

The Faith and Unity Executive Committee  
Doctrines and Worship Committee

## **Forms of Ministry among Baptists**

**Towards an Understanding  
of Spiritual Leadership**



**THE BAPTIST UNION**  
OF GREAT BRITAIN

George Smith stared gloomily at the damp patch on the wall of the church hall. He was sure that it was spreading, and signs of flaking paint were becoming all too clear. He had just begun doing the sums for the cost of re-pointing the outside brickwork and repairing the gutters when he awoke with a start to the actual item on the agenda of the Church Meeting. 'Calling the new minister' it was headed, and the Moderator was in the middle of talking about the Revd Michael Black who had preached with a view the previous Sunday. According to the Moderator, he was an 'accredited minister' of the Baptist Union. It was obvious that the Moderator thought this was a very good thing, and expected the meeting to agree with him. George could not quite see what all the fuss was about. He had enjoyed Mr Black's visit. He had felt that he had been led to God in worship and the sermon had touched a raw spot in his life (in fact, afterwards he had talked something over with his wife Susan that they had both been avoiding for months). He couldn't see what it added to be 'accredited'. Surely someone was either a minister or not.

George made a mental note not to miss the vote and sank back into thinking about the wall. It would have to be redecorated inside as well, but perhaps he could find a couple of spare evenings ... "what spare evenings?", he could hear Susan saying ... Suddenly George was brought back again with a start. It seemed that one of his fellow-deacons, John Woodbridge, was saying something that was making people more than a bit angry. Bodies, and even chairs, were shifting around him and there was a distinct muttering in the background. John ploughed on with his speech regardless, ending by saying "... and so, though we've all been very grateful to our lay pastor, Ron Green, for all the hard work he's done, I'm sure I speak for all of us when I say that we're glad that at last we can afford to have a real minister, a Reverend who's been properly ordained."

An awful silence greeted this last remark, and George for one could hardly contain himself. They had all been glad to have Ron leading their worship and visiting when he could, which was admittedly not all that often since he had a busy life as a bank manager (a job which George was prepared not to hold against him). But he had got the deacons and elders well organized into visiting teams and most people felt looked after. George was about to leap to his feet and say something he would regret

later, when he became aware that Susan had beaten him to it. "In my view", she was saying, "Ron is just as much a minister as this new man - in fact, I can't see the difference between a minister and the three elders we already have. What matters is the gifts that God gives people. I don't care what titles you give them."

George heard the Moderator making soothing noises. He was suggesting that perhaps a church conference was just the thing to think about these things deeply. In fact, the Baptist Union had recently produced a large report on the meaning of spiritual leadership and perhaps they could look at it together ... George felt distinctly alarmed at this prospect, but the silence that met this proposal was even worse than the one that had greeted John. George was glad when the discussion moved on to the safer ground of people's feelings about Michael Black's visit, and he was even more glad to cast his vote a little later to call him as their minister.

The meeting had been a long one, but there was still one more item of business. It was, as the Moderator said (still keeping up a cheerful manner), also about ministry. They all knew Paul Williams, he reminded them, one of their young people who had been away at college training as a Youth Worker. George did not need any reminding. Bit of a tearaway Paul had been, and a real handful in George's bible class. He had had to blink back the tears when Paul had finally been baptized, and Paul always had a word for him when he came back to his home church in the holidays and sometimes led the services. Paul, said the moderator, wanted to work as a Youth Specialist on a ministry team in a Baptist church. The Baptist Union Council had just decided that Youth Specialists could be 'accredited' by the Union and their names put on a list in the *Baptist Union Directory*. Did the church meeting recognise that Paul was called to this work of Christian ministry? Would it commend Paul for interview with the Ministerial Recognition Committee of the Association? George was more than happy to say that he did and he would. But he was a bit puzzled. Did this make Paul a minister? If not, why put his name in the *Directory*? Was Ron's name in the *Directory* too? And what on earth was the Council of the Baptist Union?

The meeting had finally come to an end. George felt it had been a good time, that they had all been involved in something important for their life

as a church and for the Gospel of Christ. But they really had to do something about that damp patch. George headed for the Treasurer ... better to do something about it now and not have to trouble Michael Black with it at his first church meeting ...

This account of a church meeting owes something to the imagination, though perhaps not a lot. George's puzzlement about forms of spiritual leadership in the church would be shared by many people. What really is the difference between a 'minister', a 'lay pastor', a 'deacon', an 'elder', and other kinds of leaders like 'youth specialists', 'preachers' and 'evangelists'? What difference does it make to be 'ordained'? Why does the Baptist Union 'accredit' some people and not others?

The recent paper about ministerial leadership mentioned by our imaginary moderator is contained in the main part of this booklet, and it aims to answer many of George's questions. It does, however, demand quite a lot of time and thought to work through it, and this shorter paper tries to set out its main points in a different kind of way.

### **Pastoral service**

Let us return in our imagination to the church meeting where George was present, and think about the men and women sitting there. All these people, as members of the local church, are called by Christ to share in his ministry of serving others, not only inside the walls of the church but outside in the world. Using a term from the pages of the New Testament, we may say that they are all called to *diakonia* (a Greek word we may translate as 'pastoral service'). To equip them for this ministry, they have been endowed by God with various spiritual gifts. Some of these gifts are often overlooked - like hospitality and generous giving - and others are more spectacular - like healing and prophecy - but they are all important.

All Christian disciples are called to service (*diakonia*), because God has revealed himself to be a Servant God throughout the long history of his people Israel, and above all in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God has a mission, sending forth the Son in the power of the Spirit to heal and reconcile broken lives. His chosen way for carrying out his

mission is ministry or humble service, and he calls us to be partners with him in what he seeks to do in the world.

But, despite the fact that all Christians are called to *diakonia*, the Church from earliest times has found that some have been called to be deacons, or 'pastoral servants'. George in our story is one of these. The story of the Church in the New Testament shows us that although everyone shares in serving, Christ through his Spirit calls some women and men to be particular resources of service for all, and this is recognised by his body, the Church. We might think of the way that the lens of a camera or a telescope brings a wider scene into particular points of sharp focus, and so say that some people are called to 'focus' the *diakonia* of the whole community. They are recognised by others as a 'focus' of serving, as continual sources of help, as bearers of responsibility for the service of the whole church. Such deacons will have different kinds of gifts; some will have skills in building and finance, and others will be gifted as teachers and counsellors. But whatever they do will be done in the context of pastoral care and in a ministry of prayer.

"You seemed to be day-dreaming most of the time in the church meeting", remarked Susan to George as they drove home. "I was thinking about the damp patch on the wall" said George. "As a deacon you should have been thinking about the ministry" said Susan rather tartly. George was not easily roused to contradict Susan, and he had to admit she was right most of the time. She also knew what she was talking about, as she had herself served as a much appreciated deacon several years before. But on this occasion he had something to say he felt deeply. "It's true that I'm worried about the wall - well I am chairman of the fabric committee -", he said, "but I'm also thinking about all the people who use the hall - the mothers and toddlers, the young people, the lunch club for the elderly. And you know that I pray for them as well as make sure the building is in good order." Susan did know it, and if he had not been driving she would have given him an encouraging hug.

## Pastoral oversight

In our imaginary church meeting, the members were gathered to take decisions together. They were meeting to find the 'mind of Christ' about their life together and about the mission of God in which they were called to share. Using a striking old phrase found in the constitutions of many early Baptist churches, they were carrying out their agreement 'to walk together and watch over' each other. The idea of 'watching over' is found in the New Testament in the term *episkope* - which we often translate by the word 'oversight'. Oversight of the church community is committed to its members as they meet together in prayer and concern for each other and for the world around.

But like most Christian churches, from New Testament times onwards, we also believe that Christ calls some of his disciples to individual tasks of 'oversight'. The whole church gathered together recognises this, and issues the call from Christ to some to 'watch over' them. We have already seen that calling some people to be 'deacons' does not take away the responsibility of all to be engaged in service (*diakonia*). In the same way, calling some to be 'overseers' does not undermine the responsibility of the whole church meeting to watch over the fellowship, to test the individual overseers and to call their ministry to account. So Paul writes to 'all the saints who are at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.' (Phil 1:1) This oversight can never be imposed or be a matter of dominating others; its character is humble service, and its only authority lies in winning the trust of others.

Of course, there are many people in a church who have particular kinds of 'oversight'. The leader of the young people's group, or the chairperson of the pastoral care committee, or a house group leader all exercise some oversight in 'watching over' people's spiritual development. In specific areas of the church's life they have a limited responsibility of oversight. But there are one or two people who have been called to have a general oversight over the entire life of the congregation, to have a vision of the whole fellowship and mission of the church and to enable it to fulfill its service as a whole to the world. These 'overseers' are what we usually call pastors or ministers, though they may be called by different titles in different parts of the Christian Church.

## **The Ministry of the Word**

Now, the only basis there can be for 'having oversight' or 'watching over' a congregation is in the Word of God. A community of God's people cannot be guided or its life put in order by mere human opinions or even the best human insight. God orders all things through his Word (Heb 1:3). He has expressed himself about the true purpose of life and the way we are to live in love and justice with others. The pastor who has general oversight of a congregation will therefore be a 'minister of the word', teaching and interpreting the written word of scripture which in turn witnesses to the living Word of God, Jesus Christ. The apostolic message of the gospel is entrusted to the whole community of the church, but the minister enables the church to keep it safe and interpret it to meet the needs of the world today. The minister will not necessarily do all the teaching in the church, but he or she will be responsible for it, and will train and coordinate all those involved in teaching and proclamation.

The ministry of the Word cannot, however, be simply a matter of speech. The true Word of God, Jesus Christ, was incarnate - embodied in flesh and blood, living in the real world at a real point of history. So ministers will also 'embody' the Word of God. They will 'flesh it out' in their pastoral care and service. In the congregation where they serve they will also normally preside at the Lord's table and baptize as part of their ministry of the Word, since here God makes it possible for us to encounter his Word through the material 'body' of the world, through the stuff of bread, wine and water. This kind of ministry of the pastoral 'overseer' has thus often been called 'the ministry of word and sacrament', but we could equally call it 'ministry of the word spoken and embodied.'

### **A minister of the world-wide Church**

"I was glad you spoke up about Ron Green at the Church Meeting", said George to Susan after they had arrived home, and had just caught the last moments of News at Ten and the final human interest item - or in this case an animal interest item about geese trapped on icy ponds and being rescued by the fire brigade. "Well, John Woodbridge really made me mad," replied Susan, "but I remember he was always like that at deacons'

meetings. He only had to open his mouth to put his foot in it. Trouble is, because of the way he talks you tend to go further than you mean in replying to him." George was startled by this apparently wilful change of mind. "You don't mean you agree with him after all!" he said in a shocked voice. "Well, no, not like that," said Susan cautiously, "but I have to admit there is something different from Ron and our elders about being a minister. I can't put my finger on it, but it's there." She looked around for inspiration. "It's a bit like the Ten O'Clock News", she said. George was even more puzzled. "What, the geese?" "No, silly," she said affectionately, "but having a minister's like the church having a window on the wider world. I feel we can get terribly narrow, concentrating on our own concerns here."

