

You are all Brothers

For both good and bad reasons the Church Meeting has been thrust into the limelight in recent years. In the current debate about 'Baptist Identity' the Church Meeting is centre-stage and will not be pushed onto the wings. And rightly so - for it touches the heart of what it means to be a congregation.

I, for one, will be worried, though, if the discussion revolves around the Church Meeting as an institution with a more or less fixed form in the life of the Church. The real question is not 'Do they take place?', but rather the much more profound 'What does it mean to be a responsible Christian?' The focus should not be on form and structure but on life and relationship.

Jesus' words in Matthew 23:8-12 are very significant in this respect. We have only one leader who alone has the right to be called 'Teacher', 'Master', 'Father' (or 'Pastor' or 'Minister' for that matter). All the rest of us are brothers. Here the Lord is describing that equality and family affection which exists between his disciples. In such a relationship no-one has a right to look down upon another. There can be no hierarchy of authority in a priesthood of all believers.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Apostle Paul calls upon the whole Ephesian church, **including the elders**, to "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21). The commitment to Christian community is the commitment to mutual subordination. We all submit to one another when we accept encouragement, help or exhortation. Every believer will submit to those who serve (Matthew 23:11-12). I will gladly submit to anyone who loves me. The Apostle Paul mentions the household of Stephanas in the following way - ".....they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these **and to everyone** who joins in the work, and labours at it." (1 Cor. 16:15-16). However, all this does not obviate the role of leadership within the church.

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Our leaders are those whom the whole church has set aside for the tasks of teaching, pastoring and giving a lead. They know full well that they must answer to God for the discharge of their heavy burden of responsibility. They will diligently seek God and the feelings or ideas of the church. They will gladly submit the fruit of their deliberations to the church. And it behoves the church to check the Scriptures, to pray and to listen to one another. Such a process of consultation will largely take place outside of any formal meetings. As long as leaders command the respect and confidence of the church, and as long as consultation has taken place, we owe our leaders no less than a willing spirit in the decisions that the church comes to.

Bob Roxburgh has some interesting things to say about this process. "The old style church meeting can be terrible, but it needn't be. Ours became delightful without changing all the structures. Rather, it was people's spirits that needed to change." (speaking of Trinity, Winnipeg). About Millmead, Guildford, he says, "I have enough confidence in a renewed congregation to make decisions as I do in a team of renewed elders (Acts 6:15).....My view of the mutual submission that comes from the life of the Spirit extends to the decision-making in which the committed members have a 'real' part. How one goes about it and with what spirit it is implemented will determine its effectiveness." (Renewal Down To Earth, pp. 71-73).

It is this 'spirit' which is vital, not the 'structure' as such. When Church Meetings are viewed as occasions for assertion, complaint and argument, rather than as opportunities for inspiration, vision-building and growth in love, then something is terminally wrong with the family, and no amount of pride in correct procedure or Baptist Identity can save it.

The Church Meeting is not the be-all and end-all in any case. In fact, some of the most momentous decisions that I have seen taken did not take place in 'Church Meetings' but in prayer meetings. Whenever the congregation gathers for prayer in the Holy Spirit, is not that the church meeting? (Acts 4:23-31).

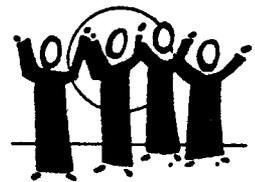
Let's get down to the real question. What does it mean to be a responsible brother/church member/ Christian?

Only when we have got answers to this question, does the Church Meeting (whatever its form) assume its important place in the life of the congregation.

Terry Griffith.

BELONGING TO ALL THE OTHERS

Part 1



It is one of the distinctive features of Baptist life that we have had strong beliefs about what Church membership means. Indeed, in a conversation I had with Stephen Winward a couple of years before he died I well remember him saying that a person has not fully become a New Testament Christian until he has been baptised and received into Church membership. In these days of easy cross-denominational movements (which I welcome) I am aware that many of our people don't know what are the responsibilities of Church membership. And perhaps they don't much care, which is worse. So we have a task to teach those new to faith, from whatever Church background they come, that there are high Biblical principles involved in responsible and active Church membership. In this article, I want to examine some of those things briefly.

Of course, some of you who read this will not be Pastors and may not be involved even in the leadership of your local Church. You may be tempted to think that I have an axe to grind, seeking to tie people to a commitment that I expect them to give as Church Members. But I remind myself that

another distinctive feature of Baptist Churches is our belief in the "priesthood of all believers", however imperfectly we may practise it. If so, I am a member of the Church first and the Pastor second, and what I expect of myself as a member of the Church in response to God's word, I should also expect of all other members. To do so shows that I love them and care for them, rather than just wanting to tie "heavy loads" on their backs without lifting a finger to help them.

Much of what I will say in the article stems from a concern that all members really understand what they are doing when they commit themselves to the Church. It has arisen from a practical approach to membership both teaching those new to the faith and helping others who are already Christians and have moved to the area to become settled in to the life of the Church. Perhaps it would be worth explaining how we go about that process in the Church in Kingsbridge.

NEW CONVERTS are as soon as possible encouraged to join in a NURTURE GROUP - nothing remarkable about that, nor about the material we cover. However, we do not encourage them to join a House Group (however much they want to) until they have some grounding in the faith. The Nurture Groups last ten weeks and then each person is challenged to commit themselves to a DISCIPLESHIP GROUP. This will last anything up to 18 months and will go over the material covered in Nurture Group in much greater detail. As a part of the Discipleship course, there is a whole section devoted to Church Membership which is covered over a four week period in the company of mature Christians who have moved into the area. We usually run at least two of these sessions every year.

MATURE CHRISTIANS will all be encouraged to follow what we call a "COMMITMENT COURSE". As I have mentioned above, it is the section in the discipleship course which deals with Church Membership. Some have been a little offended at being invited to follow the course before being received into membership. However, we have come to the conclusion that there is such variety of Churchmanship even in our Baptist Churches that it is foolish to allow people to commit themselves to membership without knowing what the Church stands for and what its structures are. If people commit themselves without knowing what it is about, they may well find it hard to extract themselves afterwards and feel that the Church has deceived them as to its theological persuasion. To be frank, I have found that those who are offended at being introduced to Biblical and practical issues about membership of this local Church, have been the kind of people who want all the privileges of membership without the responsibilities. Some have been thorns in the flesh and we have concluded it is kinder to all new members to explain how the Church works before they commit themselves to us. So with new Christians and with mature ones we like to take our time to get to know them and for them to get to know us before making that formal covenant in membership

In the first part of this article I want to look at what members should expect of themselves and in the next issue of the Newsletter in January I will examine what church members should expect of each other and their leaders.

