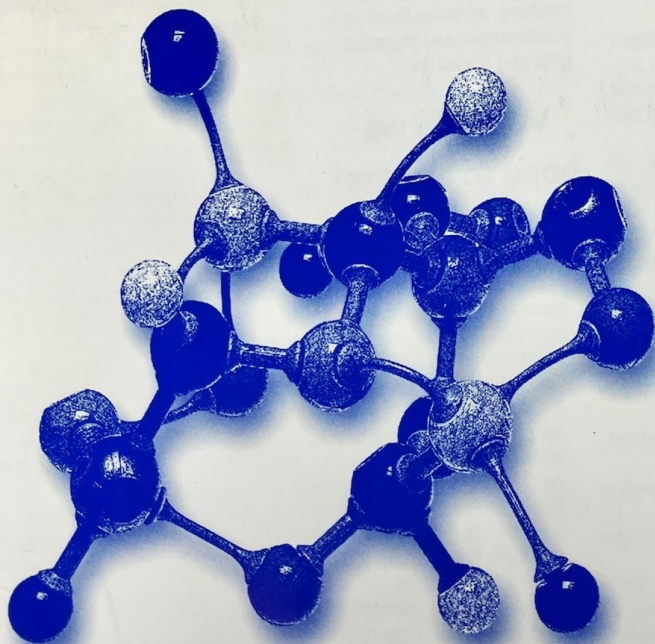
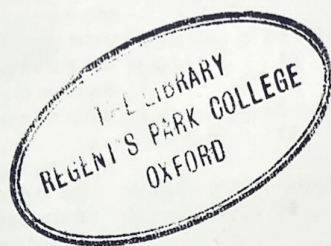


Summer 2002

TALK

The Mainstream Magazine



Connecting leaders

INSIDE

**Leadership
Uncensored**

Myra Blyth
Nigel Wright
Geraldine Latty
Bill Allen
Elaine Storkey
Gordon Jefferson
Robert Rigby
Rob May
Regular columnists
news, reviews
and much more ...

A cause of angst

Leadership – now there's a subject to provoke angst amongst our churches and their leaderships! No shortage of issues and comments. How about a few of the one's I've heard just recently – I paraphrase rather than quote. 'Baptists have a problem with leadership not with the church meeting.' 'We won't go anywhere as a denomination until we embrace apostolic leadership.' 'The whole concept of leadership frightens me. Pastors should facilitate the people of God.' 'I believe in servant leadership'. That one's a real put-down with its sub-text 'You don't'. And the real classic: 'Leadership in the church is to be a think tank.'



The problem with such comments is that whilst they all capture a truth – some more than others, they lack that quality that embeds an understanding and practice of leadership into Scripture and the particular tradition of which we are a part. Our tradition wants to take seriously the shift that took place at Pentecost from the anointed leader to the anointed community. But that's another sound-quote sentence which needs careful explanation and development. So to express it more precisely: the shift from the anointed leader over the led community, to the anointed community and anointed leadership within the community. However, it does highlight the fundamental shift that should shape both an understanding and practice of leadership. We believe that God has poured out his Spirit on all flesh and that all can be the source of prophecies, visions and dreams – there is an undoubted 'democratisation' of the Spirit in Joel's yearning and in Peter's proclamation.

So what is it that makes Christian leadership unique? With secular models of leadership even talking about 'servant leadership' how are we to configure leadership within church life? As already hinted, the unique thing about Christian leadership is probably not to be found in a particular style, ethos and label that can be attached to it. Rather it comes from the unique nature of the community that the church is to be, as part of God's mission in the world. The primary task of the church is not to do good and make the world a better place by doing things better than secular society. Rather it is to embody the new world, the new social order, that has arrived and is possible in Jesus Christ. This requires thinking about Christian leadership in the context of the total mission and calling of the church as the community of God's government.

Enjoy the edition, and book in for the Mainstream conference. There we'll explore the exciting area of relationships. It's in our relating as leaders and led – and we are always to be both – that the rubber hits the road in living out God's new order of human living that came with the advent of Jesus Christ.

Stephen Ibbotson is the Editor of *Talk*.

He is also a member of the pastoral staff of Altrincham Baptist Church, Altrincham, Cheshire.

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On not neglecting the gift

By Nigel Wright

Dr Nigel G Wright is president of the Baptist Union and principal of Spurgeon's Colleg., London. He is well known for his many books including *The Radical Evangelical* and *Challenge to Change*. His latest book is *New Baptists*, New Agenda (Paternoster 2002).