Susan was, in her usual perceptive way, getting close to the heart of things. The witness to the gospel of Christ does not belong to one local church alone, but to the whole world-wide Body of Christ. The minister too is not only a minister of the local church but of the whole Church of Christ. Through their training, ministers gain a grasp of the faith of the whole church through the ages, and have a vision of its mission in many places in the world today. So they can open up the horizons of the local congregation to this wider vision, in the light of which it can better understand its own faith and its own place in God's mission in the world. The minister is responsible for enabling the church to have a truly apostolic vision of mission at home and overseas, and for bringing the local church into partnership with other churches in many societies. In this way the minister represents the Universal Church on the local scene. For all this, we often cannot draw a sharp line between those called by the local church to focus its service (*diakonia*), and those who are called to exercise some pastoral oversight (*episkope*). We have been used to thinking of the two groups as deacons and ministers, but many of our local churches in addition now also appoint 'elders'. In many ways these, like the deacons, focus the *diakonia* of the congregation, though they will probably have stronger gifts of pastoral care and teaching. But they have also been commissioned by the church to exercise more pastoral oversight than others do. Nevertheless, the minister has been called to oversight of the whole ministry of the local church, and this calling is held in bonds of commitment with the wider fellowship of churches.



## **Accreditation**

From earliest days among Baptist churches, ministers were set aside for ministry by more than the local church alone. A local church would call its deacons on its own, but when someone was called to be pastor, ministers and members came from other churches, sometimes from far afield, to affirm their belief in his call and to recognise his ministry. This fits in with the minister's calling to ensure that the apostolic message of the gospel is kept safe and interpreted for new times, a message which is entrusted not to one congregation alone but to the whole Church of Christ. It also fits with the minister's calling to open the local church to partnership with the Church Universal.

Today, one way in which this wider recognition is offered is through the process of 'accreditation' by the Baptist Union of churches. This is not just, then, a 'quality control mechanism', although certain standards of training and theological understanding are required of a candidate. Accreditation means that a person's calling to a ministry as pastor is recognised by local church, local Association of churches and national Union, and that this person has willingly entered into a mutual commitment (or covenant) with the wider fellowship of churches.

## **Other recognised ministries**

When we thought about people who are called to focus pastoral service, or *diakonia*, we identified them as deacons in the local church. This has been our Baptist understanding of the 'diaconate' over many years. But perhaps the Holy Spirit is calling us in our day to widen our understanding.

The Spirit is gifting people to exercise a number of ministries other than that of pastor; we might think, for example, of youth specialists, evangelists and church-planters, musicians and preachers. Sometimes these Christian workers are called to serve in an area wider than that of one local church alone. Anyway, in a society where people move around much more, it is important to be able to commend such people to the churches as a whole. So the recent paper about *Forms of Ministry* expresses the

belief that the whole community of churches together should be able to recognise and affirm a greater variety of ministry than that of pastoral oversight. Such ministry will be a special source of pastoral service or *diakonia*, and so it can be called 'diaconal' even though it has a scope beyond the local church and although those serving may well be doing so full-time.

The paper on ministry thus suggests that ministries other than that of 'ministers' should be recognised and accredited by the Baptist Union, and the Council recently decided to begin with the ministry of 'Youth Specialist'. It also urges, however, that those engaged in such ministries should be placed in teams with ministers. They depend upon the ministry of the word for which the minister has primary responsibility - though they will also share in providing it - and they need the general oversight the minister offers. At the same time, the minister needs the other 'diaconal' ministries in order that the full scope of the ministry of Christ may be expressed in the community.

Like the minister, those serving in other ministries recognised by the whole Union of churches should have their calling affirmed by local church, Association and Union. Such pastoral servants are not simply specialists in a particular professional area, such as youth or community work or music. They must also have some theological training to be able to share in the ministry of the word and be able to lead others on in faith and to enable them to minister to one another and to the world.

### **Ordination**

There are many occasions when a person will be commissioned to some task of Christian service, and prayer will be made for God's blessing, asking for a new filling of the Holy Spirit to meet the needs of a new stage of life and ministry. It is fitting that this moment of commitment, commissioning and grace should be marked by the biblical act of laying of hands on a person's head. It belongs, for example, in the moment of baptism at the beginning of the Christian life, commissioning a new disciple to share in God's whole ministry and mission in the world. It is right that it should also accompany the act of setting people aside for specific roles of ministry.

We cannot then make any real distinction between words like 'commissioning', 'setting aside' and 'ordination'. The difference between various acts like this comes not from the act itself, but from the particular ministry for which a person is being set aside. It may be helpful, however, to keep the word 'ordination' to describe the commissioning and blessing of those whose ministries are to focus either diakonia (pastoral service) or episkope (pastoral oversight) in the church. In the case of ministers, ordination will involve representatives of the Association and the Baptist Union since their call is being recognised by the wider church and not only by the local one, and their ministry is to be exercised in this wider setting. Representatives of the wider fellowship of churches should similarly be involved where a 'diaconal' ministry (such as a youth specialist, evangelist or preacher) is to be recognised by the Union as a whole and not only by a local church.

### **'Lay Pastors'?**

In light of all that has been said so far, it does not seem helpful to go on using the description 'lay pastor' for those people who are giving pastoral care to a church while holding another job in their daily working life. Someone is either a pastor or not; whether ministers are full-time or part-time does not determine whether or not they are a minister called by Christ. Moreover, the word 'lay' simply means 'of the people', and all members in the church are of the people of God.

The paper on Forms of Ministry proposes that the category of 'lay pastor' should not suddenly be abolished, but that no new names should be added to the list. Instead, some of those at present called 'lay pastors' are in fact already exercising the ministry of pastoral oversight that is characteristic of the minister, and should therefore be encouraged to seek further training, accreditation by the Baptist Union and ordination as ministers. They need not be full-time in this ministry, but may combine it with another job or profession as they do now.

However, there will be others who either cannot or do not want to meet the requirements for accreditation as a minister. Their primary calling is quite clearly in the secular context of their work, but a small church may

still look to them for regular pastoral care and teaching. The paper on ministry suggests that some may therefore find they are being called to a 'diaconal' ministry recognized by the Union, like that of youth specialist or evangelist; but in this case the ministry would have a less specialized and more general pastoral and teaching character. Perhaps the title 'Pastoral Assistant' would be fitting, since this pastoral servant should be working in a team with a minister. This suggestion has not yet been adopted by the Union, but if it were then the following scene might take place....

A couple of months after the church meeting George ran into Ron Green in his local bank. "It's a change to see you sitting at the till rather than standing in the pulpit," he said. "Well," said Ron, "if Matthew was anything to go by, the till's a good place for a disciple to meet Jesus. But I haven't given up the pulpit, you know. I'm giving pastoral care to a new church on the estate on the edge of town. John Woodbridge and his family live near by and they're joining me there too." George thought for a moment, and said rather slyly, "So John's not worried about you not being ordained." "But I'm going to be," said Ron, "though not as a minister. I thought hard about whether I should take further training to be a minister alongside my job in the bank, but I decided God was calling me to be ordained as a Pastoral Assistant, and I'm working in a team with Michael Black. He's giving oversight to the whole venture. Only one thing, though; the wall of the prefab church is showing signs of damp. I wondered whether you..." George, however, had suddenly become very interested in a leaflet about mortgages and did not seem to be listening.

**FORMS OF MINISTRY AMONG BAPTISTS  
TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF  
SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**

**The Full Discussion Document**

## **I. The context of this paper**

### **1. Linking doctrine with practice**

This document does not aim at providing a full-scale account of the doctrine of ministry and ordination. In our view, much of this work has already been done by two reports of past years which are less well known than they should be. *The Meaning and Practice of Ordination among Baptists* was issued as long ago as 1957, and the report on *The Doctrine of Ministry* built upon it in 1961 in a wide-ranging way. Extracts from these two reports are provided as appendices to this document, and the biblical and historical material contained there should be regarded as essential resources for dealing with the issues in the main part of this document. Each of these earlier reports went on to apply biblical principles and insights from Baptist tradition to the situation as it was among our Baptist churches at the time of writing, as did *Ministry Tomorrow* in 1967, and it is this linking of doctrine with practice which needs to be done again in every generation. Such is the purpose of this present document, which aims to reflect theologically upon the needs for ministry among us today, and upon some recent suggestions about ways to cope with them.

### **2. Papers before the BU Council, November 1994**

In particular, as we began our work we were asked to provide some observations on two sets of papers about ministry which were to be presented to the Council of the Baptist Union in November 1994. The paper *Recommendations for the Recognition of Youth Specialists* pro-

posed the establishing of national recognition for this 'specialist ministry', and so raised the whole question of the theological nature of the 'list of accredited Baptist ministers', and the relation of specialised ministries to the 'ordained' ministry. The paper was considered by Council in the context of the theological understanding of ministry developed in this present discussion paper, which was also put before Council; the recommendations concerning Youth Specialists were accepted, and they are already beginning to be put into effect.

The papers *Called to be a Pastor* and *Called to be a Preacher* aimed to establish a more thorough process of training, testing and recognition of those ministries that exist at present as 'Lay Pastors' and 'Lay Preachers'. However, they also proposed the reform of dropping the description 'lay' from these titles. With regard to the first paper, the proposal thus raised the huge issue of what difference there might be between a minister and someone now to be recognised as a 'pastor', both with theological training, both with a call from a church, and both with Union-wide accreditation.

It is our view that this theological question needed in fact to have been grasped much earlier in the case of those presently called 'lay pastors', and has been masked so far by the insertion of the term 'lay'. It seems clear to us that this term cannot carry the weight of explanation that has been placed upon it, as all Christians are part of the *laos* (*people of God*), and ministry belongs to the whole Church. The particular nature of one kind of ministry ('the minister') cannot be established by simply calling all others 'lay', but by a careful description of function and manner of being. The term 'lay' is, we think, also unhelpful because of its common secular use in referring to someone who is unqualified or an amateur in some area.

However, our present paper on forms of ministry attempts to deal with these issues in a different way from that proposed in the paper *Called to be a Pastor*, which would have resulted in creating a category of 'pastor' distinct from 'minister'. The Council of the Baptist Union, in November 1994, resolved to leave the matters raised in the paper *Called to be a Pastor* open for discussion for a period and to return to it for decision at a later date; we hope that our own paper will help this discussion forward.

### **3. Other factors calling for reflection**

Other factors also press in upon us, requiring new reflection on forms of ministry today. The desire for national recognition of 'specialist ministries' has found expression in the first place with Youth Specialists, but a case can be made for recognised lists of others such as Evangelists, Social Workers, Church Planters, Church Musicians and even perhaps Church Administrators. Then there are increasing numbers of Christian leaders serving in our churches as ministers who are not 'accredited' by the Baptist Union, and so there is a need to develop an understanding of their position in the context of any theology of recognition. Sometimes, but not always connected with this, there are congregations led by a team of locally-appointed 'elders' with the minister counting himself or herself as one among them. Finally, on the ecumenical scene there is a concern for 'orderly transmission' of ministry.

We should make clear that we have called this document '*Towards an understanding ...*' because reflection on all these issues is still 'in process' among us; but we believe we have reached the point where we can invite others more widely to react to our conclusions so far and to make their own contribution to them.

### **4. Some characteristics of Christian Ministry**

The foundational ministry in the Church is that of the triune God, who has revealed himself to be a Servant God in the history of his people Israel and above all in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God freely and humbly submits himself to a path of ministry (ie service) in his purpose to reconcile persons and communities to himself, calling them into the fellowship of his eternal life as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God's ministry is his chosen way for carrying out his mission, his sending forth (*missio*) of the Son into the world in the power of the Spirit. Thus 'ministry' in its full sense is all that God seeks to do in, through and amongst his people. We share in his ministry and in his mission.