1. GIVING YOURSELF

As a member of a local Baptist Church my primary responsibility is in GIVING MYSELF to the Lord and to other people. If "each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12:5), then I am no longer my own in a double sense. I not only belong to Jesus (I Corinthians 6:19,20), but to his family as well. I am a child of God, AND I have brothers and sisters in the family. My place in that family is given me because of the unique gifts and talents with which God has created me and the Holy Spirit has endowed me following my conversion. There is an old CSSM chorus that says, "There's a work for Jesus none but you can do". It is not only a "work" for Jesus but a position in Jesus which is uniquely mine. My membership of belonging to all the others means that a place is given to me primarily to make a contribution, valuable to God and vital for the health of all the others in the same local family.

I am to make a CONTRIBUTION. If we are to understand the New Testament rightly, the contribution I have to make is concerned with "giving" rather than "receiving", with "serving" rather than "lording" (Acts 20:35; Matthew 20:26-28). I should never enter into the covenant of Membership expecting the "Church" to do all kinds of things for me, but expecting to give myself, serving the people in the Church in obedience to God. To have a change of attitude in that aspect alone would save many of us from being destructively critical of our Church and the leadership, knowing that to do so is to indict ourselves as well.

I am to give myself to God in CORPORATE WORSHIP in which it is necessary for me to participate. That doesn't just mean singing the hymns and songs for the day. In preparing to go to worship I should pray, "Lord, how do you want me to be involved in the worship today?" "I am open to your Holy Spirit to use me in this time of worship". God has gifted me with the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit for use in times of corporate worship. I must be available for him to speak and act through me. As someone once said, "It is not ability that counts, but availability." If I don't turn up for worship, then a part of the body is missing and the gifts I have cannot be used for the benefit of others. There are far too many "once-a-Sunday, non-participant" members of Churches today!

I am to BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST. Because I belong to Jesus and know that through his death on the cross I was bought with a price, I want my life to please him. That should be a characteristic of the Christian. I also belong to all the others in the local family of God. The Bible tells us that "each of us should please his neighbour for his good" (Romans 15:2). My activity should be directed towards building up the body of Christ, not destroying it. I must see the other people in the Church as people who need to be encouraged, exhorted and built up in their faith. That kind of activity demands self-sacrifice.

I am to GIVE MONEY. I am committed to all the others in the support of the work of the Church. Much has been said and written about tithing and it is not my intention to go over the ground except to say that there is one very good reason for your tithe to be directed to your own local Church. If every member tithes their income to the Church every member shares equally "in proportion to what he has received" in the financial load of the Church. Not only that, but any financial difficulties of the local Church would immediately disappear. Incidentally, giving is giving to the Lord - not to the Church, the Pastor's support or any other such thing. I am responsible for the financial support of the Church and its work.

I am to be a WITNESS TO JESUS CHRIST. In giving myself because I belong to all the others, I must see that the reason God has gathered us together is to send us out in to this very needy world to share the Good News about Jesus Christ with my friends and neighbours. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The Church is the only organisation that exists solely for the benefit of those who are not its members". The witness we bear has both corporate and personal demands. I have a responsibility to share the good news personally with my neighbour and I must work with all the others bringing my special gifts to bear in witnessing together to the grace of God. Both of these expressions are vital to the health of the individual and the Church.

I am committed to CORPORATE PRAYER. It was when the people in the early days of the Church gathered together to prayer that things really happened for them and God stepped in to take charge (Acts 2:1f; 4:23f etc.). There is a sad neglect of Church prayer times in these days. If that continues any renewal, restoration or revival is either going to be snuffed out or will go off the rails. "The Church that prays together stays together" is an appropriate adage for today. May God increase our fervour for corporate prayer as never before.

I am committed to DISCOVERING THE WILL OF GOD for my own life, my family and for the family of God. In most Baptist Churches the method of discovering God's will is through the Church Meeting, however accurately or imperfectly that actually happens. Nevertheless, for most of us, the Church Meeting is the executive body for the Church. It is through the Church meeting that the way forward is sought. As a member I should be committed to attending every Church Meeting. Each person, filled with the Holy Spirit and walking in step with the Spirit has a unique insight to bring to such meetings. We cannot truly say we have discovered God's will together unless we have been together, reasoned together, prayed together, sought God's word together and decided together with at least a good measure of agreement. Those decisions must be taken in response to the initiative and guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28).

So, in committing myself to membership of a local Church, I should realise that I am primarily called by God into fellowship with the other Christians to make a unique and valuable contribution to serving God, serving and building up the others in the Church, witnessing to my faith in Jesus, accepting responsibility for the finances of the Church, to praying with and for the people of the Church and to discovering God's will for the community. I am there to give these things rather than to receive them from the others.

I expect a lot from myself as a member of a local Church. It is noteworthy that Churches which expect a lot from their members, have strong doctrine and high ideals are the ones which are growing worldwide. So what may I expect from others and from the leaders?

David Slater,
Kingsbridge.

RENEWING THE CHURCH MEETING



It has been said, that, 'the Pastor comes to the church meeting with apprehension, the deacons with panic and the members with boredom!' And no wonder when you think of what many of our people have been put through in members' meetings. Irrelevance, acrimony, tedium and downright carnality have characterized this gathering which is at the heart of our Baptist life.

Thankfully, there are signs that fellowships are taking urgent steps to remedy this. Here are three areas that I believe every church has to get to grips with if the church meeting is to be revived.

Getting a grip on.....

THE AGENDA

1. Try summarizing the minutes and providing this summary on a sheet of paper with other notices and information. Explain that the minute book is available at the meeting for any who want to check something in more detail. Get agreement on the summary. This avoids reading the minutes out, which alleviates boredom and saves time! An occasional obscurantist will object to this but the vast majority of the church will love you forever.

By having a sheet with notices and information on you need only emphasize the very important. Avoid the temptation to read the sheet out - most congregations can read!

2. Remove A.O.B. from the agenda. The vast majority of 'bad-tempered business' comes up during A.O.B. Explain that the members are free to bring up items for discussion at church meeting if they give the leadership notice of the issue they are concerned about. This allows prayerful, thoughtful preparation by leaders and members. If you can't remove A.O.B. completely, limit it to notices or questions about information. Don't be drawn into a discussion.
3. Exclude trivia! Work hard to avoid discussion about new crockery, the women's guild using the new chairs and a replacement lock for the communion glass cupboard. You will need to be ruthless or these items will creep back onto the agenda.

Include relevance! Put on the agenda big issues at each meeting - worship, evangelism, social action. Give them something to get their teeth into.

Getting a grip on.....

THE ATTITUDES

We must educate people about the church meeting. Trivia can only be excluded if delegation is allowed to take place. Our people need to trust their leadership. The deacons must be allowed to deac! Alongside this must come an understanding that the church meeting is not primarily a business meeting even though business will be included. In addition our members must be encouraged to share their ideas and concerns with house group leaders, deacons and elders - not to save it all up for a church meeting. Much more is accomplished in this personal sharing.

