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Letter to the Editor

SIR,

As one who, though regarded by the C. of E. Pensions Board as a full-time clergyman, is engaged in what is termed auxiliary pastoral ministry I would like to comment on the subject of APM since you have carried two articles on the topic recently. My knowledge of APM is chiefly based on its current expression in the diocese of the North-West where I know personally all the men engaged in this ministry. Further, since I did a short course of pastoral training with the North-West Ordination Course, I have had the opportunity to discuss with men and see how some chose to go into full-time and others into part-time pastoral ministry. In the following comments I believe I am speaking on behalf of these men as well as stating my own beliefs.

First, they all deplore the title 'auxiliary ministers' which the CPAS and now the *Churchman* are encouraging. The word 'auxiliary' originally qualified 'ministry' but now seems to have been moved to qualify 'ministers'. Auxiliary nurses and firemen are in a different class to SRN's and fully qualified firemen but ministers engaged in part-time pastoral ministry have had the same ordination as the full-time parish minister (and in the case of N-WOC the same training as well). Therefore they cannot see the need for any special term to describe them, except perhaps 'non-stipendiary parish clergy'. Further, they find the view of the local ordained ministry as it is being developed in the East End of London not to their liking and they also ask what kind of ordained ministers are those clergy who do not function in either a pastoral or parish situation (e.g. a clergyman who lectures in history in a college and who has no parish pastoral role) but insist on wearing dog-collars etc.

Secondly, they cannot see how their function as parish ministers is any different from the time-honoured role of schoolmasters, lecturers, employees of religious societies, and social workers who being in Orders serve in a parish in evenings and at weekends. The only

difference seems to be that if you first do a full-time title and then revert to part-time parish ministry you are not an auxiliary minister, but if you begin part-time you are deemed to be an auxiliary minister!

Thirdly, they regret that ACCM is now recommending men for either full-time or part-time ministry and is also suggesting that those in part-time ministry will need to go to a further selection conference before being allowed to serve the Lord in a full-time capacity. Since the move from full-time ministry to part-time (or no-time) is easy (cf. the numbers of clergy who apply for teaching posts), the move from part-time to full-time, with the consent of the bishop, should be just as easy. The idea that men in holy orders need to attend a selection conference before being allowed to act as full-time clergymen is a repugnant idea. They believe that ACCM should choose men for the ministry only.

Fourthly, they recognise that the choice of parish for a part-time ministry is very important and they believe that a man should be willing to move house or change job in order to be able to serve in the right parish (several in the North-West have already done this). They also realise that relations with the incumbent are tender and should be carefully nourished. When more team ministries come into operation the placement of men for part-time pastoral ministry will be easier.

Fifthly, they realise that Post-Ordination Training is important as is also their own personal discipline and devotional life. These areas need to be adapted and cultivated in order to strengthen, as well as fit into, the type of life a man is living.

Finally they believe that they are called to serve a parish and that their homes, even when they are not there, may be centres of ministry as people come to the door and talk to their wives etc.

These comments lead me to say in conclusion that if the part-time pastoral ministry is to succeed (and succeed it must in our present economic position) some of our best ministers will need to be involved in it so that it gets a good name and reputation and is quickly accepted as part of the normal ministry of the Church. It is not a ministry for those who are not good enough for the full-time ministry!

Yours sincerely,

PETER TOON.

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