It is against the backdrop of this vision of a ministering and missionary God that we should recall the characteristics of Christian ministry that have been affirmed by Baptists in recent times. A study of the reports



mentioned above, and of other significant modern statements by Baptists<sup>1</sup>, shows that the following general affirmations have been made:

- a) Christian ministry expresses the ministry of Christ who embodies the ministry of God, and so it derives its authority from him.
- b) Ministry is exercised by the whole church as the Body of Christ, which thus 'preaches the Word, celebrates the sacraments, feeds the flock and ministers to the world'<sup>2</sup>; but some individuals are called to spiritual leadership, exercising forms of ministry in a representative way on behalf of the whole.
- c) God through his Spirit appoints those who exercise these types of ministry.
- d) Call to this ministry must be tested by the whole community of the church, so that the minister's authority is 'from Christ, through the believing community'<sup>3</sup>.
- e) Ministry cannot be exercised without possessing the spiritual gifts appropriate to that ministry, but all who possess gifts are not called to leadership
- f) Particular ministries enable all church members to exercise their own ministries, for which they are variously gifted as members of the Body of Christ.
- g) Ministry builds up the Church to enable it to carry out God's mission of reconciliation in the world.
- h) Those called to some forms of ministry are set aside by ordination, usually by laying on of hands:

Ordination is the act, wherein the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, publicly recognises and confirms that a Christian believer has been gifted, called and set apart by God for the work of the ministry and in the name of Christ commissions him [sic] for this work. (*The Meaning and Practice of Ordination IV.*)<sup>4</sup>

- i) Principles of ministerial leadership can be found in the record of the early church in the New Testament, but there is no 'blueprint' available, and the Spirit calls for flexibility in forming ministry in every age.
- j) All forms of ministry are open to both women and men.

But even if we are able to affirm all these characteristics, we still need to ask how we can distinguish between various forms of spiritual leadership, or indeed whether we ought to do so at all. Among our churches at present are ministers, elders, deacons, lay pastors, lay preachers, youth specialists and evangelists. What kind of recognition, ordination and authority belongs to each?

## II. Two approaches to the question of spiritual leadership

### 5. Offices of ministry

We may distinguish two distinct views about the basis for particular forms of spiritual leadership in the Church. The first is the conviction that Christ has established certain 'offices', or appointments to ministerial leadership, alongside the exercise of gifts by *all* members of the church. So, both Particular and General Baptist Confessions of the 17th Century declare that 'a particular church consists of officers and members'<sup>5</sup>. Being set aside for these offices has been called 'ordination' since the beginning of Baptist life in Britain (with a breach in the tradition in the 19th century), the word expressing both the sense of 'appointment' and of an 'ordinance' created by Christ himself for the health and good order of the churches.

This view of ministry proposes that while these offices may well take different shapes in different social contexts, there is a stable underlying *pattern of office* which can be discerned from the New Testament and from the experience of the Spirit by the Church in its life through the ages. As can be seen from the historical material collected in Appendix II, until the latter part of this century Baptists have for the most part affirmed a constant 'two-fold office' of Pastor (or Minister, Elder or Bishop) and Deacon.

This two-fold office has usually been understood to reflect the two-fold pattern of

- a) Bishop or Elder (*episkopos* and *presbuteros* being taken as equivalent) and
- b) Deacon (*diakonos*) as found in I and II Timothy and Philippians 1:1.

While a haze of uncertainty surrounds their appointment and functions, it seems that at least by the time of the Pastoral Epistles, leaders had emerged in some churches who were charged either with pastoral oversight of a congregation (*episkope*) or with particular pastoral service (*diakonia*). Modern New Testament scholarship has brought to light the variety of church life in the early period, and the prominence in some places of the exercise of spiritual gifts (*charismata*)<sup>6</sup> over appointments to leadership, so that it can hardly be claimed that this two-fold office was universal throughout the early congregations, as Baptists had formerly supposed. However, those who hold to this basic pattern will place weight upon its survival and firm establishment in the post-New Testament period, as indicating continuing guidance of the churches by the Holy Spirit.

Some General Baptists in the 17th and 18th centuries held to a 'three-fold office' of Bishop (or Messenger), Elder and Deacon with the Bishop exercising various kinds of inter-congregational ministry, and it has been claimed that the 20th century Area Superintendent revives this earlier office. This would put Baptists more in line with the Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox traditions, who look to the development of the office of Bishop in the second and third centuries of the Church. In its modern form, however, the Superintendent is to be seen as an extension of the function of the congregational minister, rather than being a distinct third office. In Baptist understanding, the local pastor is 'bishop' (*episkopos*) of the flock as well as 'elder' (*presbuteros*), and so exercises a leadership in not only caring for, but 'overseeing' the Body of Christ in its needs and its mission. The Superintendent exercises the *same kind of* 'episcopal' ministry of pastoral oversight as the local minister, but among a group of churches rather than in a single congregation.

This first approach to the question of spiritual leadership therefore looks for forms of *episkope* and *diakonia* which the Spirit of God has created, and is creating among the churches. While Baptists have a distinct contribution to make to the ecumenical process in their view of the 'episcopal' ministry of the local pastor, this approach does have obvious links with ecumenical concerns and can get conversation going. The WCC Faith and Order paper *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), for example, discusses ministry in terms of a three-fold order. The response from the Baptist Union of Great Britain made clear that the 'heavy insistence' on a three-fold form (bishop, presbyter, deacon) was a matter of 'deep concern'; it commented, for example, that the more flexible approach of discerning 'diaconal functions' had been tightened up implicitly into 'diaconal functionaries' placed in a three-fold structure<sup>7</sup>. However, it is only possible to have this kind of conversation if there is some conviction about the presence of diaconal and episcopal functions in the Church at all.

## **6. Gifts and calling must shape structures**

A rather different approach has developed among Baptists in recent times, although we observe that it is more present in Britain than among Baptists in either the USA or the rest of Europe. This moves away from a presupposition about the existence of 'offices', and rather looks to see what gifts Christ through his Spirit is actually giving to the churches, and what forms of service he is calling people to in the present day. Structures of ministry and forms of ministerial leadership should, it is urged, flow from this gifting and this calling. We should indeed recognise and honour spiritual leadership, but its forms cannot be trapped within the traditional pattern of 'minister and deacons'. We must be open and flexible, ready to make new structures of recognition, training and support for the forms of ministry that the Spirit is actually raising up. Suspicions about the words 'ordination' and 'office' that first emerged among Baptists in the 19th century in reaction to the high church movement have thus re-appeared in our day in a very different context. There is a fear that singling out one kind of ministry as the 'ordained ministry' not only suppresses the ministry of the whole people of God in their daily life in the world, but also fails to give proper recognition to other kinds of service in the church to which people are called to give their *primary* commitment - for example as a youth worker or evangelist.

On the local scene this kind of conviction sometimes lies behind the creation of 'eldership' in a local church, cutting across the traditional two-fold pattern of office with new forms of leadership. In a different way, and on a national level, we also find echoes of this second approach to ministry in the two sets of papers at present before the BU Council. Though dealing with different issues (Youth Specialists and 'Lay Pastors'/'Lay Preachers'), they have a similar concern to extend to other ministries the kind of national recognition given at present to those whom we call 'ministers'. The paper on Youth Specialists urges that the significance of this particular ministry calls for a process leading to recognition which is 'comparable' with that applying to those seeking accreditation as ministers. It proposes accordingly that those recognised for this specialist ministry 'will be accorded benefits similar to those currently accorded to those on the accredited list', including entry to the *Baptist Union Directory*, membership of the Assembly, eligibility for HMF grants and use of the settlement process. The papers on Pastors and Preachers advise Association Ministerial Recognition Committees that

many of the criteria for assessing the fitness of someone for denominational recognition as a pastor/ preacher correspond to the criteria which apply to those seeking inclusion on the Baptist Union accredited list.

We can only warmly commend the guidelines in these documents about training, self-discipline, standards and the fostering of Baptist identity. However, we notice that the effect of these documents is to break down distinctions presently existing between those on the 'accredited list' and those exercising other ministries, and what this implies needs to be grappled with theologically. There also needs to be theological reflection on the *relationship* of these ministries to what we have traditionally called 'the ordained ministry'. As a committee we have had conversations with representatives from the Mission and Ministry Departments which have made clear that there is a widespread desire to work towards having a single accredited list containing those recognised for different kinds of ministry - including, for example, Youth Specialists and 'Pastors' (formerly 'lay pastors').

Those who take this second approach to ministry may be motivated by a worry that the present 'ordained ministry' can easily acquire the characteristics of a 'priestly class', and also by the desire to affirm and encourage those who believe they are called to new kinds of ministry in our day. But it seems that above all they are concerned that proper recognition by the whole community of the church should be given to ministries that are called into being by the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Practically, it is necessary to afford such recognition so that persons can move from one church situation to another in a mobile society, and that churches may know that these men and women enjoy the confidence of the Union in their skills and calling. Theologically, divine calling must always be discerned by more than the individual privately; a person needs the testing and recognition of the whole community to confirm a personal sense of vocation.

## 7. A proposal

We suggest that there is a need to combine the best insights of both approaches to the nature of ministerial leadership. Both are grounded in aspects of the New Testament witness, and in a Baptist understanding of a balance between order and freedom.

On the one hand, we believe that a distinction between a ministry of 'pastoral oversight' (*episkope*) and that of 'pastoral service' (*diakonia*) is still a useful one, in distinguishing between the activity of 'the minister' and that of 'other ministries'. On the other hand however, these terms need a good deal more qualification than our Baptist forebears supposed. We should recognise that *episkope* and *diakonia* are dimensions of ministry that are not sealed exclusively into two offices. The boundary between them is a moving one, and both need to be understood in the context of the ministry of the whole church to which is corporately entrusted both *diakonia* and *episkope*. We also need to envisage the range, training, national accreditation and ordination of pastoral service in a way that bursts the old wine-skins of what we have previously regarded as 'diaconal' ministry (ie simply the service of deacons in the local church). We believe that this will meet the challenge we are facing, adequately to recognise new gifts and new forms of ministry for a new age.

## 8. The boundaries of *episkope* and *diakonia*

Before we go on to describe in more detail the nature of 'the minister' and 'other accredited ministries', we need to explore briefly the open boundaries of *episkope* and *diakonia*. All Christian disciples are called into the ministry of service (*diakonia*) through their baptism, following the model of the Servant Lord. *Diakonia* is universal and primary in the Church of Christ, since it is nothing less than a sharing in God's own ministry and mission in the world. Furthermore, the whole community of the Body of Christ gathered together has a commission to 'watch over' or 'oversee' its members and to find the mind of Christ for its life; that is, it exercises a corporate *episkope*. But we believe that the Spirit of God also entrusts a focusing of *diakonia* and *episkope* to those who are called to be spiritual leaders in the community.

While none is excluded (or excused) from serving, some are nevertheless commissioned to be special sources of pastoral help and service (*diakonia*). To speak of some women and men as exercising a 'diaconal' ministry does not therefore conflict with the fact that *diakonia* is required from all disciples. The New Testament writings call all to service, while recognising some people specifically as 'deacons', however hazy and ill-defined the functions of this office appear to us as we try to picture the scene of the Early Church.