As they say, the world is divided into two kinds of people: those who think the world is divided into two kinds of people and those who don't. When it comes to the topic of leadership, I think the world is divided into two kinds of people. Either they think that leadership is what ministry is all about, or they think it's what ministers should at all costs avoid. Theologically the camps do not divide neatly. Some 'conservatives' think that discourse about ministry has been hijacked by leadership talk; some 'liberals' call for bold leadership to get Christianity out of its bondage to traditional doctrine. Generally speaking however, if you're charismatic, you will be more comfortable with the idea that we need leaders; if you're liberal, you will

time, I am little short of appalled at the abdication of leadership responsibility that I find in some. Sometimes it seems as if the last thing that ministers, teachers and theologians might be expected to come up with is leadership. I discover them articulating reasons why, with relief, they might be spared this burden. The fact is, they can't be.

The inevitability of leadership

Leadership is intrinsic to pastoral ministry. It is implied in the shepherding metaphor. The shepherd goes before the sheep to lead them into good feeding ground. Fair enough, people are not sheep, but no metaphor is meant to apply at every point. It is also intrinsic to the teaching task, since as teachers we go before people in how we might first think through and then

to be teachers and pastors end up leading the people of God for good or ill. When pastors and others deny they are leaders, they fool themselves, abdicate their responsibility and leave the field open to illegitimate leaders to fill the gap that they have vacated. Far better to do away with false modesty and accept what we are given to do.

Government and leadership

Part of the ambivalence about leadership comes from the confusion among Baptists between leadership and government. We make the assumption that to lead is to govern, to tell people what to do. Quite rightly this is seen to conflict with the principle of congregational government according to which we freely and together discern and embrace the governing will of the head of the church. But leadership, properly understood, is not the removal or the denial of this freedom for which Christ has set us free. Rather it is inspiration as to how this freedom may be used and how we might embrace for ourselves wise courses of action. Because the Spirit is free, such inspiration might come from a number of quarters, but to identify it, invite affirmation of it and see how it might translate into action will normally be the responsibility of those the church has recognised in formal oversight capacities. Their task is not to govern so much as to enable orderly government under Christ and through the Spirit. If

Sometimes it seems as if the last thing that ministers, teachers and theologians might be expected to come up with is leadership

(paradoxically) be more likely to disparage anything that smacks of modern management techniques or newfangled ways of actually doing things (as distinct from believing things).

My sympathies are with neither of these camps. I am certainly tired of the overuse of leadership language and want to stick a needle in. At the same

apply the message we believe and proclaim. Teaching involves exploration, which in turn requires the willingness to step ahead. If teaching isn't this, it ends up as sublime, or not so sublime, recapitulation. We end up leading by our non-leadership and this creates indolence and confusion. One way or another, therefore, those who are called

anybody says we do not need the exercise of this gift, they either do not know how groups of people work or are leading while denying that it is leadership. Leaders have a sense of where things ought to go and how we might sensibly get there.

Ministers first

A further mistake is to imagine that leadership is something we offer independently of ministry, as though we need to do less of the latter in order to achieve more of the former. But for a start, leadership is a form of ministry since it is a necessary service to the people of God. It enables the church to function as the church and so to maximise its service. In a different context I recall hearing Bishop Lesslie Newbiggin say that 'bishops are those people who enable churches to function in the way congregationalists say they should'. It's a subtle statement. The full functioning of the church is a valid aspiration. But to deny the importance of leadership in the name of body ministry is to cut off our noses to spite our faces. There is an organic connection between leadership and the full functioning of the body of Christ.

However, it is also mistaken to believe that this leadership can somehow be abstracted or separated from the essential tasks of ministry expressed through preaching and pastoral care. Those who travel this road decide they need to give these up so that they can lead more effectively. But it is precisely through the week-by-week rendering of the word of God (however we do this) and the relational, person-by-person care of the people of God that we exercise our leadership. It is fatal to imagine that we begin to lead when we distance ourselves from the people we are called to pastor.

Leadership is not served by confining ourselves to our offices where we engage in blue-sky thinking and dream of where to go next. It is not realised by becoming accessible only through a series of acolytes and minions on the managing

director model. Christ-like leadership involves being close enough to people to wash their feet and vulnerable enough to them to know it isn't a pleasant task. This does not mean that,

reveals that they are well down the road of discovering just how effective 'Christian' models of leadership can be. Of course, they are often informed by Christian assumptions as well as

Christ-like leadership involves being close enough to people to wash their feet and vulnerable enough to them to know it isn't a pleasant task.

unlike Jesus, we never take time to get away from the crowd. It means that just as leadership is a form of service so it is exercised in the form of service. Jesus told Peter to 'feed my sheep' and this tender call is the one that comes to those who are in the apostolic tradition of Peter.