It's useful to encourage these four attitudes in church members for a church meeting:

1. Pray before meeting begins - for forgiveness, guidance and love for other members of the body.
2. Think before you speak - is what I am going to say relevant to the whole church or just of personal interest? Can I say it without causing unnecessary hurt? Would it be better said privately?
3. Listen to others - are they right? Could I be wrong? Am I prepared to change my mind or disagree graciously?
4. Expect a good meeting (a major act of the will to start with!) What can I say that will encourage the leaders? What contribution can I make which will help the meeting to be warm and positive? What has God said to me tonight?

None of these things will come automatically - we must keep on teaching them as important principles of our joint life together.

Getting a grip on.....

THE ATMOSPHERE

Why is it that people can be so nice individually, so warm on Sunday, yet like a bear with a sore head at church meeting? It's as if people come expecting it to be difficult.....and so it is!

I believe that the Pastor has to set the atmosphere for the evening by being relaxed and friendly, yet maintaining a strong spirituality and openness to God. (A sort of 'Wogan at worship'!) Our prayerful preparation can really

help smooth the way for a better spirit at these meetings. (It's not uncommon for me to fast on the day of church meeting!) For the meeting itself you can:-

1. Avoid the great worship versus business divide. We often give the impression that we nod in God's direction (hymn, some verses of scripture and a prayer) before getting down to the real purpose of the evening. Worship is the business of the church! Why not stop every so often during the meeting for prayer, sometimes a period of open prayer. Announce the finishing time at the beginning and spend the last 15 minutes in worship! Why not include someone's testimony to God's goodness in the opening worship? Or split the meeting into prayer groups? Or have communion together? Or ministry to the sick? The whole meeting needs to be in the conscious recognition of God's presence.
2. Keep it fresh! Let different people take part. Use the overhead projector for reports. Get missionaries to send reports on tape (even better on video!). Change seating arrangements. Don't always follow the same pattern of agenda. Serve coffee as people arrive. Break up into discussion groups. And so the list could go on.

All these things can break up the numbing predictability which creates such a bad atmosphere. They can help generate a sense of expectancy and enthusiasm.

3. Be positive. Share the good things God is doing in the church and for you personally. Even when discussing difficult issues keep a positive approach. Encourage people to believe the best of each other. Never lose your temper however stupid or carnal the contributions from the floor. Set (and keep!) the tone for the whole meeting. Write to members before the meeting outlining some of the agenda and expressing enthusiasm and expectancy! Use humour where appropriate.....it's amazingly difficult to keep on being angry/bitter/frustrated when you are laughing!

I believe that the church meeting has a great future! As we work hard to get its agenda, our attitudes and the 'atmosphere' under His control, I believe the church will be helped to a great future too!

Stephen Gaukroger,
Stopsley, Luton.

THE WIMBER FACTOR - What have we learned?

It was like a battlefield. Prostrate bodies littered the floor. Faces - reflecting a mixture of feelings - grouped themselves around the 'casualties'. Shaking and trembling hands stretched out towards the fallen. Tears flowed. Faces shone. From this group came a surge of laughter and joy. From another came unearthly screams and groans. Some faces were glowing and shining. Some eyebrows were being strained to the limits! Some reactions were positive and full of praise. Others were puzzled, confused - even outraged.

'This is Church, folks!' John Wimber was pacing up and down holding a microphone. He looked relaxed. He had 'blown our doors off' with powerful and humorous preaching. His team had inspired us with strong and contemporary worship that had swept us into the presence of the LORD. It was the 'clinic' that turned fairly familiar disciplines into a battlefield. Part of me just wanted to watch with fascination. The rest of me wanted to get involved. This was compelling modelling of a new way to minister to people.

This little article is to open up the conversation again. It is to ask questions. It is to get some feedback. Has this impartation of power done us much good?

In the last few weeks I have chatted to 15-20 British Baptist Pastors and leaders about the continuing impact of the ministry of John Wimber. I had first hand contact with the Vineyard team when they visited Rochdale, Heywood and Ansdell Baptist Churches in the North West in 1982 and then when teams visited us in Streatham, Lewin Road and in the hugely significant "Third Wave" Conference organised by Manna Ministries. I have also been to California twice and seen the work at Anaheim and in some of the newer and smaller Vineyard Church plants. I have enjoyed attending conferences on 'Signs and Wonders', 'Healing', 'Spiritual Warfare' and 'Prayer'.

1. Whose Church?

The first prophetic message from the Vineyard team was simple and yet stunning. The Lord says: "I want My Church back!" Could it be that we had shut Him out of His Church? Had we taken over? What happened when we opened the door and invited Him to come in? What happened when we stopped filling every conceivable moment with the latest choruses and the sound of our own voice and listened to God and let Him come and work? What happened when we stopped straining to do our own thing in ministry and started watching the Lord at work? Do you remember the relief of joining in and blessing what He was doing rather than asking Him to bless what we were doing?

So we have begun to respond to that confrontational and prophetic word. We have not taken ourselves quite so seriously. We have begun to relax and get ourselves a little more 'laid back!' We have braved out those embarrassing times when we have dared to ask the Holy Spirit to come in Power and nothing visible has happened. Yet, as we have asked the Holy Spirit to come in Power and honoured Him and His work, things have been revealed in the Church. Initially there has been shaking hands but deeper in there has been a shaking of the foundations. 'Our Church' is un-holy, selfish, ambitious, angry. It has become like Nazareth where Jesus could do no miracle because of lack of faith. Could it be that we have become those having a form of godliness but denying its power? (2 Tim. 3 v. 5).

From what I have heard, John Wimber's ministry has helped to confront this and begin to bring a change of climate in the Church. The Californian culture is so positive and contrasts vividly with British negativity, cynicism, caution and conservatism. We could do with a little more sunshine in Church to warm us and relax us to provide an environment where fruit ripens. We are called to be guardians of the flock and we need to identify the enemies of the Kingdom. We are also called to bring the flock to a place of sparkling life-giving water and satisfying food. The ministry of John Wimber has stimulated us to think more about the nature and style of the Church as a relaxed, merciful, accepting community of God's people.

2. 'Practitioners'

Meanwhile, back in the Anaheim base, we find that training and equipping people are high priorities in the Vineyard set-up. It has taken seriously the business of placing people in teams. Yes, the familiar small groups called 'kinship' groups are there, too, but the dynamic of team membership is highly emphasised. We have witnessed and learned from the spiritual investment of the team on specific occasions in terms of prayer and preparation. We have valued the teams' willingness to serve, to take initiatives, to be vulnerable and to be evaluated. Confidence is built in the team practice. Anointing and wisdom have been evident. What has been strongly modelled to us can be summed up by the word "Practitioner". Working, praying, crying, evaluating together speaks of a real love and sacrificial commitment.

Too easily we can find ourselves stepping back, folding our arms, taking on the passive role of the spectator or the cynical role of the critic. Too often we are fingering our letter of resignation in the inside pocket when the Lord is calling us to persistence and perseverance. There are no short cuts and there is a cost involved in confronting the 'What's in it for me:' syndrome. We could do with more teams of practitioners in the Churches: people who are responsive to that eloquent and frequent prophetic word to us - "Get on with it!".