Moreover, some are called, in addition to their serving (*diakonia*), to exercise a pastoral oversight (*episkope*) in the community. So much is indicated by the New Testament title 'bishop' or 'overseer' (*episkopos*), although an office with this name probably only appears on the scene towards the end of the New Testament era. Such oversight will include co-ordinating and enabling the gifts of others, but it is also the means by which the congregation stands under the ordering of its life by the Word of God; we shall develop this crucial aspect in the next section. Once again, however, we are not dealing with a strict exclusiveness in this dimension of ministry. From time to time, in different contexts, many members may be called to exercise a particular kind of oversight on behalf of the community. In the sphere of youth work, for example, the Youth Specialist will exercise a pastoral oversight appropriate to his or her expertise. So will a Sunday School leader or Church Secretary. But



there are those who are called to exercise a 'general' oversight, that is an oversight related to every part of the life and work of the community. Others may have oversight in a particular sphere, but the one whom we call the minister (or pastor) has a responsibility for the whole. He or she will develop an overall vision of the whole Body and the gifts of all its members, and is entrusted with this general oversight to enable all to grow into the identity of Christ the Servant of humankind, and to help them make visible God's own ministry of reconciliation in the world around.

Here then are some of the open frontiers between *episkope* and *diakonia*. While we consider 'the minister' to be a focus of *episkope* in his or her general pastoral oversight, this ministry is also part of the *diakonia* of the church; on the other hand, those leaders who focus *diakonia* (deacons, in whatever sense) may also exercise particular kinds of *episkope* themselves. The development of 'elders' among our churches in recent years perhaps illustrates the lack of sharp boundaries between dimensions of ministry. In the formal distinction of a two-fold office (which still has a validity), we might regard the 'elder' as a kind of deacon with pronounced pastoral gifts and a pastoral specialisation - though no deacons should be appointed without pastoral gifts. However, it is apparent that in fact, in many places, the elders also share in the *episkope* of the minister.

For these reasons we do not think it would be helpful in any listing of accredited ministries to title them formally as being either 'episcopal' or 'diaconal'; indeed, it would be positively misleading. We believe that the dimensions of *episkope* and *diakonia*, overlapping as they are, provide a useful theological tool for understanding the nature of ministry, but in this paper we are proposing that the Baptist Union should simply accredit 'ministers' and 'other ministries' (see para 35 below).

## **9. The key idea of *episkope***

We are well aware that criticism has recently been levelled by some in our churches against an appeal to the concept of *episkope*. The significance of 'pastoral oversight' has been affirmed in the recent report on *The Nature of the Assembly and Council* and in the guidelines given to the Commission on the Nature of the Superintendency, as well as in this present paper. We believe that the unease felt by some about this trend is understandable, but mis-founded.

There is some suspicion, for example, that when applied to the service of Area Superintendents it is moving us towards the kind of notion of Bishop that obtains in the so-called 'Episcopal' church traditions. It is urged that congregational leaders in New Testament times were called not only by the Greek title of *episkopos* but by the Jewish title of 'elder' (translated into Greek as *presbuteros*), and that there is thus no good reason to concentrate on the concept of *episkope*. We should observe, however, that the two titles soon became synonymous in the early church, and that *episkope* expresses the *function* of the elder/presbyter (see Acts 20:28) in a way that the word *presbuteros* itself cannot. In the English translation 'to watch over', the word was in fact a key one in early Baptist descriptions of ministry: while all members enter into covenant to 'watch over' each other spiritually, some are especially charged with this office:

And as Christ for the keeping of this Church in holy and orderly Communion, placeth some speciall men over the Church, who by their office are to governe, oversee, visit, watch; so likewise for the better keeping thereof in all places, by all the members, he hath given authoritie, and laid duty upon all, to watch over one another. (*The London Confession, 1644*)<sup>8</sup>

Thus *episkope* is a concept that helpfully embraces corporate as well as individual spiritual care. Since the whole community has a commission to 'watch over' its members and to find the mind of Christ for its life, oversight is held corporately in at least three spheres: by the local church meeting, by the Association Council and by the Assembly and Council of the Union. But oversight is also focused in individuals in each of these three spheres of church life - in the local ministers, in the Area Superintendents and officers of the Associations, and in the group who are formally called the 'Senior Management Team' at Baptist House, but who should be understood to be the Pastoral Team which guides the Union. *Episkope* flows back and forth between individual leaders and community, characterised not by ruling but by the gaining and giving of trust. Pastoral oversight can never be a matter of requiring obedience; the only authority can be that of the winning of trust from others, through service offered in imitation of the self-giving of Christ.

The concept of *episkope*, or pastoral oversight, thus links Baptist to wider ecumenical discussion, while we have a distinctive understanding of it which may actually contribute to the development of *new forms of episkope* in partnership between churches.

### **III. The minister or pastor**

#### **10. The Ministry of Oversight and the Word**

There are, we have argued, some who are called to exercise a *general* pastoral oversight in the Christian Church, or an oversight directed to the whole life and work of a community, whatever *particular* kinds of oversight are exercised by other servants of Christ and the church. Following long Baptist tradition we name this ministry as 'the minister', and it is in this sense that the word is used in this document. Early Baptists, as we have seen, used other titles such as 'Elder' (= Presbyter), 'Bishop' or 'Pastor', and the last name does suggest the role of pastoral oversight in a way that others do not. But there seems no good reason to abandon the title of 'minister' which has become familiar among us. It is defined, not by etymology (for 'minister' simply means servant) but by its functions.

The only true oversight there can be of a community is that which springs from the Word of God. Jesus Christ, the great 'Pastor and Overseer of our souls' (1 Pet. 2:25) is this Word of God in the fullest sense, as the self-expression of God's very being made flesh, crucified and risen from the dead. He is God's self-communication, the truth that God speaks about himself. The written word of scripture may be called 'word of God' because it is our most reliable witness to the eternal Word which is incarnate in Christ, and to his ministry which is to call all people into the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All ministries are thus ordered by the Word, and the community stands under the ordering of the

Word that comes through ministry. Moreover, because the Word of God has been incarnate in flesh and blood, the ministry of the word will be more than the word written and spoken; it will also be embodied in sacrament and pastoral care.

It follows from all this that the spiritual leader in whom *episkope* is focused will also be the one who has primary (though not exclusive) responsibility for the ministry of the word in the community.

### **11. A Minister of Word and Sacrament**

The whole church shares in the ministry of Christ who is the Word of God, but to the minister is assigned the primary responsibility for witnessing to the Word in proclamation and in teaching, interpreting in each age the written word of scripture. Other members of the church who have been given the gift of teaching can certainly share in this ministry of the word; but to the minister is given the responsibility for training, overseeing and co-ordinating all teaching and preaching that happens within the congregation. Thus the whole church is called to be 'apostolic' in witnessing to the good news of Christ and the forgiveness of sins as the Apostles did, but some are called to be guardians of the apostolic tradition. Such 'guardianship' is not, of course, to be understood as an inflexible repetition of the past; like the New Testament Apostles themselves, ministers of the word are to be creative and imaginative in finding old and reliable words coming to life in new contexts in a way that is faithful to the past. This may mean at times that the minister stands over against the congregation with a word of prophetic challenge. The church willingly accepts this oversight for as long as it recognises the overseer's calling to minister among them.

### **12. Ministry of the sacraments by others**

The word which is spoken must also be embodied in the actions and the physical materials of the Lord's Supper and baptism, as the Word of God himself became flesh in history. Thus the minister of the Word is also minister of the sacraments, and *normally* presides at the Lord's Table and baptises new disciples. In many Baptist churches from the 17th to the 19th century, *only* the minister was authorised to administer the sacraments by

the church meeting and through his ordination. In the development of Baptist tradition we have come to take a less legalistic view, and other members may on occasion, by decision of the church meeting, preside at the table. But it is still 'good order' for the minister of the congregation normally to do so when he or she is present, since the breaking of bread and the pouring of the wine is a visible passing on of the Gospel story which belongs to the ministry of the word and guardianship of the tradition.

### **13. A ministry of pastoral care**

Pastoral oversight can never be a matter of requiring obedience from people; the only effective spiritual authority can be that of winning trust through service, and so pastoral overseers must themselves be deeply engaged in offering pastoral care. Looked at from the angle of ministry of the Word, the Word must be embodied not only in the administration of sacraments but in a life of self-giving and serving. Only this expresses the ministry of Christ as the Word of God incarnate in history.

### **14. A minister of the wider church of Jesus Christ**

The general pastoral oversight exercised by the minister ensures that the witness of the Christian community to the Apostolic tradition of the gospel will be a faithful witness, in words and deeds. But this witness does not belong to one local church alone, but to the whole worldwide Body of Christ. Through his or her formation and training, the minister has gained a grasp of the faith of the whole church through the ages and its mission in many places in the world today. So he or she can open up the horizons of the local congregation to this wider vision, giving it a context in which it can better understand its own faith and its own place in God's mission in the world. The minister is thus responsible for enabling the church to have a truly Apostolic vision of mission at home and overseas, and for bringing the local church into partnership with other churches in many societies. In this sense at least, the minister is the 'representative of the Universal Church' on the local scene.

Some among us would want to ground this representative function in another feature of the Apostolic tradition. The Apostles were 'link-

persons' between the local churches they founded through their missionary activity, and the rest of the Christian church. Like Paul in Corinth, they could advise the local church about the nature of faithful witness to the gospel made by the wider church (1 Cor 11:16). It may be argued that as the generation of Apostles died out, this Apostolic function of linking the local churches to the whole Body, together with guardianship of the gospel tradition, was handed on to the elders or overseers in the local congregation. This may be what is being portrayed in Paul's farewell to the elders in Acts 20:28-31, though this cannot of course sanction any idea of an unbroken succession of ordination from the Apostles to the present day.

Others among us, however, would simply want to ground the function of representing the Church Universal in the call to be a minister of the Word which creates the *whole* Church and in which the *whole* Church believes. In any case, we underline the words of an 18th Century Particular Baptist that 'a minister of a particular church is a minister of the church in general.'<sup>9</sup>

### **15. Ministerial vocation**

The call to be a minister is not only the call to exercise various functions, but to a 'way of being' or 'order of life'. Doing cannot be separated from being, as the functions of ministry shape what a person is, as well as being grounded in a personality which has been 'formed' in the process of ministerial training. There are, of course, many ways of being for Christian disciples; it is not something confined to ministers. But there are important implications for a Christian minister. To say that Christ has established a way of life, (some would say an office), to which this person has been called means that there is bound to be something open-ended about it; a way of life is more than a mere job description; all its functions cannot be neatly defined ahead of time, and what it fully means to 'be' a minister will emerge in new circumstances and in new times.

Such a concept of the ministerial vocation does not mean that there is an 'indelible' order of ministry. The minister sets no conditions on the offer of service, and does not enter upon this way of being in a conditional manner, but Christ himself may cease at some stage in the minister's life

to issue the call to a particular kind of ministry. That a call is coming to an end may well be felt by the individual himself or herself, but it is also discerned by the community of the church which has tested and recognised the call in the first place.

