. At what stage is a man (or woman) ready to assume leadership roles?
4. Can you detect other reasons why the elders were unsympathetic to Fred?
5. What ways can you suggest whereby Fred's gifts could have been utilised in Bankside assembly (i) if it were the only assembly in the area? (ii) if there were other assemblies nearby?

(2) "What mean ye by this service . . .?"

The Brethren assembly in Hopeville, a small home counties town, was established some seventy years ago mainly as a protest by a group of evangelical believers who found it difficult to 'hear the gospel proclaimed' in the contemporary churches of those days. They had not gathered especially under the 'church principles' followed by most fellowships of Brethren persuasion but soon adopted a system of open worship and shared leadership, which suited their inclinations and their 'sense of release' from the historical institutions of churchmanship available to them.

Since then, this local body has grown apace, if not spectacularly, largely by the accession of family members into the fellowship and, to a more limited extent, by the gathering in of souls converted to a new life in Christ. They have continued to be faithful to God's Word as they have understood it and have regularly and consistently provided the service and activities conventionally undertaken in a witness and a fellowship of believers.

Despite this faithfulness and stable responsibility towards the tasks of a local church, there has been only a modest sense of 'success' and growth in this pattern of life. As the years have rolled by into the present

and the generations have changed — but replaced by very similarly minded people — the impetus has imperceptibly decreased into the present static condition.

Moreover, the original grounds of establishment for a separate testimony, i.e. the need for a witness faithful to the gospel and the scriptures, no longer obtains in this town. God has sent His servants, true believers and biblically sound, to minister to other congregations of local churches, amongst whom there has always been a handful of faithful Christians. Furthermore, the Lord has manifestly blessed some of these churches by his Spirit, in their growth, renewal and enthusiasm for the word of God. Indeed, they have now markedly surpassed the assembly in their outreach and attractiveness to unbelievers, and in the warmth of their fellowship in which God 'adds daily to the church'.

The assembly is warmly invited to share in their evangelism and fellowship. The Brethren believers are welcomed for their reputation as Bible students, bringing a certain sobriety and *gravitas* to the enthusiasm of others! Some of the assembly folk spend time attending special services, house groups, societies, etc. associated with these causes. Indeed, a number of the young folk have succumbed and now take part in other youth fellowships as a regular thing.

Some believers have wondered about a merger with other evangelical Christians, others are embedded in 'church principles' and cannot move, but all are concerned about the viable future of their assembly.

Questions to discuss

1. What has gone wrong with the leadership of this assembly over the years?
2. If a merger is considered, what essential condition of testimony would you wish to preserve?
3. What kind of assembly life, if any, do you wish to lead into the 21st century?

(3) Evangelism and growth

An assembly in a Victorian suburban area of a large city has known better days. When it was built, it regularly had congregations of over five hundred people and was a community church, in that it drew its congregation mainly from the immediate neighbourhood. But times have changed, and so has the area. A large influx of immigrants of West Indian, Indian and Pakistani origin has brought changes to every social service in the area, and to the church. The cost of housing has been a deterrent to younger people settling in the area, and in any case the older-type housing and the fall of educational and living standards has hardly been an attractive proposition to those setting up home. So the church has declined considerably since the second world war. One person has

predicted that at the present rate of decline the assembly will have to close within twenty years. And yet it still seems, outwardly, reasonably healthy.

Its membership is over seventy in numbers, and mostly in age too. It has maintained an involved missionary interest both in overseas and home missions. Attempts have been made from time to time to reach out into the community, but the lack of immigrant membership within the church has made their task doubly difficult. They maintain a regular outreach in three institutions in the area — a hospital and two old people's homes. They have a small Sunday school of over twenty in number, run mostly by retired people, but do not seem able to hold children once they reach teenage years, and can rarely get their parents to come. More than half the children are from immigrant families. A mid-week club is better attended, and more immigrant children come then, being unable to do so on Sundays.

The assembly membership includes one West Indian family, a middle-aged businessman and his family, most of whom find their fellowship more with other evangelical churches in the area where there are more young people, and a young married couple who feel at present that they should stay in the area out of a sense of loyalty to the fellowship where they grew up. Most of the remainder are of retirement age. Seventy-five per cent of the assembly do not live in the immediate area — they are scattered within a five-mile radius and some have to pass other assemblies or evangelical causes to get to the meetings.

Understandably the elders (all except one are of retirement age) are concerned to know what they should do. It has been suggested to them that they consider the following possibilities:

(a) As the membership is mostly of retired status, they should do more to contact other retired people in the locality, since that constitutes the majority of the white population.

(b) As few aged people are able to travel to mid-week meetings at the 'hall', they should consider organising area home meetings under the leadership of an elder for the purposes of fellowship, teaching and pastoral care.

(c) As there is such a need amongst the immigrant population, they should consider inviting a returning missionary from overseas to settle in their area and support him and his family to work full-time as from their assembly.

Questions to discuss

1. As an oversight, how would you respond to these suggestions?
2. Have you any alternative solution to suggest?
3. Is it worth attempting to do anything, or should the predicted inevitable be allowed to happen?