The Christian kind of leadership

When people distance themselves from leadership language, they really mean not that we don't need leaders but that we need leaders of a particular kind – Christ-like ones. But if this is what they mean, this is what they should say. This opens up the constructive debate as to what servant leadership looks like rather than closing down any discussion at all. We can't afford what we often end up with when we deny the leadership role – passive leadership which is afraid to face up to the task. Passive leadership is not servant leadership but rank failure to serve. Christ-like, servant leadership is not passive but proactive and self-sacrificing. It requires thought, sensitivity, decision, courage, determination and action. It rejects domination, manipulation and intimidation in favour of persuasion, inspiration and example, and so makes its task simultaneously harder and more valuable.

It proves to be mistaken to contrast Christian models with 'worldly' models at this point. A careful review of the literature and web-sites that emanate from schools of management and 'secular' leadership thinking

commercial ones. The salt has penetrated. The fact is, to get the best out of people, treating them as responsible and gifted persons works almost every time, whereas to treat them as resources to be expended does not. Even the notion that volunteers and salaried staff are to be treated differently comes into question. In a buoyant economy, everybody who chooses to work for a particular firm is a volunteer since they could as easily take their talents elsewhere. Those who aspire to serve within the church might learn a good deal by studying the discipline of leadership studies that has emerged in our own generation.

A call to lead

The state of the church in Britain is rocky not because we have poor leaders but because the church is in exile in the midst of a consumerist and increasingly paganised society. That doesn't mean we don't need to work on our leadership skills. My observation is that we have some fine and competent personnel in many of our churches and in their leadership teams. But difficult times test the stuff of which we are made, and the challenge to be servant leaders who understand the times and know what we should do is great. Servant leaders are those who learn how to listen before responding and leading, who possess empathy in their dealings with others and are able to bring healing to broken situations.

Continued over leaf

They are people of integrity who have learnt the art of persuasion, not coercion, and who can immerse themselves in the details of their tasks while holding clearly to the over-riding mission objective. They are committed to personal growth and the growth of others and are builders of community. We do not learn and develop these skills easily or without continuous application.

Christian ministry is one of those vocations in which who we are is more important than what we know or what we can do. This is the great challenge of the task and it can never be avoided. The most knowledgeable and skilled of people can make shipwreck because they have not learnt to know themselves or to develop self-possession. Some people call this 'self-differentiation' and regard it as a primary leadership skill. Being self-differentiated means that I have worked on myself, clarifying who and what I am, what I believe and where I believe myself to be going. This means I cannot be easily swamped or threatened by other people's personalities or agendas. But it needs to be combined with the capacity to relate, especially to people who see things differently and who are apt to pull away.

Sometimes you hear people pray for 'strong leaders' to emerge. It never sounds quite right to my ears, I confess, and I cringe if I hear it. We do well to fear the domineering leader who can persuade people to do things that should never even be contemplated, let alone done. We do equally well to fear people who will abdicate their own responsibility to discern, test and decide. But strength takes different forms. Jesus was strong. If by 'strong' we mean resilient, wise, Christ-like servants of the servants of God, this is precisely what we should be praying for and seeking to become.

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With
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worship file

Filtered worship

by Geraldine Latty

Song selection time! Does this find you (a) engrossed in the thematic index of various song-books, (b) filled with anticipation, or (c) drawing a complete blank? Come with me on my journey of selecting songs. This is not a definitive route, but you may find some of the ideas helpful.

Whatever the starting-point – a list of songs given to me, or a chunk of time to fill – the principles I use in my selection process (I've called them 'filters') remain the same. Here are some, but I wouldn't necessarily use them all in the same meeting or event!

My filters

New and old / Hymns and songs
I like to use both newer and older hymns and songs that list the characteristics of God (*And can it be; All my days; You are the sovereign I am*) as well as songs that simply respond to this our wonderful God (*I will worship, What a faithful God have I, You are God in heaven*).

Songs from around the world
Using songs that our sisters and brothers use in their praise and worship around the world reminds us that we belong to a worldwide church. It can be very powerful to sing songs of praise from places such as South Africa (*Siya Hambe / We are marching in the light of God*), Cameroon or Peru, or the song that a Filipino church would have sung, having lost everything in an earthquake (*Kay Yahweh Ako / I'll follow my Lord*).

Songs of intercession
Helping us to look into the world our God loves so much, identifying needs within our own community and bringing them to him, perhaps interspersed with prayers and visuals: *Father hear our prayer; Bring your best to their worst; Jesus – God to the rescue; Heaven shall not wait*.

Space for the spontaneous and prophetic song

Songs of commissioning
Refocusing on our place in our God's world and the mission he's entrusted to us: *Every day, I'm gonna trust in God; The Spirit of the Lord is on me now; Take, O take me as I am*.

Songs of praise and celebration
Pure, abandoned joy in our God: *There's a pageant; Hallelujah, hosanna; I will dance*.