## **16. The role of the Ministerial Recognition Committee**

Among those who are accredited ministers of the Baptist Union, the Ministerial Recognition Committee of the Union will thus play a vital part in discerning, at key stages in a minister's life, the nature of his or her vocation. Ordination to be a minister (see below, Section V) cannot take place until the process of testing and recognition has been completed by the issuing of the call to minister to the people of God in a particular place. Where this call is not to the pastoral charge of a local congregation but to some other sphere of service, the MRC is responsible (on behalf of the Union) for discerning whether the nature of the ministry can truly be said to have the dimensions described above - general pastoral oversight and care of the Christian community, ministry of word and sacrament, and opportunity to represent the Church Universal.

Baptists have long recognised that 'ministers' can be called to serve in other ways than in a local congregation - for example, as officers of the Union or Association, as Superintendents, as missionaries with some sphere of inter-church service, as Chaplains, or as tutors in Baptist theological colleges. The Christian community in which the minister has oversight may be wider than a local unit, or have an ecclesial ('churchly') nature while not actually being a local church. But the MRC must always ask whether the service proposed does indeed enable the person to fulfill the functions and responsibilities of a minister - whether, it might be said, it is truly a focus of *episkope*. Such discernment must also, then, be exercised when a minister on the accredited list wishes to move from pastoral charge of a local church into some other kind of ministry. Ministers do not have the right on their own to maintain their names on the list of accredited ministers; this is a covenant document indicating mutual agreement about call between persons and churches (on this, see further section VI below).

It may be that a minister will leave the pastoral care of a local congregation to take up the kind of ministry that is described below under the title



of a 'specialist ministry' - for example, evangelism or youth work. It is quite possible that the minister could undertake this service in a manner that is still characterised by the functions and way of being of a minister, and so his or her name would remain under the heading of 'minister' on the accredited list. It is also possible, however, that the MRC would find that the minister had moved into a distinctively different kind of ministry from being a 'minister' or pastor. He or she would then be placed in the relevant section of the 'list of accredited ministries' that we propose.

If a person has been following the vocation of a minister faithfully to the point of retirement, we do not think that retirement from a pastoral post means in itself that the call to be a minister has come to an end. The minister remains in the way of life to which he or she has been called by Christ, unless called to another kind of ministry, and will use whatever opportunities might be available, health permitting, to be of service to the Christian community. As long as the retired minister remains a member of a local Baptist church we think that his or her name should remain, without further questioning, on the list of accredited ministers.

## **17. Ministry and other occupations**

To be called to the functions and way of being of a minister does not necessarily imply that this will be a full-time occupation. To be a minister does not depend upon such factors as stipend and work time, but simply upon the call to exercise pastoral oversight in the Christian community and to be minister of word and sacrament. Other occupations may be taken up as a way of providing financial support for ministry, as was the case with most Baptist ministers in the early years of Baptist life in Britain. We also think that there may be occasional cases of a person who has an equal commitment to ministry and another vocation, and this must be tested out by the MRC of the Union.

## **IV. Other ministries appropriate for recognition by the wider Church**

### **18. Diversity of ministries**

It cannot be repeated too often that all members of the Body of Christ have been given gifts of service, and so all share in ministry. However, the experience of the Church of Christ through the ages has been that Christ calls some people to a position of spiritual leadership, with special responsibility for enabling others to exercise their gifts, and that this leadership is not confined to the 'ministry of general pastoral oversight' we have been describing above. In the past, Baptists have recognised these particular ministries in a purely local way, often through the office of 'deacon' in the congregation. Indeed, a key difference between the 'deacons' and the 'minister' has been that the former have been leaders set aside by a local church acting on its own, while the latter have been set aside by the wider fellowship of churches acting together. The involvement of Association and Union in the ordination of ministers has often been linked with their function as representatives of the wider church.

However, if we are to respond to the calling of the Spirit to new forms of ministry in our age, there seems to be a need to break through this simple distinction between local and wider ministry, and to offer wider recognition to a larger range of ministries. The present lists of recognised 'Lay Pastors' and 'Lay Preachers' in the *Baptist Union Directory*, for those who have fulfilled certain criteria of testing and training, perhaps represent the

first stumbling steps in this direction; but as has been stated above, the definition of these ministries as being 'lay' has insuperable theological problems.

Rather, we should look for a greater diversity in the expression of ministries which may appropriately be *recognised and affirmed by the whole community of churches*. Theologically, we regard these as part of the ministry of *diakonia*, rather than being a focus of *episkope* (as defined above, in paragraph 8). This means that we will affirm a diversity of kinds of 'diaconal' ministry to which people are called; while it will be appropriate for some to be set aside by the local church alone (traditionally called 'deacons', and now often combined with 'elders'), it will be proper for the well-being of the church and the effective exercise of their ministry for others to be set aside for service by the wider fellowship of churches. We do not, however, think it is either necessary or helpful to give these latter men and women the *title* of 'deacon'. In the first place this has the particular association of locally-appointed leadership among Baptists. Secondly, while they are mainly to be characterised as part of the *diakonia*, their ministry implies that they will often also be exercising some *episkope* in specific and limited fields. It would be better, then, simply to call them by the name of their particular function - eg Youth Worker or Evangelist or (as proposed below) Pastoral Assistant.

## **19. The nature of vocation**

The diversity among these ministries also extends to the question of the nature of vocation. Here we observe that the papers on Youth Specialists and Pastors/Preachers speak with different voices. The former envisages the criterion for Union-wide recognition to be that candidates see the ministry they are fulfilling as their *primary* vocational calling, while the latter is concerned with those who 'live out their Christian vocation primarily in the secular context' (Pastors) and those who 'will find their vocation primarily in a secular calling' (Preachers).

We do not think that either the nature of ministry, or the criteria for inclusion on a Union 'list of those accredited for ministry' can be defined by one single kind of vocation. We should be sensitive in each case to the nature of the ministry, and so open to discerning the sense of vocation

which is appropriate for it. It may well seem proper in the case of 'specialist ministries' that candidates should regard their youth, community or evangelistic work as being their primary calling, though (as with ministers) we should be open to the possibility of a genuine dual vocation. In the case of those we propose to call 'Preachers' and 'Pastoral Assistants' (see below), however, it seems positively desirable that these should exercise their ministry of pastoral care and teaching in the congregation against the background of sustained involvement in a secular job.

## **20. Team ministry**

There is an integral relation between the minister and those exercising other ministries. The latter depend upon the ministry of the Word for which the minister has primary responsibility (though they will also share in providing it), and they need the general oversight the minister offers. At the same time, the minister needs the other ministries in order that the full scope of the ministry of Christ may be expressed in the community. This means that those ordained to 'diaconal' ministries are being set aside to work - usually - in a team ministry with one or more ministers. There will, of course, always be exceptions to meet the demands of particular situations. But if this general principle is accepted, it may involve a more fundamental review of the relationships between churches as well as between their ministers, and a new dimension within the life of the Association. We are glad that the paper before Council (November 1994) about Youth Specialists refers to team ministry as being the normal context for such specialist ministries. We note, however, that the paper *Called to be a Pastor* contains no reference to team ministry, and while the paper *Called to be a Preacher* suggests that 'where possible it is better for preachers to be in teams', it does not explicitly state that a minister (for example of a neighbouring church) should be part of the team.

## **21. Specialist ministries**

Apart from those engaged in pastoral and preaching work (see below, paras 25-26), the 'other accredited ministries' will be specialist ones. The paper on *Recognition of Youth Specialists* admirably sets out some recommendations for application, recognition, training and benefits of such a ministry. We underline the inclusion of theological training and the

taking of courses in Baptist history and principles. Those called to a specialist ministry to be recognised by the whole community of churches are not simply specialists in a particular professional area, such as youth or community work or music; they are called to enable others to grow in faith and service, and equip them in turn to minister to the world. They must therefore be able to reflect theologically on their professional skills and practice, have some share in the ministry of the Word, and be able to open the horizons of the local congregation to the wider fellowship of churches.

We only wish to add to this document a reference to the way that the Baptist colleges might help to provide at least some elements of training and 'ministerial formation' for these specialists.

## **22. The present ministry of 'Lay Pastors'**

The paper *Called to be a Pastor* carries marks of being an interim statement, partly reflecting the situation of 'Lay Pastors' as it exists at present, and partly aiming to move into new definitions of ministry altogether. We agree that the designation 'lay' is not appropriate, but we do not think the situation can be resolved by simply keeping the title 'Pastor', especially if the existing separate lists of 'recognised lay pastors' and 'accredited ministers' are ever to be brought into closer alignment. The two titles - minister and pastor - cannot register any theological distinction; the minister is the pastor in the congregation, in the sense of exercising pastoral oversight, though he or she should of course enable many others in the congregation to use their pastoral gifts too.

## **23. Encouraging 'lay pastors' to seek accreditation**

We suggest that many who are at present designated as 'lay pastors' are in fact already exercising the ministry of *pastoral oversight* that is characteristic of 'the minister', and that they should therefore be encouraged to seek accreditation as Baptist ministers. In each case the Ministerial Recognition Committee of the Baptist Union should ask what stands in the way of recognition, and through the Colleges of the Union should offer such further training and support as will enable those called to the ministry of pastoral oversight to be affirmed nationally within it. There

is now a wide range of post-experience courses in theology open to people by means of extension learning (including courses in 'Applied Theology'); we also suggest that the ability to reflect theologically upon pastoral practice, and evidence of being 'formed' as a minister, can be assessed in other ways than a University-validated qualification. Though there may be problems of finance and settlement arising from increasing the numbers in the accredited pastoral ministry, this should not deter us from taking the right step theologically.

#### **24. Lay pastors**

However, there will be others who cannot, or do not wish to meet the requirements for accreditation by the Baptist Union. Their primary calling may be quite clearly in the secular context of work, but a small church may still look to them for consistent pastoral care and teaching. A local church is, of course, quite free to regard such a person as its pastor, and to call him or her to pastoral oversight among them. We do not think that there is any meaning in designating and recognising such a person as a 'lay pastor'; the church has simply called him or her to be its pastor, and he or she is in the same situation as those whom we call at present 'unaccredited ministers'. Their names appear in the main body of the *Baptist Union Directory* under the listing of the churches, where the church is free to declare whom it has called, seeking the guidance of the Spirit of God, to be its minister (see further below on accreditation). We hope that a local church, if it proposes to take this path, will also seek the mind of churches around with which it is in fellowship.

The church meeting and the candidate for leadership in the church may, however, discern between them that the kind of calling received, and the kind of leadership offered, really fits best into the description of a 'Pastoral Assistant' as mentioned below. The leader might then wish to seek Union accreditation for this 'diaconal' ministry.

#### **25. Pastoral Assistants**

There will be men and women called to exercise a ministry which has a general pastoral and teaching character, rather than a specialized nature, and yet such a ministry may be discerned to be essentially 'diaconal'; that

is, the person is not called and gifted to exercise the kind of overall oversight of a congregation which is committed to a minister. There may, nevertheless, be good reasons for wanting to recognise this ministry in a way that transcends the local church situation. The Union may wish to commend a person's ministry more widely to the churches, and the leader concerned may want to enter into a covenantal relationship with the whole Union of churches, to accept the offer of further training, and to test out his or her calling in a wider context. We propose, then, that the ministry of 'Pastoral Assistant' or perhaps 'Pastoral Worker' should be recognized, and that - as the name indicates - such a person should usually work in a team ministry with an accredited minister. He or she will depend upon the general oversight offered by the minister, and will share in the ministry of the word (verbal and embodied) which the minister offers. If there is no suitable minister locally with whom to link in partnership, the Pastoral Assistant might relate directly to the Area Superintendent or to an Association officer.