3. Healing the Sick!

Expectations are heightened for the 'special event' and there is a danger in what I call 'Conference Christianity'. Those of us who have experienced the 'clinic', the words of knowledge, the phenomena and the claims of healing and deliverance know how impressive that all is. When the team has gone, the dust settles and normalcy returns and honest evaluation takes place, it is vital that we have integrity. The questions come pouring out. How much evidence of real healing do we have? What has happened when this 'healed' person finds that it only lasts a day or so and the symptoms return with greater vigour, coupled with a numbing sense of disappointment? How much of this is down to the power of the human will? Is this just an example of mass hysteria. Is this not just a magic show with ESP doubling for genuine words of knowledge? Are there any other factors at work?

4. Power

Yet most Pastors I have talked to acknowledge that exposure to the Wimber factor has been helpful and positive. Many people have been helped and changed. Some Pastors talk about a new sense of wholeness in themselves and others as a result of this ministry. Most speak of a rising in faith (spelt R.I.S.K.) and a steady determination to work these things through. We have had opened up to us fresh dimensions of spiritual awareness. We have been stretched and enlarged spiritually.

It is as though there is a subterranean stream of power that is inherent in all we do. From time to time there is a release or manifestation of that power. At its heart we are touching on revival. At its edge there

is an encounter with the demonic and sinful. It is safer and healthier at the heart - and can be dangerous at the edge! The release of power is seen from time to time in the setting of a worship service. But are these dramatic and dynamic power encounters intended to be the norm, or for the initial stages of fresh chapters of growth? Traditional settings even though 'Wimberisms' are not present, can be impacted for good as well.

5. **Phenomena**

My observation about some of the phenomena is that they assert the human-ness of response to the presence of God. I have seen jumping, shaking, swaying, vomiting, whooping, crying, falling down, laughter, tears. Is not this a shaking away of obstacles and resistances to God and His work in us and through us? As we move towards wholeness do they not become the exception rather than the rule? In this process we become significantly whole. Something of our complicatedness is shaken away and that yearning for simplicity surfaces. Let us simplify in order to intensify.

6. **Beware the seeds of corruption**

Worship has been enriched by the songs and style of the Vineyard. But speaking as an old "rock and roller" I recognize the dynamics and temptations of the performance. Not only is this curiously there with the music, it is there with the words of knowledge. There is a slender biblical base for this 'on-stage' approach to the gift. The Americans are brilliant at marketing. They sell themselves. The packaging is glossy and attractive, but how much substance is there underneath the veneer? Mammon lurks in the background when it comes to selling the books and the tapes and the conferences. Perhaps radical pioneering has sufficient importance to excuse and forgive a little showmanship!

7. **One local response**

For my own part I believe that it is important to be real. For our fellowship here that means a three-fold thrust. Yes, we want to continue to mature in the emphasis on the **Renewing Power** of the Holy Spirit in the Church. From this **Reaching Out** to the community with the Gospel is imperative. Translating this into **Radical Action** where caring love is demonstrated in practical and substantial ways is the third and vital ingredient of being true to the personality of our King and the priorities of His Kingdom. This vision is more than flavoured by the Vineyard values and priorities.

We have not yet arrived. We are on the way. There are no short cuts and in Britain we do need all the help and inspiration we can receive. There is value in disillusionment. Ridding ourselves of illusion is a healthy practice. It is the truth that sets us free. It would be a mistake to think that being 'Wimberised' answers all our problems. Our eyes are best fixed on Jesus. He is our model. He coped well with the obscurity of the carpenter's bench. He confronted and defeated the temptations that were hurled at him. He picked an unlikely team of ordinary blokes, exposed them to powerful and simple teaching and mind-blowing signs and wonders and told them to get on with it. His aim for them was maturity. His purpose for them was that they should be engaged in making disciples who make disciples. His provision for them was a reservoir of rich teaching, an example of holy living and powerful back-up from the Holy Spirit.

What have we learned from John Wimber's distinctive emphasis?

1. God wants His Church back. He loves it. Every part of it. He is pleased when we love what He loves.
2. Let us affirm that we are an accepting, merciful and loving community providing and building an environment in which we can all grow and learn.

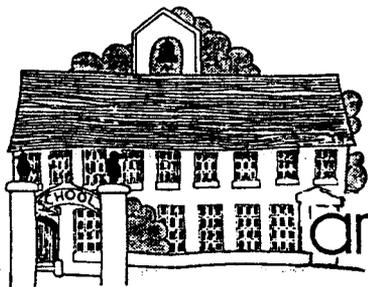
3. Let us be open to receive the experience and goodness of translocal ministries. Remember the messengers?
4. Let us equip God's people and encourage team spirit and one another ministries in healing, prayer and evangelism.
5. Let the Holy Spirit enrich worship, inspire creativity and direct ministry.
6. Let us send our people out into the world as tangy salt and laser light to create a thirst for God and to chase away the gloomy shadows.

This ministry is costly. John's present emphasis is the preaching of the Cross. Challenging superficiality, confronting the 'powers' in spiritual warfare, calling people to repentance is draining. We are praying and longing for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this country. We have to humble ourselves and lay aside our pride and prejudice. We are being prepared. The Lord has used the ministry of John Wimber to help us. I, for one, am grateful.

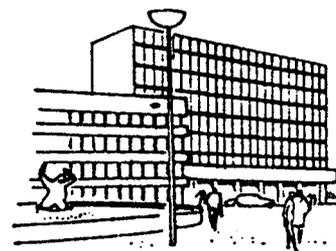
He would not want us to lay aside evaluative skills. However, now is the time for discernment. Where is the source of the 'flack'? Is it fear of people or change? Is there a critical spirit infesting the Church? John says: 'Let us shake hands never to be critical or speak critical words about any person or part of the Body of Christ.' Do all things decently and in order, yes.....but **DO THINGS!**

Are you hearing me?

Mike Wood,
Streatham.



Schools - an underrated opportunity



Not everyone has to go to church. But everyone should go to school. And many schools are within reach of a Baptist church with a minister. I want to share my experiences in local schools, and commend involvement of ministers in their local school if possible.

Today, especially in Junior Schools, "community involvement" is a key word. And any working Baptist minister is part of a community. He should be known in his area, and so is eligible to offer help.

Schools, especially Primary Schools, are often glad of voluntary help, if it is sensibly given. Visit the head-teacher at a time when they are not totally harassed (mid-afternoon or mid-morning may be best), and see if you can help.

Head-teachers are only human, and they get all kinds of odd-balls pestering them. Be realistic about yourself, and what you can offer. Don't have over-high expectations, and don't expect always to evangelise. Help with assemblies may be appreciated. But it is often far better to volunteer to come to a class for an ordinary period.

Be prepared to offer any skills you have. Your hobbies may provide material of interest to a class. If you are reasonably knowledgeable on a subject, and are interested in it, you can be a great help to a teacher who is not an expert. My interest in geology (fossils etc.) and archaeology is always useful. I also make models (including those on the back of the BMS magazine

'LOOK'), and can encourage children to have a go themselves. A guitar and a few good Christian songs (catchy tune, clear words, and sensible actions recommended!) can be very helpful.