Confession
Readings and songs that give space to say, 'I'm sorry, cleanse me, Lord': *Father, I have sinned; Purify my heart; When the music fades; Lord, have mercy on us*.

Songs of affirmation
We also have a God who says, 'Your sins are forgiven – go and sin no more!'. So we need to make space for songs that affirm our place in God: *Before the throne of God above; I have a maker*.

Heart response
Giving space for our hearts to simply say, 'I love you, Lord' in response to our wonderful God: *You are God in heaven; Santo, Santo – Holy, holy, my heart*

adores you; To be in your presence; I sing a simple song of love.

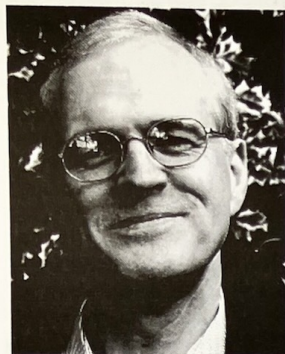
What 'filters' do you have?

It might be a helpful exercise to work out which filters you use (perhaps subconsciously) and then apply them deliberately to forthcoming services and events. Try to ensure that something of the breadth of our holy, loving, powerful God and all of the dimensions of his relationship with us and his world have some space for expression. Of course we cannot do it all at one event, and we need to be aware of the 'supermarket' mentality of trying to please everybody, but I have found these filters to be useful checking tools.

Praying the songs

I learned something from another worship leader a while ago that has proved to be one of the single most effective tools in my preparation. Having chosen the songs – or using a given list of songs to work through – try praying through each song. You will find that as you use the actual words of the hymn or song, and pray them for yourself and for the group of people you will be leading, they are no longer simply words on a page, but become prayers that God by his Spirit will fill and use. Then, as you lead God's precious people and join together with them to sing, the songs have already been prayed! They have become a place where God can minister into people's hearts, and also into your own!

Geraldine Latty, a graduate musician, conducts workshops in leading worship. She also leads worship at national and international conferences such as Spring Harvest, Baptist Assembly and Worship Together. Previous to this she taught as head of music in a secondary school for 12 years. For further details please contact Geraldine on geraldinelatty@hotmail.com.



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Regional expansion.

A group of about 30 met at Sutton Coldfield Baptist on April 25. It was planned as a day to pray and increase our awareness of what is happening up and down the country. People travelled from as far away as Newcastle, East Dartmoor, Norfolk, Battle and Cardiff.

The Leadership team were very encouraged by new groups being proposed in different parts and of their commitment to Mainstream's vision and values. Younger leaders were also with us and, as was reported at the conference, they are looking to Mainstream to foster their spiritual development, and at the same time challenging us and keeping us focussed.

A few years ago the Mainstream executive, as it

was then called, made a definite policy decision to give time to prayer to know God's future. It may have led to God bringing Mainstream to a close, its work being completed. However, we heard the Lord tell us there was more to do, especially at the level of leadership, relationships and mission.

On the day we gave ourselves to three things:

- We invested in challenging teaching and heartfelt worship and prayer
- Hearing how God was leading particular individuals in different part of the country.
- Prayer ministry.

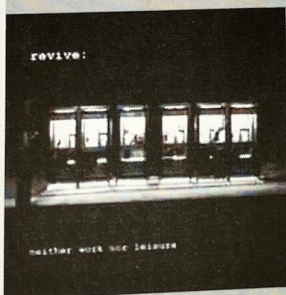
Mission, mentoring, real relationships, apostolic and

prophetic leadership are issues which we sense God is calling us to. The final session was to be a time of prayer to seek the Lord about the issues which had been raised during the day. As is often the case, the Lord began to speak prophetically which led to a precious time of prayer ministry for a number of grateful leaders.

God is with us and we seek to encourage regional groups to be faithful to word and Spirit issues with mission always high on the agenda.

Creativity takes form

Harvey Elias reviews the first album from revive (see X-files on page 22)



Revive is what happens when young Christians meet God before they are dragged off by the cheese and easy listening of Mat Redman and Martin Smith. Not that there is anything wrong with Mr Redman et al. If we are honest we all love

them, it's just that life is so much more complicated than many easy listening, feel good songs imply. For many of us worship is about being honest about how we feel with the God we love. That means really honest: all the wonder, frustration, pain, confusion and weeping joy we encounter day in day out. This is where Revive are coming from.

Revive were formed as a plant congregation out of the youth of Sharing life in Leeds. The leaders felt a calling to establish an environment in which younger (often newer) Christians could meet: those who are put off by the hard

seats and blue rinse of established churches. There has been an ongoing questioning and cleansing of how we work with God, whilst holding true to the values and excitement of the early churches. Since the early days the congregation has been blessed with a ridiculous amount of musical talent (both in numbers and variety). This second album pulls together the best songs written by the church over the last 5 years.