We think that most of criteria contained in the paper *Called to be a Pastor* could apply to the accreditation of this diaconal ministry. We are not assuming that those at present called 'Lay Pastors' will automatically transfer to this kind of ministry (see above), nor that it will be limited to those in this situation. However, churches who at present have lay pastors might reflect upon the possibility of entrance into such a team ministry as the office of a 'Pastoral Assistant' implies.

## **26. Preachers**

The paper *Called to be a Preacher* highlights the essential part played by those who interpret the Word of God from a background of everyday life in a secular occupation - whether in a paid job, voluntary work, or in the home. The church needs to hear such preaching from the experience of the 'front line' of the Kingdom; it complements the preaching of the minister and is not a mere substitute for it. We agree that the term 'lay preacher' is inappropriate, and propose that simply the title 'Preacher' be used; when properly trained and recognised, according to the guidelines provided in the paper, Preachers should be ordained to their calling.

We also agree that 'their service must not be regarded as ... secondary to that of ministers', if 'secondary' is understood in the sense of having lower status or esteem. But the proclamation and teaching of the Word that local preachers provide is always to be ordered by the ministry of the Word which is committed to ministers, and so preachers should be in a partnership of team ministry with them.



## V. Ordination

### 27. Ordination and Commissioning

It is right that we should have delayed a consideration of the meaning of ordination until we had given a theological and practical account of the ministry of 'ministers' and 'other ministries'. In our view, there has been a tendency to use the phrase 'ordained ministry' as a vague means of referring to ministers when a clearer theological understanding of the distinctive function and manner of being of ministers has been lacking. The question, we suggest, is not just whether someone has been ordained, but to *what kind of ministry* he or she has been ordained.

According to the definition quoted above (para 7), ordination is the act in which the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, both recognises a person's call to ministry and commissions him or her for this work. Though taking place in one single moment, it sums up a whole *process* of calling, testing and mutual commitment between candidate and churches. To this we should add that it is also a moment in which God himself freely acts, to meet someone with his grace, to give him or her a new filling of the Holy Spirit to meet the needs of a new stage of life and ministry. The interweaving of the act of the Church in commissioning, and the act of God in blessing, is fittingly symbolized by the laying on of hands. The act of laying hands on a candidate's head, with prayer for a deeper endowment with the Spirit of God, may in fact be appropriate in many areas of Christian life. It belongs, for example, to baptism, to spiritual healing and to the blessing of children. It is surely right that it should accompany the act of setting people aside for ministry.

But commissioning someone for service in this manner could of course be applied to various kinds of Christian ministry. It is a weakness of previous statements on ordination that they assume that the only relevant candidates for an act like this are those called to be 'ministers' or pastors. The Church can act to recognise gifts and calling, and to grant the commission of Christ for many kinds of ministry which 'no person can take upon him or herself'<sup>10</sup>. It would be no less fitting to mark in this way, for example, the valediction of someone for missionary service as a teacher or an agriculturalist. We may (with Luther) regard baptism as the commissioning of every Christian disciple to the work of the *diakonia* of the people of God, which makes the laying on of hands for a new filling of the Spirit especially suitable after baptism with water. The question has therefore been asked in some perplexity: what is the difference between 'commissioning' and 'ordination'? We must surely say that in all these cases the nature of *the act itself* is the same. What makes the difference is not the mechanism of the act but its goal, the particular ministry *to which* the candidate is being set aside or commissioned, and this in turn will shape the character and content of the act of commissioning and blessing.

The words 'commissioning' and 'ordination' cannot therefore *in themselves* denote any distinction between various acts of setting aside for ministry. The distinction can only come from the difference of ministry to which a person's call is being recognised, and to which he or she is being commissioned. Here we believe it is helpful, as a practical matter of clarity, to reserve the word 'ordination' for the ministries which focus *diakonia* and *episkope* in the Church, that is for the setting aside of the 'minister', the deacons of a local church, and (as we have described them above) the diaconal ministries of the wider church. We note that from the early 17th to the early 19th centuries our Baptist forebears ordained both pastors and deacons. Those among us who regard these as the basic 'two-fold office' which has been 'ordained' by Christ for the health of his Church 'until the end of the world' may find echoes of this in the word 'ordination'<sup>11</sup>, but the word cannot be pressed etymologically to yield this meaning. We can only say that there are many forms of commissioning-with-blessing, and that we are using the word 'ordination' to refer to the commissioning and blessing of people called to be pastors or to exercise other diaconal ministries.

We must add that it is unfortunate that the word 'commissioning' has often been appropriated by some who want to deny any action of the Spirit of God within the act of setting aside for ministry. When we use the word here we are including the blessing and new endowment of the Holy Spirit that God graciously gives to accompany any entrance upon a new stage of service.

## **28. Ordination and induction of ministers**

Since ministers are 'guardians' of the Apostolic tradition of the Gospel which belongs to the whole Church of Christ, and since they are the representatives of the wider Church in the local one, their ministry must be recognised by more than the local church. In the process of accreditation by the Baptist Union this recognition by the wider church has already happened through various selection committees of Association, College and Union following affirmation of calling by a local church meeting. Then, as has been the practice among Baptists from earliest days, representatives of other churches share in the act of ordination, which is the act of the whole community of the Church. If the local church is in covenant relationship with the Baptist Union, and if the minister is to be accredited by the Union, these participants must include representatives of the Union (usually the Area Superintendent) and of the Association of churches. Ideally, representatives of other Christian denominations should also take part and grant recognition; but in a broken ecumenical situation the body of the wider Church may have to be represented, in the act of ordination itself, simply by its Baptist members. However, we observe that the acceptance of the ministry of a Baptist minister in a Local Ecumenical Project is at least an implicit recognition 'after the event'.

According to the theological understanding of the 'minister' developed here, he or she is a minister, not only of a particular church, but of the whole Church of Jesus Christ. At the moment of ordination, those being set aside among our Baptist churches can at present only be *appointed* to serve in a limited range of churches (mainly Baptist and Ecumenical Projects) because of the brokenness and disunity of the worldwide Body of Christ, but the act of ordination itself is still to be understood as relating to the Church Universal. The person is ordained to be a minister of the whole Church, generally appointed to serve among congregations of the

Baptist Union and its partner churches, and then 'inducted' to serve a particular local church or other pastoral community.

Since the minister is the one who exercises a 'general pastoral oversight' in a Christian community, the receiving of a call to serve such a community must be part of the whole process of testing whether someone has in fact been called by Christ to this ministry. None should be ordained as a minister of the Church Universal until they have been called to serve by a particular community, and representatives of that community should share in the act of ordination. Ordination is thus distinct from induction, even though the two might take place in one service when the minister is settled in a pastorate for the first time. Ordination only happens *once*, as the commissioning to ministry in the *one* Church Universal and appointment to serve among a whole Union of churches; induction, even if with laying on of hands and blessing, happens as often as someone is commissioned to serve a particular local community.

## **29. Ordination of deacons and wider 'diaconal' ministries**

We have been arguing that it is appropriate to ordain all those called to ministries which focus the *diakonia* of the whole people of God, and not merely ministers. This might be described theologically as ordination to both *episkope* and *diakonia*, though we must keep in mind the overlapping of these two dimensions of ministry as described above.

- a) Local churches should be encouraged to set their own deacons and elders aside for service with the act of laying on of hands for commissioning and blessing. Many already do so. Some will want to call this an ordination, while others will prefer the language of 'commissioning'. As we have suggested, the term used is not the crucial point, but rather the nature of the ministry to which the person is being set aside. Thus churches should also seriously ask themselves whether they do in fact intend the people they call to their 'diaconate' to be a focus for pastoral service, or whether they really only recognise this in the group they call 'elders'. They should also consider whether ordination to the office of deacon raises questions about imposing a limit of time to a term of office.

- b) We think that those who have been called to diaconal ministries which have been tested and recognised by the wider Church (see Section IV above) should certainly be commissioned with laying on of hands, and we think it proper to call this ordination. Because they are being recognised and commended by more than the local church, representatives of the Association and Union should share in their ordination.

If it is agreed that the concept of 'the ordained ministry' applies beyond the office of ministers or pastors, the question of the use of the title 'Reverend' arises. This title is a convention which - while making an absurd claim if taken literally - has a use (which is sometimes pastorally necessary) in our society as a way of identifying those who are recognised by responsible church bodies as exercising a Christian pastoral ministry. We suggest that we should follow Baptist practice from the 17th century in approving the use of the title (*if they themselves wish to use it*) only by those who are ordained as ministers, that is who exercise an overall pastoral oversight in a community. Those exercising other ministries might, anyway, actually find it obstructive in their work.

### **30. Several ordinations?**

As people enter upon new kinds of ministry which are new stages of service within the Body of Christ, it will be fitting to mark each of these with an act of laying-on-of-hands for commissioning and for seeking new endowment with the Spirit of God. The question is how this is to be *interpreted*. We think that ordination as deacon within a particular local church applies only within that congregation, as no wider recognition is involved; thus a future appointment of that person as deacon or elder within a different local church should be regarded as a new ordination. The first commissioning to a ministry which is recognised by the *wider* community of churches should also be understood as an ordination, even if the person has already been a locally-appointed deacon, and commissioning as a minister should be understood as ordination even if the person has previously held another kind of ministry recognised by the Union of churches. However, as indicated above (in considering induction), those placed on a Union list of ministry should not be re-ordained in moving from one *place* to another.

It sometimes happens that someone's calling to be a minister, or to exercise another kind of accredited ministry, has clearly come to an end for a period, but then he or she enters upon it again at a later date. This, we believe, should be marked by an act of laying on of hands. Some may regard this as a re-ordination (since ordination is not an indelible order), while others will understand it to be a renewal of ordination vows. Such renewal is also appropriate for the commissioning for 'another recognised ministry' of someone who has previously been a minister/pastor.

## **VI. The meaning of accreditation and the list of accredited ministry**

### **31. Accreditation as recognition of ministry**

In 1953 the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union re-stated the purposes of accreditation of ministers, although lists of recognised ministers had been prepared by the Union since the latter part of the 19th century. In summary, the statement described the purpose of the scheme as being:

- a) to encourage candidates to undertake study and training;
- b) to grant ministers the 'recognition of the Baptist Union and to commend them to the Churches';
- c) to encourage ministerial self-discipline;
- d) to take action in case of conduct unbecoming to the ministry;
- e) to facilitate settlement;
- f) to confer membership of certain financial schemes of the Union;
- g) to mark assent to the Declaration of Principle of the Union.

This early statement speaks of 'recognition' by the Baptist Union, but does not explicitly spell this out *as a recognition of God's call to ministry*. It seems mainly concerned with proper regulation of training, behaviour, finance and belief. By contrast, successive reports *have* clearly linked accreditation to 'recognition of call' by the wider fellowship of the churches. *Ministry Tomorrow*, for example, defines accreditation as:

the confirmation by the denomination as represented by the Union, of a man's [sic] call to the ministry and the recognition that by personal character and gifts and by theological training he is qualified to exercise his ministry within the denomination.<sup>12</sup>

If this is correct, and our theological argument so far suggests that it is, then 'accreditation' cannot be separated from 'recognition'. Though recognition is a cumulative process (through several dimensions of church life) and accreditation is a legal point, these are not two different concepts theologically; the question is rather to what *kind* of ministry (eg minister, evangelist, youth specialist, local preacher) a person is being accredited. Accreditation is thus much more than a 'quality control mechanism'. For those called to other ministries than that of the minister/pastor, the Union recognises their ministry among the family of Baptist churches and commends them for service in all places which are bound in covenant with the Union. For those accredited as ministers, the Union also dares to speak on behalf of the whole Church of Jesus Christ in affirming that they are called to ministry within this universal community of faith.