Consider the teacher. Ask what they are going, and how you can help. It may be a case of adding a Christian touch to a secular theme. I hear some mutter "shades of Goldman", but it can work. Why shouldn't a theme on water include something about baptism, - after all, for most of the children this will be totally new ground! Also, if you can occupy a class for an hour, many non-Christian teachers will be glad to have your help. Many an atheist would pray for a spare hour to do remedial reading with a couple of children, or just to clear out the stock-cupboard, if only they knew where to apply.

Don't always expect to preach. It is good to be there to help by listening to children reading, or to help by supervising their maths work. The fact that someone with a clerical collar takes time to come and help may be the first step in commending Jesus Christ to them. You have a tremendous chance to reverse the TV image of a "vicar". I remember well how one boy asked me "How is that you, a vicar, are interested in fossils?". Not to mention the teacher who was amazed that I could tell her that part of the model of the internal parts of an ear was missing, - "How did YOU know that?!".

Be prepared to get your hands dirty. You may well get asked to judge a fancy-dress parade (once you are accepted), or to make a draw for the school raffle! (After all, if the minister does it, few people will shout out "Fix"). Be prepared to be there when they have a school pantomime or a concert. And don't rush away immediately afterwards.

Don't be worried if you cannot win them all. Some heads still have a Berlin-wall around their school which says "Parents and all others keep out", but these tend to be the older sort. And even some of them may be won over by a courteous approach and a genuine offer to help. Treat them carefully, for some may have been bitten by an over-zealous minister somewhere else. And you may well be pleasantly surprised to find Christians (or at least people with church connections) who are quite ready to welcome a regular visit.

How often to go? Speaking as a busy minister, I would suggest only one morning or afternoon per week. Rotate round from one class to another, so that all can have the benefit of your help. Have a list available of what you can do, and come in the Spirit of Christ who said that He came, not to be served but to serve.

From personal experience, I can say that going as an unofficial and voluntary helper is far more rewarding than being on a board of managers or governors. Being a school manager tends to make you one of "them". At present I visit two local primary schools for a morning each week, and because I go as an unpaid volunteer I am counted as one of "us" by the staff. I do not have any great brilliance as a teacher, but enthusiasm and specialised knowledge used in Christ's service is always welcome.

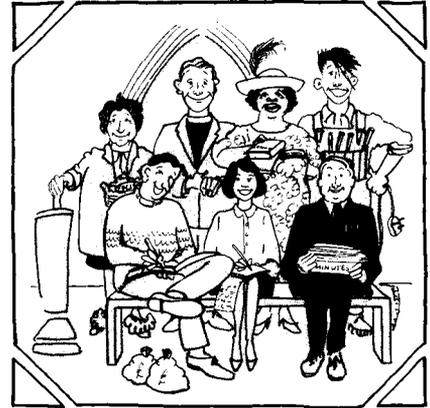
So what about exploring your opportunities?

Mike Smith,
Golcar.

ADMINISHEETS

Practical advice or theological reflection on organising your church more effectively

Published by ADMINISTRY's Education and Training Ministry



All agreed, then?

How should church committees / leadership teams reach decisions? Nobody is worried about trivia, such as who should make coffee next Sunday. But for important questions of principle or changes of direction, there are two time-honoured approaches in use:

- majority rule (take a vote);
- unanimity (reach 100% agreement).

Here the LONDON MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP describe a third possible way, mutual consent, which ADMINISTRY believe to be well worth considering.

Our understanding of consensus is not unanimity, but mutual consent. We need not all agree about a decision (in the sense that we are all for the proposal) to go ahead with it. But we cannot proceed without the permission of those who don't share the majority opinion. Permission requires the giver to take responsibility for her/his part in the decision, agreeing to support and be involved in its consequences.

Equally, mutual consent is not 'majority rule', with an outvoted minority. The minority agree to the way forward, even if it is not the way they would have chosen. This leaves no room for them to feel isolated or 'sat upon' by the rest. Such agreement to co-operate is evidence of the Holy Spirit working among us. Our goal is to try to determine together what God's will is.

Being a small fellowship of around 30, our major decisions are made by the monthly business meeting of the whole fellowship. Membership involves affirming our

ADMINISHEET 6

Fellowship Covenant, which includes a specific commitment to each other. This helps to build an atmosphere of trust which is indispensable when facing tough decisions.

Procedure

When we have talked out the underlying principles of an issue before, we aim for discussion and decision all on the same night. When we have to make an emergency decision, we do the same but keep everything as tentative and temporary as possible.

But we proceed much more slowly with issues that break new ground. These should be dealt with in three stages if necessary:

First month: thorough, careful discussion

This first stage is particularly useful in listening to each other's feelings, with the freedom of not having to make a decision on the same night.

At the end of this discussion stage we take a sounding whether we can reach a conclusion in another month or not. If not, we refer questions to committees. But if we can, we proceed to the second stage.

Second month: discussion aiming at a decision

The chair summarises the range of comments and feelings mentioned previously.

ADMINISTRY - rediscovering gifts of administration in our churches

(This might be helped by distributing a sheet with key words or phrases from the first month). (S)he invites further comments, especially to discover whether people's feelings have changed. Then (s)he presents a brief summary of the principles involved, asking the meeting to make a choice or give its consent based on them.

If disagreement occurs at this second stage, the question is deferred to the third month, with a 'listening group' meeting the minority in the interim.

This listening group is appointed by the Business Meeting and consists of three or four, often including an elder. To be as impartial as possible, it should not include anyone responsible for the proposal under discussion. It reports back to the next Business Meeting, expressing the dissenters' views, feelings and principles on their behalf (together with any changes of mind that may have occurred).

Third month: decision-making

The aim of this third meeting is very much like the second. We try to discover through discussion whether people have changed their position and can now agree with the rest of the group.

If the minority still disagree, we ask their permission to proceed. They often give it readily, as a result of the listening process, described more fully below. Sometimes, of course, permission is not given and deadlock will result. At this point a time of silent prayer and reflection has often been helpful. Giving the Holy Spirit some extra space to work in can often turn the impossible into the possible!

If we are still at odds, we sometimes try breaking the decision down into its smallest components, where less is at stake. We debate each in turn and see where we can agree and progress together.

If there is no way forward at the moment, we recognise the conflict and aim to keep the discussion open. In these circumstances we expect to change gradually by evolution

rather than by single decision. But we have found that by facing into the pain and struggle (rather than burying it) healing and change do occur, even if not in the way we expected at the start.

The listening process

Mutual consent can only take place where the minority know that they are heard and respected. The approach of the listening group is therefore crucial. We start with the understanding that God has often spoken through a prophetic minority, and so we must be open to the one voice which calls into question the possible decision of the rest.

Not all dissent is of this kind, however. So the listening group (and the chair in the meetings) need to clarify the nature of any contrary voice.