Neither work nor leisure takes you through many of the places we have all encountered in our walk with God. There are some

Personal Profile: Adrian Argile

Preston was my home in my early days and I spent my teenage years watching Preston North End, or playing chess or trying to play any ball games in a family that wasn't interested in sport.

My parents took me to church as soon as I opened my mouth and I can not claim any devastating conversion. I was part of a lively church with a large number of young people

Leaving the north was a big step for me when I entered Spurgeon's College for my 4 year sentence!

There I felt called to church planting and to the north west, and I started at my first church in January 1988 in Leyland just south of Preston, despite my name being sent almost anywhere but the north in the official channels. Leyland had 11 members and you needed your pension book to get in (almost!). It was great to see the growth, mainly through conversion in the early days and to go on to plant a church.

Almost 6 years ago I moved to Rawtenstall.

Rossendale is certainly a most interesting place – the home of low flying umbrellas! Umbrellas because there must be more here per person than anywhere else (and the rain to go with them!), and low flying because up the valley in Bacup is the home of a UFO centre as there are meant to be more UFO sightings in the area than anywhere else in Europe.

In my early years of ministry I was part of a small group that met monthly to share and pray with each other as well as eat and socialise together. This group was the first thing in my diary and it certainly helped me to continue in ministry. Nothing has replaced this, but there is a good group of ministers in Rossendale and my leadership team at Rawtenstall is the best I have worked with.

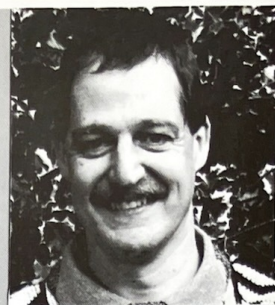
Sport continues to have an important place for me – it's the way I relax. Today it tends to be table tennis and golf, although I am constantly encouraged to play for Rawtenstall Chess Club. I do enjoy DIY – it helps to hammer something in place

to release any pent up frustration!

My family are very special to me. Pam and I married in 1983 just before entering Spurgeon's. My best experiences have been witnessing the birth of my 4 children; each one was simply awe inspiring! The nurses were far more concerned with me than Pam!

At both Leyland and Rawtenstall I have endeavoured to encourage my two passions of prayer and mission. I believe we need to be creative and diverse in both. The following is my prayer for the church

And this is my prayer, that the Fellowship would grow in a greater love and understanding of one another and overflow that love in the power of the Holy Spirit into the community, sharing Jesus in word and action. My prayer is that each week we would see people become Christians, who in turn are built up and encouraged. May we abound in true holiness filled with the fruit of the Spirit radiating Christ by our presence.



I am not someone who gets down easily, or loses sleep over things, but ministry has brought both the biggest blessings and the biggest disappointments and hurts. The blessing of seeing changed lives, and the disappointment of seeing God's people act in very ungodly ways, especially when you should have expected a different response.

Pam will tell you that I tend to be organised, almost too much at times, but I have been known to arrive too early as a visiting preacher for a service (fortunately the clocks went back!) and to travel to a conference in Falmouth from Lancashire only to arrive a week early! It's better than being late!

moments of sublime peace (*Freedom, Be with you*) contrasted with desolation and confusion (*Here, Deadending*). Whilst the subject matter is often more difficult and challenging than standard Christian fare all the songs are accessible and there are several sing your head off belting bouncy worship classics such as *Saver*, *The state I'm in* and *Glory to you*.

Musically the most accomplished track is a song called *Everything* which combines tight buzzed up guitars, trippy chilled synth layers with the inspirational rapping talents of Justin

Thomas. Turn it up and jump around.

The highlight for me is the last track *constant* which combines Genesis 8:22 and an ancient Celtic prayer into one of the most remarkable things I have ever heard. It always makes me laugh when people talk about God 'turning up' at church services. God didn't just turn up here: He wrote, produced and arranged it – listen and weep.

If you love music you will love this album. The flow of love is constant ...

Revive: *Neither work nor leisure* (ICCD 63730, £12.99)

Consultations bear surprising fruit

Over the last couple of years consultations have been offered at the Mainstream conferences. Two of these have resulted in change of Pastorates.

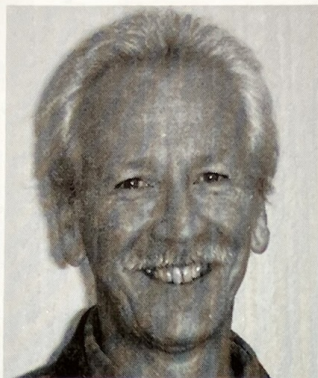
A group of six leaders from Purley Baptist asked for some help with evangelism. The leadership team assigned Chris Densham and myself to speak with them. At that point (January 2000) I certainly wasn't thinking of moving to Purley. However, as a result of a further conversation a few months later, with their Associate Minister, Pam Bryan, it seemed right for me to pursue becoming their senior

minister. God had clearly opened the door.