### **32. Un-accredited ministry**

Those who are accredited by the Union also have their ministry recognised by the Union. However, we should admit immediately that no ecclesial forms can bind the working of the Spirit of God who freely raises up ministry to deepen the life of the local church and enable its mission. The Church is the pilgrim people of God, and so there will be some untidiness of structure and openness to what God is doing in each moment alongside the order which the Spirit brings. We must not then deny that someone has been called (by Christ and through the church meeting) to be a minister/pastor of one of our churches although he or she is not accredited by the Union. There are many ways in which the Associations and the Union recognise in practice that people are truly exercising pastoral oversight (*episkope*) in a local church without being accredited. Churches may enter in the *Baptist Union Directory* the name of whomsoever they have called to be their minister, in the section for details of churches. The Baptist Union will send un-accredited ministers all the



information it circulates about Baptist leadership. Such ministers may also be called by the Association to take up office *among* the churches, as for example an Association President. Accreditation is the means by which the *whole* Union of churches, acting together, makes a declaration about the recognising and commending of a person's ministry. This is one way in which God works through the wider Christian community for the enrichment of the local church and its mission; but there are doubtless other ways in which the Spirit will work.

### **33. Accreditation and ordination belong together**

Accreditation should not *normally* be separated from ordination, as the moment of ordination is a focal point within the whole process of recognition of calling by the wider church. However, we live in a broken situation where some will have been ordained as ministers in a local context before entering upon procedures for accreditation with the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Others will have been ordained within the structures of another denomination of the Christian church.

In some - perhaps most - cases it would be a denial of the work of the Holy Spirit and of fellowship between the churches if a candidate were re-ordained, though it may be proper in other cases. Ideally recognition, ordination and accreditation are inseparable parts of one process; but in any human community, and the more so among the pilgrim people of God, we shall have to live with untidiness and brokenness. We suggest that the use of laying on of hands for commissioning and blessing at each new stage of ministry may provide an opportunity for the renewal of ordination vows and an affirmation of the ministry that someone has been previously offering.

### **34. Accreditation and covenant**

But if there is normally this integration between accreditation, recognition and ordination, then we should also regard accreditation as a form of covenant making. Accreditation is a solemn moment of mutual commitment between candidate and the whole community of churches, in which each promises to 'walk together' and 'watch over' the other. The Declaration of Principle may be regarded as the covenant document of the Union

(as is argued in the report on *The Nature of Assembly and Council* 1994), not as a full statement of belief but simply as the basis of living and working in fellowship together.

In this covenant agreement, the Union of churches commits itself to the candidate, to provide pastoral support and whatever financial support is appropriate and possible for the kind of ministry she or he is exercising. The paper on Youth Specialists is surely right therefore to propose that the same kind of 'benefits' should be granted to them as to ministers. The same support and responsibility should be given to all who are given Union-wide recognition, whose call to *diakonia* is believed to apply beyond the local congregation to the whole community of churches. Some financial benefits will only, of course, apply *if* persons are receiving a stipend for working in ministry for the churches, although the nature of their ministry is not to be defined in terms of salary and time spent on the job.

At the same time, those granted accreditation will have a commitment to the Union of churches. They will foster its life, encourage the participation of their congregation within it, take a responsible part in decision making at Union level and offer trust (though not uncritical obedience) to the pastoral oversight of those whose ministry is to guide the Union. As they consider the development of their ministry, they will also be ready to hear the call of Christ to them through the work of the Ministerial Recognition Committee of the Baptist Union, which seeks on behalf of the churches to discern his mind.

We suggest that all those whose ministry is accredited by the Union should be voting members of the Assembly, whatever kind of ministry they exercise. By contrast, un-accredited ministers who are listed in the *Baptist Union Directory* as being in pastoral charge of churches should not be members of Assembly in their own right, but may be appointed by their churches as one of their allotted representatives. This makes no judgement about their identity as ministers, as is made clear above (para 32), but is consistent with a covenantal understanding both of the Union and of the list of ministries, as also proposed in the recent report on *The Nature of the Assembly and the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain*.

### **35. The form of the List of Accredited Ministries**

We regard it as desirable that there should be one list of accredited ministries kept by the Baptist Union, as the ministry and the covenant is one. With the recognition of Youth Specialists the opportunity should be taken to create a list which has a proper theological shape, which is open for expansion to more specialist ministries in the future, and which takes account of the reform of the category of 'lay' ministry.

At the same time we recognise that there are differing theologies of ministry among us, and therefore the headings on the list should not require a very specific doctrine of ministry. The following proposal reflects the general shape of a two-fold office of *episkope* and *diakonia*, without using these particular titles. It therefore has room for a flexible view of the 'focus' of *episkope* and *diakonia* in certain ministries, while not excluding open boundaries and overlap between them.

#### **List of Persons accredited for Ministry in the Baptist Union of Great Britain**

I. Ministers (also called Pastors)

II. Other Ministries

1. Youth Specialists
2. Evangelists
3. Pastoral Assistants
4. Preachers
5. Church Musicians
6. Social Workers
7. ....

People may move from one classification within the accredited list to another only by further training and through further processes of recognition of calling. This includes ministers moving into the area of 'other ministries'. Probationers would be listed under the relevant type of ministry for the agreed period.

## **VII. Into the immediate future**

### **36. Suggestions for action**

The present paper is offered for discussion, and we recognise that it will take time for its recommendations to be variously accepted, modified or rejected. Meanwhile the papers put before the Council in November 1994 from the Departments of Mission and Ministry call for some immediate action.

- a) For the time being, we suggest that a separate list of 'Persons accredited as Youth Specialists' should be printed in the Baptist Union Directory. If it seems right to develop other specialist ministries, separate lists could also be provided. If it were finally decided to create one list of accredited ministries, sub-divided as above (para 35), then these separate lists could be integrated into it.
- b) There are implications for the meaning of 'lay ministry' in the papers *Called to be a Pastor* and *Called to be a Preacher* which clearly need to be discussed between the Ministry Office and the Federation of Lay Ministries. The recommendations in these two papers concerning procedures for training and recognition might be put into effect as an interim measure while the discussions are proceeding. However, if it seems early on that the recommendations in this present discussion paper are acceptable to all concerned, interim measures might not be necessary.

- c) If it were agreed at some future date to discontinue the category of 'lay pastor', it would probably be necessary to allow the existing 'List of Recognised Lay Pastors' to remain for those who did not wish to transfer to other kinds of ministry as suggested under paras 23-24 above, although no new names would be admitted to it.

### **37. The process of reflection**

We envisage our work as represented by this paper to be part of the whole process of reflection on Baptist identity and practice that is going on in the Baptist Union at present. In particular, we hope that it might be taken account of by the Commission on the Nature of the Superintendency.

### **Members of the Doctrine and Worship Committee involved in preparing this paper**

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The Revd Dr Brian Haymes was also part of the committee for earlier parts of the discussion.

## APPENDIX 1

Extract from *The Doctrine of the Ministry* (Baptist Union, 1961)

### Forms of Ministry in the New Testament Period

#### I

It is clear that some form of leadership existed among the disciples from the beginning. The opening chapters of Acts portray a community of disciples in which the apostles exercised leadership; Acts 1:13-15; 2:41-47; 23, 32; etc. It is equally clear that this leadership had begun during the earthly ministry of Jesus.

#### II

This leadership was appointed by Jesus and exists therefore according to His will. The scene described in Mark 3:14-19 is a particularly solemn occasion when the Lord chose and appointed twelve disciples to be associated with him in his work. The mission of these twelve, Mark 6:7 ff, the Messianic confession and teaching at Caesarea Philippi, Mark 8:27 ff, the last supper in Jerusalem, Mark 14 :12 ff, are incidents confirming the solemn deliberation of the choice recorded in Mark 3. It was to these chosen men, except for Judas, that the risen Lord appeared; it was to them that the experience of the Holy Spirit was given; it was upon these men that the burden of leadership fell during the first days of the church. Since the events just mentioned form a continuous sequence, indeed belong together by their inner nature, we may properly say that the leadership thus began and exercised was of the Lord's appointing and according to His will. This theme is prominent in the Fourth Gospel, which emphasizes the "sending" of the apostles by the Lord and links this commission very closely with the sending of the Son by the Father. "As thou hast sent me into the world even so have I sent them also into the world." 17:18. Many phrases in chapter 15 could also be cited; they are focused in the saying of verse 16: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit." These sayings belong to the discourses in the upper room, ie to the section of the gospel devoted to the teaching of the eleven disciples (Judas goes out before the teaching begins). As God sends His Son into world, so the Son sends His disciples to bear witness; as the Father loves the Son so the Son loves His

disciples; as the Father reveals Himself in the Son, so the Son makes known to the disciples all that He has heard from the Father. The work of these disciples derives from and is determined by the Divine sending of the Son that "the world might be saved."

### III

It is important here to notice that what is according to the Lord's will is a spiritual leadership among the disciples. This must not be equated with any particular forms of leadership. It is noticeable that some of the original twelve do not occupy any place in the records; they are simply names to us. Even the word "apostle" cannot be used exclusively of the twelve, for Paul undoubtedly claimed to be an apostle and the word is used of others, eg Barnabas, Acts 14:14. There was no attempt in the church to maintain the word "apostle"; it was used of those who having seen the risen Lord were commissioned by Him and so bore authentic witness to Him.

The apostolic church obviously felt free to appoint leaders according to the needs of the work. Acts 6:1-6, shows the church exercising this freedom, though by prayer seeking the guidance of the Spirit; then meeting the needs of widows by the appointment of seven gifted members. Again, the church at Antioch feels free, under the same guidance of the Spirit, to appoint two of its teachers, Barnabas and Paul, for special evangelistic work, Acts 13:1 ff. Then these two men meet the needs of the churches that they had established by the appointment of "elders", Acts 14:23. In the church at Jerusalem there is no attempt to maintain apostolic leadership, for at an early period James, the Lord's brother, becomes the leader; with him appear to be associated a number of "elders" cf Acts 11:30; 15:2-6. What is assumed in all the situations described by these references is that the churches need spiritual leadership; what is variable are the titles given to the leaders. Furthermore, no attempt is made to give precise definitions to their functions. In addition to this evidence, we have some lists of forms of ministry, eg 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11; but these are clearly not exhaustive or authoritative definitions of Christian ministry.

What we can say is that as the years passed by certain words appear in more frequent usage to denote the prevailing modes in which ministry

came to be exercised. The three words "bishop", "elder", "deacon", grew in common usage though it cannot be said that the functions attaching to each title were clearly defined, or that dogmatic statements can be made in regard to this early period about the relationship of bishops and elders. What this amounts to is that the apostolic church accepted the necessity for leadership, and the twelve, as those appointed by the Lord, sought the guidance of the Spirit in continuing appointments, and used the titles which were familiar in order to denote the functions of leadership.