- Is it misunderstanding, to clear up?
- Is it personal reservation, to be heard and respected by all, but which then need not halt the decision?
- Is it fear or other personal struggles, requiring compassion and understanding?
- Is it a prophetic stand on convictions and principles that the proposed decision would violate?

Aids to listening

We have discovered that we all need to grow in our ability to listen to each other. Often we have inherited unhelpful ways of responding in discussion, from our family backgrounds and subsequent environments (including the church). We need to learn to recognise our unhelpful manner, and to encourage new ways of being honest. Here are a few examples we have found important.

Choose the environment

Since the first meeting is fundamentally listening to each other's stories, try to find a

room where people feel cosy and at ease. What they talk about may be difficult for them, so a 'warm' environment can help everyone feel more relaxed.

No interruptions

When people talk about their feelings, they need to know they won't be 'jumped on'. During the first meeting we often use a child's toy to help. Whoever holds the toy may speak, but no-one else. The chair directs who holds the toy, taking care to ask the quieter ones whether they would like a turn.

No accusations

We are trying to understand each other, so 'I statements' are more helpful than accusations. For example, "I felt hurt, excluded and angry when the hymns you chose talked about men and never mentioned women", as opposed to "You never think about the women in the congregation when choosing hymns".

SPECIAL OFFER FOR MEMBERS OF MAINSTREAM

This printing of ADMINISHEET 6 has been specially produced for the Mainstream newsletter. Mainstream members may order extra copies at the special price of 15p each (post free) - min. order 5 copies.

Please send cheque with order (marked MAINSTREAM) to ADMINISTRY, 69 Sandridge Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4AG.

Also from this address, details of other ADMINISHEETS and other publications and events run by ADMINISTRY.

In autumn 1987 ADMINISTRY will be announcing details of the Partnership Scheme. This extends most of the benefits of full membership of our Inter-church Organisation Project to non-Anglican churches (all other sides of our work are already interdenominational). Let us know if you would like to receive details when available.

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Reviews



Team Spirit by Dr. David Cormack (MARC, 1987) £5.95; Dr. Eddie Gibbs, Followed or Pushed? (MARC, 1987) £4.95; & John Tiller & Mark Birchall, The Gospel Community (Marshalls, 1987) £4.95.

"Under the crushing burden of routine chores and in face of the lava flow of engulfing additional demands, any leadership vision and motivation are eventually crushed or vaporised. Physically tired and emotionally drained people are eventually reduced to a survival mentality, unable to rise above their day-to-day struggles" (Gibbs, p9). "To face an aggressively secular society the Church of Jesus Christ urgently needs leaders who are prepared to serve more after the style of the commando than the caretaker" (Gibbs, p10). I'd say 'Amen' to that. Effective leadership is certainly essential to church growth but for the most part we do not have it and the way many churches run is a conspiracy to ensure we don't get it, for the reasons Gibbs states.

So what does he suggest? He does not propose that we should adopt radical changes which will lead to the breakdown of existing institutions. Rather he sensitively leads us through how we can establish priorities, implement change and stay in the saddle. He is concerned throughout to get the reader to think concretely and so includes diagrams and exercises. I have to confess that I did not find these altogether convincing. The diagrams looked a bit as if they had come out of a biology text-book! But, for the rest there was a lot of very helpful material, especially on the question of how to match your leadership style to the type of church in which you minister.

The other two books deal with leadership in relationship to team ministry. Recent studies in the B.U. show that team ministry is encountering many problems and both of these books would enhance our effectiveness. David Cormack's is a basic primer which is delightfully written. It deals with motivating a team, commitment, developing skills, evaluating and coping with conflict and failure. Again it includes several exercises and you can learn a lot about yourself if you do them, as I discovered! It's usefulness is not limited to those with full-time teams. It would benefit every minister. We all lead teams of deacons, workers and members.

John Tiller's is the most English approach to the subject. He notes the resistance to change in many churches which are hidebound by clericalism, folk religion and institutionalism. Yet there are signs of hope of a revival. Can existing denominational structures cope with that new life? Or are those who believe they are beyond redemption and abandon them for the house churches right? He is sure that the existing structures can be renewed. Essential to that renewal is the rediscovery of corporate leadership and the release of the ministry of the laity. He argues that such renewal is not only pragmatically necessary but an indispensable outworking of the gospel.

Tiller's book is the least abstract of the three, although it is perceptively analytical. Half of it is concerned to report what people have actually done to change the structures and how the new styles of leadership have succeeded or failed. Although essentially Anglican he has incorporated a number of Baptist examples. It gives much food for thought. All who believe, with him, that the church is "neither a hierarchy nor a democracy but.....a community led by the Spirit in which the charismatic reality is a multiplicity of gifts bestowed upon the whole body". (Tiller, p146) will profit from reading him.

Dr. Derek J. Tidball,
Plymouth.

"Created in God's Image" by Anthony Hoekema (Paternoster) £12.95.

This is a comprehensive and scholarly exposition of the Bible's view of our humanity from a Reformed standpoint. Hoekema affirms the "central mystery" of humanity - total dependence on God as his creature, and total responsibility for his decisions as a person.

The guts of the book concerns a very full and careful exposition of the Biblical term "Image of God" as applied to human beings examining the Biblical, Historical and Theological background to it.

Plainly there are problems with our understanding of our basic human nature. If we are human only because we are made in the image of God, how has the fall affected our humanity? Are there aspects of the image we have lost through sin and some that have been retained? Or is it that the image is somehow an "optional extra" divinely added by God's grace to those who come to faith in Christ? These are questions all posited and treated in some depth. The conclusion is that there is a "functional" aspect of God's image totally lost through sin so that we cannot behave as God intended. But there is also a "structural" aspect which has been perverted through the fall so that our gifts, endowments and capacities have been directed towards ourselves and human achievement rather than the worship of God. Renewed man has these faculties progressively restored through regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Ultimately we shall only be restored completely at "the final glorification" when we shall have apprehended the goal of our creation and re-creation - unlosable perfection in Christ.

There are three main areas in which we image God. In our relationship with God, our relationship with other men and in our ruling over nature. In each of these, sin has spoiled what God made good. In Christ each of these is being restored to the state God originally intended.

Following the lengthy section on the theological summary, Hoekema then launches into chapters on "The question of self-image" in which he examines the Christian's perspective on himself; in short that we "love our neighbours AS WE LOVE OURSELVES". And then comes another lengthy set of chapters about sin: its origins, its spread, its nature and its restraint.

The final two chapters deal with "The Whole Person" and "The Question Of Freedom". In summary, the book is a very careful and helpful analysis of the Bible's view of man. What we think people are does have far-reaching consequences for our Church life. It is a book well worth spending time reading.

David Slater,
Kingsbridge.

HONOURABLY WOUNDED by Dr. Marjory F. Foyle. Marc Europe £3.95.

Dr. Foyle has faithfully fulfilled her charge in giving a clear vignette of missionary life with its stresses and strains.