Graham Jefferson and Craig Millward met with a mature college student who was seeking advice about what to do at the end of his course. Nigel O'Dwyer had been serving a church in Birmingham during his training with Regent's College and was considering what to do next. Informally the next day, Graham mentioned that he knew of a church looking for a minister and said he would mention his name to the moderator. Nigel and Caroline O'Dwyer have now taken up the pastorate at Goring New Life Church in Sussex.

Integrity – the shake down

by Graham Jefferson



Graham Jefferson has a first class honours degree from London Bible College and has been in Christian ministry since 1975. He has been at New Life Church in Worthing since 1981, most of the time as Senior Pastor.

One Sunday I was teaching from Romans 13 on obeying the state authorities – paying taxes, parking legally, observing speed limits and such like. Unfortunately, I had overlooked the fact that my wife was in the congregation, and afterwards she pointed out my hypocrisy, most notably in relation to speed limits! She made me realise I had better start practising what I preached.

Such inconsistency is by no means uncommon amongst Christian leaders. We can be too kind to ourselves, making too many allowances for behaviour that is sloppy, if not downright ungodly. If 'much is required from those to whom much is given' (Luke 12:48), then we need to 'walk the walk' as well as 'talk the talk'. Leaders who embezzle church funds or run off with the organist are still few and far between, but even minor lapses of integrity can build into a pattern of inconsistency that seriously undermines the effectiveness of our ministry.

What sort of things am I talking about? How about hiding behind the myth of ministerial busyness? I used to hate being early for meetings. Hanging around beforehand seemed such a waste of time. So I would aim to arrive roughly when the meeting started. Result? Always

late. But at least I didn't have to wait for other people. 'Nobody keeps me waiting (sub-text: because I'm so busy and important), but I don't mind keeping you waiting.' What an appalling, discourteous attitude! Nowadays I show respect by turning up *before* the appointed time if I possibly can.

Replying to people's letters also shows respect, but church leaders can be the worst at this. I once wrote an urgent letter to fifty local church leaders. A prompt reply was essential. The response was underwhelming. Are we really so busy?

Are we too busy even to return phone-calls, or be at meetings we promised to attend, or do things we said we would do? How many times have you heard someone at a committee meeting say, 'I haven't got round to it yet'? How many times have you made the same excuse? 'Think before you speak, and don't make any rash promises ... Better not to promise at all than to make a promise and not keep it' (Ecclesiastes 5:2,5). Yes, there

convicted me about books I had borrowed but never returned. It cost me a fortune to post them back.

The problem for church leaders is that people don't just listen to our fine words, they also look at our behaviour. That's why Paul wrote to Timothy, 'Watch yourself and watch your teaching' (1 Tim. 4:16). As Albert Schweitzer, the great missionary doctor observed, 'Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing'. So what kind of example am I setting for the people I lead? How closely do I resemble the One who 'did not come to be served but to serve'?

When there's a church meal, am I first or last in the queue? And where am I when the clearing up is done? Our local MP attended an Alpha celebration meal at the church. After supper, I found him doing the washing-up. The cynic might say it was good PR, or a way to avoid hearing the talk! But I prefer to believe he was displaying the servant attitude we all need to

If an ounce of performance is worth a pound of preaching, we should start practising what we preach!

are times when circumstances conspire to defeat even our best efforts, but how often are failures due to laziness, or lack of planning?

I no longer make promises to people who ask me to pray for them. I know how easy it is to forget. Now I say, 'Let me pray for you right now', or 'Whenever you come to mind, I'll pray'. I also hesitate to borrow books, tapes, CD's and videos. They easily get mislaid or end up permanently on my shelves. Some years ago, God

cultivate. True greatness isn't measured by the number of our servants but the number we serve. If an ounce of performance is worth a pound of preaching, we should start practising what we preach!

For if ever we want to be given great responsibility, Jesus said, we had better start by being faithful in the little things.

Leadership.net

Emerging leaders, according to the Centre for Creative Leadership, are technology-savvy, hungry to embrace change, entrepreneurial and outcome-focused. If we want to keep up with them – even if only to release them into their leadership and not be swamped in their wake – there are plenty of websites which will offer the latest thinking and techniques on leadership in the business and political world, as well as in the world inhabited by Christian ministers.

www.ccl.org is a good place to start. It's a US academic site running a major research project on emerging leaders in business. Some of its preliminary findings are posted at www.ccl.org/research/projects/emerglead/elphasel.htm (or, follow the links from the home page!).