The New Testament terms denoting leadership in the church are all taken from the environment in which the church grew. Terms such as "apostle", "teacher", "elder", were well known in Jewish circles; terms such as "bishop", "deacon" were equally well known in the environment of the Hellenistic world. Furthermore, the functions associated with these titles in their respective spheres were by no means unlike the functions within the Christian community for which these words were used. This suggests that we should not regard these titles as necessarily belonging to any permanent forms of the church's life, though the functions which they denote continue to be essential. Just because the Christian church is a fellowship of people, part of its life is earthly and temporal. The church as a human community partakes of the life of society in which it lives, just as Jesus in His human nature shared the language, the customs, the problems of the Jewish people in the first century. It is not wrong, therefore, for the church to reflect the sociological patterns in which it bears it witness. What is wrong is to confuse these patterns with the essential and unchanging elements in the life and witness of the church.

A study of the organisation of the apostolic church suggests then that some form of spiritual leadership is necessary to the life of the church, that this was according to the Lord's will, and was initiated by His appointing. In the New Testament this spiritual leadership is seen to be exercised in varying ways according to the needs of the church, and to be indicated by titles taken from contemporary society. In order to discover the essential nature and functions of this ministry we have to consider carefully basic theological conceptions.



## APPENDIX II

Extract from *The Meaning and Practice of Ordination Among Baptists* (Baptist Union, 1957)

### Baptists and Ordination

There are frequent references to ordination in the early Baptist Confessions, of which the following are examples.

"Every Church hath power given them from Christ, for their better well-being, to choose to themselves meet persons into the office of elders or deacons, being qualified according to the word ... as those which Christ hath appointed in His Testament, for the feeding, governing, serving and building up of His Church, and that none have power to impose on them either these or any other." (Particular Baptist London Confession 1644)

The Confession of the thirty Baptist Congregations which joined together in 1651 declares that "fasting and prayer ought to be used, and laying on of hands, for the ordaining of servants or officers to attend about the service of God" (McGlothlin *Baptist Confessions of Faith* pp 105-108).

"The way appointed by Christ for the calling of any person fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit into the office of Bishop (i.e pastor) or Elder in a Church is that he be chosen thereunto by the common suffrage of the Church itself and solemnly set apart by Fasting and Prayer with imposition of hands of the Eldership of the Church if there be any before constituted therein." (Second London Confession 1677).

The fullest General Baptist statement on the subject in the early period is that of 1678, in which the officers of the Church are listed as 1) bishops or messengers; 2) elders or pastors; 3) deacons or overseers of the poor. "Bishops" are to be chosen "by the common suffrage of the Church and solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer, with imposition of hands, by the bishops of the same function, ordinarily, and those Bishops so ordained have the government of those churches that had suffrage in their election ... and the particular pastor, or elder, in like manner is to be chosen by the common suffrage of the particular congregation and ordained by the

bishop or messenger God hath placed in the church he hath charge of ..." (McGlothlin, op cit, pp 146-7). The Particular Baptists marked appointment both to the pastoral office and the diaconate "with imposition of hands of the Eldership of the Church, if there be any before constituted therein" (1689 Confession, McGlothlin, op cit, p 266).

The Confessions are corroborated by the minutes of the Assemblies of both the General and Particular Baptists. For example, in 1689 the Particular Baptist Assembly refers to "ordained ministers". Also, it was agreed, "churches must provide an able ministry for the preaching of the word, also to set apart to office and in a solemn manner ordain such as are duly qualified for the same". From an Assembly in London in September 1689, attended by the members of over one hundred churches, a circular was sent out stating, "We cannot but bewail that great evil and neglect of duty in many churches concerning the ministry, in that some, though they have brethren competently qualified for the office of pastors and deacons, yet omit that sacred ordinance of ordination whereby they are rendered incapable of preaching and administering the ordinances of the gospel so regularly and with that authority which otherwise they might do". Similarly, the Western Assembly of 1693 decided that "no private brother (however gifted) if not solemnly called to ministerial office and separated thereto ought to administer the ordinance of baptism and the Last Supper ... A brother called to the office of elder by the suffrage of the church may administer all ordinances though he be not immediately ordained by the laying on of the hands of the elders". The General Baptists in 1689 agreed that "distinct officers must have their distinct ordinances and the church has no way to delegate an office or power Ministerial but by Ordination.

The evidence of the continuation in the eighteenth century of this view of ordination may be derived from old Minute books, Assembly proceedings and the writings of Baptists. For example, in 1701 the General Baptist Assembly held that "the ordination of Elders by Elders is of Divine institution". It is evident that ordination was the usual practice and that it was customary for as many neighbouring pastors as possible to join in Ordination Services. Further, it seems to be accepted without question that the Ordination of Elders was to be performed by Elders. In 1749 the General Baptist Assembly agreed, at the request of the church at Sudbury, that as there were no local Elders available "some Messengers do go down

as soon as they can in order to ordain an Elder among them". Among the church records, it may be noted that the church at Stevington, for example, refers regularly to ordination from 1691 to 1832, at one of which (in 1806), twenty-three ministers took part.

The writings of the eighteenth century are well documented in Dr E A Payne's *The Fellowship of Believers*, and we would draw particular attention to the quotations from Daniel Turner (p 47) and Dr John Gill who in volume III of his *Body of Practical Divinity* (1770) urged that for a man to go to a pastoral office there must be a call and he must be a member of the church to which he is to be ordained as pastor. Similarly, Andrew Fuller records that in 1774 he was called to be pastor and in May 1775 he was ordained, the ordination being conducted by the Rev Robert Hall of Arnesby. A number of other ministers attended. Further, when he removed to Kettering he was again ordained, in 1783, as pastor of that church.

The rise of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 was an important development, although its significance in the matter of ordination was not fully appreciated. In 1795 two missionaries were set aside for a Mission to Sierra Leone with prayers and the laying on of hands. Andrew Fuller in 1804 took up some of these issues, urging that missionaries should be commissioned in this country and ordained on the mission field by the churches who called them into the pastoral office. In this country the regular practice of ordination appears to have faded about the middle of the century. For example, at Oxford in 1806 Chater and Robinson were ordained by the laying on of hands. In 1830 a German named Tauchnitz, of Leipzig, was solemnly set apart as an evangelist and "Joseph Ivimey offered the ordination prayer accompanied with imposition of hands". A similar Service took place in 1840, when G W Lehmann, of Berlin, the associate of Oncken, came to England for ordination. It is well known that C H Spurgeon rejected the idea of ordination when it was suggested to him in 1854 at New Park Street, and it may be surmised that about that time we begin to see a reaction to the Oxford Movement. On the other hand, Rogers, the first principal of Spurgeon's College insisted on giving what he deliberately called an ordination address, and in the *Sword and Trowel* from 1865 there are occasional references to Services held "in connection with the Ordination of ... when the former Pastor of Church

or a nearby Pastor asked the question usual upon such occasions and offered the ordination prayer". There is no reference to laying on of hands. By 1880 references to ordination have become infrequent and it was not until after the First World War that they come into prominence. Since that time ordination has gradually become the regular practice with or without the laying on of hands.

## APPENDIX III

### **The history of this paper on ministry**

In March 1993 the Council of the Baptist Union considered the document *Ministry Matters* prepared by the Head of the Ministry Department (the Revd Malcolm Goodspeed), and among other resolutions the Council

request[ed] the Doctrine and Worship Committee and relevant staff members jointly to draw up a statement reflecting current Baptist interpretations of ministry.

The committee had in fact already begun an initial consideration of the nature of ministry in January 1992, responding to the call of *Ministry Matters* for 'a restatement of a baptist understanding of ministry' and of the meaning of accreditation.

As the members of the committee were preparing the present paper, it became evident that the documents on *Proposals for the Recognition of Youth Specialists* (from the Mission Department) and *Called to be a Pastor/ Preacher* (from the Ministry Department) would be laid before Council in November 1994, and the Committee was asked by the Senior Management Team of the Union to put its work into a form which could provide some theological reflection to accompany these other documents and to comment upon them.

The paper was mainly prepared through discussions of the Committee in May and August 1994; both meetings included the Head of the Mission Department (Revd Dr Derek Tidball) and the Executive for Church Life (Paul Mortimore), and the Head of the Ministry Department participated in the second meeting. These staff members were also invited to comment on successive drafts of the paper between and after meetings. A substantial, though not complete, consensus on major issues was achieved between the staff members and the Doctrine and Worship Committee, but the paper remains the responsibility of the Committee. The 'joint statement' requested by Council must remain for a second stage beyond the present consultation.

This paper was submitted to the Faith and Unity Executive in October 1994, who commended it for presentation to Council in November 1994.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Baptist reflections on ministry include the following:

Statement on Ministry adopted by the Annual Assembly (1923); Reply to the Lambeth Appeal authorised by the Baptist Union Assembly (1926); Reply of the Baptist Union to the Report of the World Conference on Faith and Order (1930); Statement of the BU Council on the Report of the Second World Conference on Faith and Order (1939); *The Baptist Doctrine of the Church* (1948); Statement on Accreditation of Baptist Ministers, adopted by Annual Assembly (1953); (Ed. A. Gilmore), *The Pattern of the Church: A Baptist View* (1963); P.S. Fiddes, *A Leading Question: the Structure and Authority of Leadership in the Local Church* (1981); Reply of Baptist Union of Great Britain to the WCC Faith and Order Paper *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1986); Paul Mortimore, *The Future of Lay Preaching and Lay Preachers' Associations* (1989); Nigel Wright, *Challenge to Change. A Radical Agenda for Baptists* (1991); Paul Mortimore, *The Worldly Church* (1993); Geoffrey G. Reynolds, *First Among Equals. A Study of the Basis of Association and Oversight among Baptist Churches* (1993).

- <sup>2</sup> *The Baptist Doctrine of the Church*; in R. Hayden (Ed) *Baptist Union Documents 1948-1977* (Baptist Historical Society, 1980), p. 8.

- <sup>3</sup> *The Baptist Doctrine of the Church*, p.9

- <sup>4</sup> In Hayden, (Ed), p. 74.

- <sup>5</sup> eg The Second London Confession (1677) XXVI 8, in W L Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Judson Press, Philadelphia 1959), p 287; The Orthodox Creed (1678) XXXI, in Lumpkin (ed.), p 319.

- <sup>6</sup> In the New Testament, charismata are 'spiritual gifts' in the sense that they are 'the acts of the Spirit's giving', not possessions of people but God's dynamic working through them for the sake of the community.

- <sup>7</sup> (Ed) Max Thurian, *Churches Respond to BEM. Official Responses to the Baptist, Eucharist and Ministry Text*, Vol. I. (Faith and Order Paper 129, WCC, Geneva, 1986), pp 72-3, 76-7.

- <sup>8</sup> Ch. XLIV; Lumpkin (ed), p 168.
- <sup>9</sup> Daniel Turner, *Compendium of Social Religion* (1758).
- <sup>10</sup> From Statement adopted by the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union, 1923: 'By Ordination we mean the act of the Church by which it delegates to a person ministerial functions which no man [sic] can properly take upon himself.'
- <sup>11</sup> From The Second London Confession (1677) XXVI.8, 'to be continued to the end of the World'; in Lumpkin (Ed), p 287.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ministry Tomorrow*, in Hayden (Ed), p. 107.



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