Whilst it is all good stuff, it is not light reading. It will be read to some profit by the phlegmatic but scarcely by the more bucolic. They will put it down after a chapter or two.

I know that it is not written for entertainment but perhaps a few more human stories and illustrations would make for a better application of the wisdom and experience herein. A few more headings and paragraphs would make it even more practical than it is.

Everybody suffers stress. Missionaries are no exception. They are still put on some sort of pedestal and expected to be above that sort of thing. Because of their calling and preparation missionaries are expected to be super-christians. That is one of the conditioning factors in the life of the missionary.

Dr. Foyle suggests that a certain amount of stress may be good for a missionary. On certain occasions it produces good results. Nervousness produces adrenalin, heightens sensitivity and makes the individual ready for the test. Very true, and not just for missionaries.

There is the extreme of course: too much stress. I think of the young missionary wife, who becomes a mother, in a new country, and has to cope with language school and house-keeping. Sometimes the stress and strain is too much for a body to take.

I thought that the section on missionaries' children, good. It confirms our own experience: bringing up four of our own and assisting with others. I am glad that the author brings out the positive aspects of life overseas for the child. They can gain a wider education, especially in the early formative years. As a by-product of their parents' calling they are given an invaluable window for the rest of their lives.

I found the last two chapters of special value because they deal with the returning missionary syndrome i.e. re-settlement for a long furlough, sickness, retirement, new phase of life. Carefully and positively Dr. Foyle covers these aspects of missionary life. The book ends with a useful application of Elijah and Moses' real problems.

Frank Vaughan,
Tottenham.

TO LIVE & WORK Christian Schumacher. Marc Europe £7.95, 288pp.

I approached this book with eager enthusiasm. Here, at last, was a sociologist - a proven expert in personal motivation - who also held hard by the orthodox creeds; a rare breed indeed! The early chapters fascinated me. Perhaps here we had a Christian apostle to the new automated world of work.

His major idea is that the relationships within the Trinity, and those within the Church, are patterns for man involved in the industrial process. These are great concepts, and valuable I'm sure, but as I read on I began to feel that he was stretching the parallel much too far. There seems to me to be a fundamental incongruity between the two worlds - one organised for giving, the other for getting - which could not be reconciled so easily.

As I see it, man's motivation in industry is 99% self-interest, however one may pretend otherwise; whereas God's motivation, as far as we men are concerned is the giving to us all good things by every means, and in particular giving us salvation which cost him his Son. How can any industrial process, however reformed and idealised, be compared with that?

In chapters 4 & 5 the attempt to parallel the church and the factory becomes almost ludicrous at times. To equate the priest's making the bread into the body of Christ with the creative element in industrial production completely misfires as far as I am concerned. Also his idealisation of relationships within the church, as if the ideal was the norm, suggests unfamiliarity with the church's abysmal failure in practice. I have the uneasy feeling that the church could learn much from industry in this matter, rather than the other way round.

There is an excellent passage on spiritual love (p236-240) which I would make required reading for every applicant for church membership. The sooner we in the churches return to this simple but profound priority the sooner we shall be rid of the appalling deformities which have developed within our ranks. This is the adult gift; all the rest are relatively 'childish things' 1 Cor. 13 v 11. Perhaps the author should have started with this and made all the rest dependent on it. As it is, the machinery of reform has more emphasis than the inner revolution in man which can bring it about.

But his clear appreciation of the origin of the modern moral malaise must be listened to - viz, the neglect of God. Too often we blame conditions for irreligion and immorality, when really the conditions are the result not the cause.

The book should certainly be read, but, as with most of modern writing, the most important factor for a Christian is left out - the active intervention of God in judgement and grace. You only have to put this volume alongside Isaiah to realise that this is so. The rise and fall of nations and civilisations is not just a question of cause and effect on the human level, but is in the sovereign action of God. The cry for grace and mercy is still the ground of hope for us all. Social engineering, however well intentioned and intelligent, is an entirely secondary factor.

Humphrey Vellacott,
Vernon, Kings Cross.

GOD'S WORD FOR A COMPLEX WORLD by Andrew Kirk. Marshall Pickering £5.95

(161pp.) (Pbk.).

A short primer on the questions of how to interpret Bible passages, analyse our social and economic world, and understand political approaches to society. This book shows that it isn't enough to have a high view of Scripture. It is necessary to have a competent grasp of how society works if the Bible is to be applied in a penetrating way.

After stating general principles, methods and approaches, the author spends the latter half of the book in trying "to identify the most crucial evidence where the biblical writers touch on political issues, to suggest ways of interpreting the evidence and to examine its significance for contemporary political life." (p.77).

Topics dealt with include the theme of justice, the Monarchy, the message of Micah and wealth creation/redistribution. I found the book to be impartial, containing stimulating and provocative ideas about many biblical texts. There is a thorough biblical reference index. Expensive!

THE CROSS OF CHRIST John Stott. IVP, £5.95 (383pp.) (Pbk.).

Part 1 deals with the centrality of the cross in the Bible, in God's foreordained plan, and in the mind of Jesus during the last 24 hours.

Part 2 deals with what happened at the cross. The chapter on the problem of forgiveness is magisterial and worth the whole price of the book. The concepts of the majesty of God and the gravity of sin, wrath and sin, love and holiness, satisfaction (in which 2 Tim. 2:13 is vital) and substitution are handled with depth, precision and passion.

Part 3 deals with what the cross achieved. Salvation is analysed under the heads of propitiation, redemption, justification, reconciliation, justice and love, wisdom and power, and the conquest of evil in all its forms.

Part 4 deals with what the cross means for the disciple of Christ. The cross is representative and normative as well as substitutionary. Service to God, service to others, enemy loving, and suffering and glory are the substance of this section.

John Stott has done us a great service. We are brought within the heart of God and left to contemplate the mystery of our salvation. Take this book on retreat or study leave. Read it twice. Preach Christ crucified in its full evangelical sense.

There are extensive indices together with a full bibliography.

Terry Griffith.

LOVE WON ANOTHER (Every Christians Guide to Evangelism) Lewis and Molly Misselbrook. Marshall Pickering £3.50.

This is an excellent book about evangelism. I highly recommend it. Practical, well-illustrated and thorough, this is going to become a textbook for many years to come.

Drawing on their great experience the Misselbrooks helpfully describe most major aspects of local church evangelism. Very stimulating for all church leaders. (Especially rich in sermon illustrations!) The material at the end of each chapter makes it easy to use in house groups or even deacons (!) meetings.

One minor disappointment. In the recent climate of 'signs and wonders' I would have valued the Misselbrooks' comments on the place of 'power' evangelism in the local church.

I particularly appreciated the sections on door-to-door work. For many of us this has been dismissed as a little passé and been replaced by an emphasis on 'friendship evangelism'. Good though this emphasis is, the book reminds us of the worth of thoughtful, planned evangelistic activity. The Misselbrooks believe both elements are necessary.