Most leadership gurus have a website these days. Some of them are great fun – though how much help they really offer is a moot point. Try www.buzancentre.com for Tony Buzan, Mensa author of *Use your Head*, for insights about leadership thinking. Lateral thinking is on offer at www.edwdebono.com. You'll find course details (pretty expensive!), a few articles and a thought for the week. www.tompeters.com is full of quotable and useful info from the world's most read management guru, Tom Peters. And there's a host of wisdom for managing voluntary sector organisations at Peter Drucker's site www.pdfr.org. Click on 'articles books resources' on the home page for thousands of words by some of management's most strategic thinkers, including Charles Handy.

Two other secular sites worth checking out are the Change Project – at www.well.com/user/bbear/qindex.html – which offers a wealth of helpful stuff on handling change both personally

and organisationally (something the church has historically not been that good at), and www.theworkfoundation.com (formerly The Industrial Society). Its site has a lot of analysis of workplace dynamics and management. It'll help you develop as a leader and give you great insight into what your members are facing in the world of work, equipping you to offer better pastoral leadership to them.

From the Christian world, The Work Foundation's material can be supplemented with Mark Greene's wisdom from www.licc.org.uk and Third Way's www.thirdway.org.uk. Both have good collections of freely available articles and offer the chance to talk about issues in forums and chat rooms. Also helpful are Patrick Dixon's site www.globalchange.com, and www.leaderu.com, the website of the leadership university [should this have caps: Leadership University??] in the States, packed with articles and papers on all aspects of ministry from all around the world.

If you want to check out the whole coaching phenomenon – sweeping the boardrooms of America and emerging in the UK as well – the best place to start is www.coachfederation.org. This explains what coaching is and how it can help, before pointing you in the direction of organisations who, for a fee, will coach you in any way you want.

www.faithmaps.org is a huge site offering material in all sorts of areas helpful to ministry. There is a good collection of articles on leadership from a variety of perspectives, and it has links to a number of other excellent sites. Here are a few of the best ones:

www.greenleaf.org is the website of the organisation established by the late AT&T executive, Robert Greenleaf. He pioneered the notion of servant leadership in business, a concept

clearly and explicitly derived from Jesus. You'll find a full explanation of his principles and examples of how they've worked in business, the voluntary sector and churches.

www.servleader.org has a good online newsletter reporting from the cutting edge of where servant leadership ideas are being put into practice (you need a free, downloadable acrobat reader to access these. It's a useful thing to have, as it allows you to read any .pdf files).

www.ginkworld.net has been recently revamped. Featuring analysis of trends, surveys of the culture and ways to chart a course through it, its most provocative latest addition is an updated form of Luther's 95 Theses. Excellent.

www.smartleadership.com is a massive site still under construction. It's bursting with articles and papers on all aspects of leadership – including what we can we learn from dolphins. Now, don't laugh or switch off – what follows is a memorable unpacking of their mission statement, and an example of first-rate communication.

Finally, www.injoy.com offers an online quiz designed by John Maxwell, which enables you to evaluate your leadership style, strengths and weaknesses. Naturally, as it unpacks the results, it offers you any number of Maxwell's books that will help plug any gaps in your understanding the quiz may have highlighted.

And don't forget Christianity Today's excellent website which includes Leadership Journal (www.christianitytoday.com/leaders).

Please note: all web addresses are to be entered in your browser as one word (with no spaces or line breaks). The constraints of narrow columns make it impossible to keep all addresses to single lines in this publication.



Simon Jones is BMS World Mission coordinator for London and the South East and author of *Why Bother with Church?* (IVP 2001), *Discovering the New Testament* (Crossway 2001) and *Discovering Luke's Gospel* (Crossway 1999). A former editor of *Christianity* magazine, he was pastor of Peckham Road Baptist Church from 1989 to 1996.



Where have all the women gone?

by Myra Blyth

Having trained at Regent's Park College and served as minister of a Baptist Church,

Myra Blyth held various appointments with the British Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches before becoming Deputy General Secretary of the Baptist Union.

The Baptist Union has been ordaining women into ministry for over 100 years. Today there are 151 accredited female ministers, of whom twenty-one are now retired. This number compares favourably with 1965 when only five women were on the accredited list. But the reality is that this current figure represents only 6.66% of accredited ministers. Also significant in recent years has been the appointment of women to regional and national leadership positions. In the new associations, we now have four women appointed as regional ministers, one of whom is a lay leader. In the colleges we have a growing number of women on the teaching staff, and on the staff of the Union in Didcot, four women (two ordained and two lay) are serving in management positions. My own appointment in 1998 as Deputy General Secretary was the first time in the Union's history that a woman had occupied a senior management position.

While the opportunities for women to serve the church in a leadership capacity exist and are increasing, it would be irresponsible to imagine that this means all is well. The truth is that many women – who are as gifted and as called as the 151 who are ordained – never realise their calling, because their churches do not affirm or encourage women in the same way as they do the men.