Worth every penny of the purchase price. Sell your John Wimber T-shirt to buy it!

Stephen Gaukroger,
Stopsley.

A NOBLE TASK (Eldership and Ministry in the Local Church) Neil Summerton. Paternoster Press £4.95.

There is much of help here, especially for newly-appointed elders or for churches considering appointment of full-time workers.

The book's general value is in laying out clearly an updated treatment of the age-old issues related to this crucial aspect of church policy. There is discussion of the principles and practice of congregational eldership, the office and task of an elder, elders as a leadership body, education for eldership, full-time ministry and collective congregational ministries. Its more specific attractions are: fairly short chapters, a realism about human nature and a well-balanced appeal to scripture.

Neil Summerton writes from a Brethren background but clearly has wide sympathies with all truly wanting to serve the Lord. A useful list of recent books and a guide to training opportunities are included. Whilst inevitably taking exception to some of his statements, I endorse wholeheartedly his grand choice of title. "A Noble Task" indeed!

Oliver Vellacott,
Wilton Baptist Church.

MOVING PRAYER Rosemary Budd. March Europe £2.50 (224pp.).

TOUCH THE WORLD THROUGH PRAYER Wesley Duewal. Marshalls £2.95 (240pp.).

Worship, prayer and meditation appear to be the subjects in vogue in contemporary Christian publishing. Consciousness of an inner spiritual experience of the living God both attracts and frightens us. These books testify that without the disciplines of prayer and meditation the Christian life atrophies.

Rosemary Budd's contribution is a 'how-to' volume in which self-expression with the senses and the body is examined and commended. Arguing from the premise that Jesus understood his body, she suggests that the body is a vehicle for expressing worship. In the use of the faculties we are helped to greater understanding of the presence of God. It is a thoughtful book, replete with worship exercises for 'acting' out our beliefs. Being a 'non-mover' - a 'non-hand raiser' in worship, I find difficulty with the suggestion of 'galloping 8 steps sideways across the building' to 'rejoice in the Lord' a little daunting!

Wesley Duewal's contribution is practical. The writer takes us along well-trodden paths. It has the feel of a clutch of conference addresses with suitable illustrations. It is interesting, simplistic, liberally laced with quotations and scriptural references. There are ideas for enlivening prayer times and stimulating praise.

Patrick Goodland,
Gorsley.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Discovering the Bible: ed. Tim Dowley, Marshall Pickering, £8.95 (Hbk.), colour, coffee table book illustrating life from Bible times through recent archaeological finds. Topics include the Temple; where was Jesus buried?; the lake cities of Galilee (which sheds light on the social setting of Jesus' ministry). (SJC).

Small Group Bible Studies: Genesis, 75pp. 12 discussions; 1 Corinthians, 64pp. 16 discussions; John, (2 vols.), 23 discussions; by Marilyn Kunz and Catherine Schell. Marshall Pickering, £0.99 each. Formerly published in the USA as Neighbourhood Bible Studies. Some maps. Assumes fairly high intelligence. Good for your Church Resource Library (have you got one?).

The Mystery of Marriage: Mike Mason, MARC Europe, £2.25, 185pp. Any book that gets a rave Foreword by Jim Packer is worth a shelf of other paperbacks. A refreshing and stimulating change from all the 'How to' and 'Now work through these 12 questions with your partner' Christian marriage books. This book beautifully describes what marriage IS. Good use of descriptive language bordering on the grandiloquent in places.

The Power of Love, Evangelism and the Local Church: David Hewitt, Marshall Pickering, £2.50, 157pp. By minister of Counterslip Baptist Church. Takes each of the 'one another' commands in the NT and shows how building relationships releases the power of love into church and community. Good to see realistic and helpful accounts of Church Meeting joys and problems in chapter on "Submit to one another" and the last chapter. Handy basis for sermon or study series.

A Gardener Looks at the Fruit of the Spirit: Phillip Keller, Marshall Pickering, £2.50, 187pp. Devotional meditations upon the Parable of the Four Soils and Galatians 5:22-23.

A Shepherd Looks at the Good Shepherd and his Sheep: Phillip Keller, Marshall Pickering, £2.50, 187pp. Devotional meditations upon John 10. Good antidotes for the bland diet of much recent biography. We need to place ourselves under the Word of God rather than chase others' exploits.

A World Without Windows: Derek Tidball, SU, £2.50, 160pp. Derek's theme is secularisation - that process whereby our world has become a 'world without windows', i.e. a closed system which has no place for the supernatural. Written by a sociologist who is a pastor - it is this blend of sociological insight and biblical perspective which will undoubtedly commend this somewhat light paperback to many. (PBM).

Chained to the Gospel: Michael Baughen, Marshall Pickering, £2.25, 189pp. Anything by Michael Baughen is sure to be a good read. This popular level study of 2 Timothy will be appreciated by many in our churches. Best used for personal Bible study rather than group study (as publishers suggest). What group would spend 24 sessions on 2 Timothy? (PBM).

Religious Prisoners in the USSR: Keston College and MARC Europe, £2.50, 160pp. Foreword by Irina Ratushinskaya. Lists relevant parts of USSR Criminal Code, prisoners by religious grouping with personal details and photos, and many testimonies. Very practical on how to write to the USSR. 306 religious prisoners of conscience known as at 16.6.87. Dr. Anatoly Koryagin, a recently released Soviet psychiatrist ("a very new Christian indeed" -Michael Bourdeaux), has stated that there is a "false euphoria in the West about the extent of 'glasnost'" and calls attention to "the multitude of those whose names we don't know or may never know". A very moving and informative book.

Ten Growing Soviet Churches: Lorna & Michael Bourdeaux, MARC Europe & Keston College, £2.50, 210pp. Methodists, Pentecostals, Baptists, Mennonites, Uniates, Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans from all over vast USSR. Illustrates the particular problems of the registered and unregistered Baptists - both of whom the Lord is blessing, although relationships are still strained. A startling picture of courage and growth across the board.

Don't Let the Goats Eat the Loquat Trees: Thomas Hale, MARC Europe & BMMF Interserve, £2.50, 256pp. The small daily problems encountered in a very different culture (Nepal) are shown to be what they really are - but headaches!! Author learns how to share Christ with the Nepalese by learning about goats and loquat trees. If you've got any ideas about becoming a missionary, this is an enjoyable book and well worth reading before you take another step. (KB.)

MAINSTREAM CONFERENCE 1988

The 1988 Mainstream Conference will be held at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire from Monday 11th to Wednesday 13th January. The conference theme is "Conversion Today" and the team of speakers will include:

Gavin Reid; Malcolm Goodspeed; Peter Cotterell; Stan Woods; Stephen Gaukroger; Nick Mercer; David Coffey; Paul Beasley-Murray; David Slater.

The cost is £33 each and a £5 non-returnable deposit secures a place. Book early and avoid disappointment.

BOOKING FORM

Please reserve places for the Mainstream Conference. I enclose a £5.00 non-returnable deposit for each place booked.

Name:

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.....

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