At the 2002 Baptist Assembly, David Coffey publicly affirmed and applauded the leadership being given by women within the Union, both ordained and lay, and challenged ministers and churches who remain

ambivalent or even opposed to women's leadership to think again. After all, Jesus broke the mould which gave exclusive leadership rights, on the grounds of race and gender, to a select few. Jesus recognised and affirmed the gifts and calling of a huge diversity of men and women, stubbornly and courageously defying all the cultural, social and religious conventions of his day. To recognise and affirm women in leadership within our churches today is simply to do as Jesus did.

If the number of women affirmed in leadership roles is to grow, and the percentage accredited as ministers is to rise, we must address the question of how to encourage ministers and churches to welcome women into leadership. Experience suggests that churches which have called women to be their ministers can help others to think again, and by the grace of God to start again.

Here are just two discoveries to commend women's leadership to churches in search of a new minister:

1) Churches often react adversely to the initial suggestion that they might consider the name of a woman as their future minister. Experience has shown that when churches put aside their negative feelings and take the time to meet with women candidates, those negative reactions are quickly dispelled. Because we are creatures of habit, and prefer things to stay the same, we deprive ourselves and our congregations of the possibility of God doing new things.

2) Many churches who have called a woman to be their

minister now testify to having experienced a whole new style of leadership. Women, more often than men, work collaboratively. Their leadership style is participatory rather than competitive, and this radically influences the way congregations behave. Men more than women have been socially conditioned to think that strong leadership is about going it alone, leading from the front, being out there ahead of the pack, inspiring people to follow. Women, also because of social conditioning, have learnt to exercise leadership not by going out ahead of the pack, but by standing amongst those whom they serve and empowering them to realise their God-given calling individually and collectively. There is clearly room for many styles of leadership in our churches and certainly no style is exclusive to either gender. The challenge for all ministers, men and women alike, is to know what kind of lead is needed in any given situation and to be able to exercise a variety of leadership styles.

Congregations which have called and affirmed women testify to the positive experience women's leadership has brought to the church. They insist that churches which have not yet walked this road are the poorer for it, because they are working with less than the full range of talents and gifts God has given to them. But poorest by far are surely the women in these congregations who are constrained to live with the fact that their gifting and calling, though real and of God, must remain hidden and suppressed.

Escape from coercive religion

by Rob Warner



The past is a different country, they do things differently there. The 20th century saw massive changes in the way people think and live. Here are several with a profound impact upon the church and mission.

Secularization takes God and the church out of the picture in most aspects of life. Science is no longer under the scrutiny of the church: if Christian leaders object to scientific theories, the natural assumption is that this is far more likely to demonstrate the invalidity of Christianity than any weakness in the science. Faith in God makes no difference to whether the trains run on time or to the patterns of success and sorrow woven into human existence.

This doesn't mean that secularization is the necessary opponent of authentic Christian faith. Some pioneering scientists were Christians who believed that Genesis provided a charter for science. The anti-scientific attitudes of the medieval (and Victorian) church were shaped by the superstition and pseudo-science of a coercive Christian tradition. Nonetheless, secularization means that we approach life with the assumption that the authority of the church has passed its sell-by date.

Pluralization has introduced us to a world of many authorities and perspectives. We mix with people of different faiths, political convictions and living arrangements. While this tends to make us more tolerant of diversity, it also makes us more inclined to relativism. We easily move from respecting diversity to assuming there is no such thing as absolute truth. Pluralization has greatly reinforced secularization. It's not just that science and business, shopping and leisure can all be accomplished without reference to God. The multiplicity of

opinions in the marketplace of religion tends to discredit them all as a source of universal truth.

Differentiation profoundly shapes contemporary existence. Life is experienced as a series of separate compartments. Work, home and leisure are different worlds, in different locations, with different priorities. Rather than expecting to discover wholeness and integration, we juggle priorities and increasingly experience a famine of time. We don't expect the experts in one part of life to be relevant elsewhere. Our fitness coach won't have expertise for the office. Our MBA tutor may have no idea how to nurture a happy family. In a differentiated world, secularization is experienced as a natural part of life. If we happen to be that way inclined, we may worship God in the religious zone of life. But we hardly expect God to turn up Monday to Friday. And we certainly don't expect the preacher to speak credibly beyond the religious compartment of life.

Sacralization pushes in the opposite direction. The old consensus among sociologists of religion was that institutional Christianity is doomed in the West. The forces of secularization, pluralization and differentiation were too powerful to be resisted. Respectable church-going and Christian influence upon society were evaporating to nothing. But then a counter-trend was noticed. People's religious instincts were not extinct, but re-emerged in New Age spirituality and the instinctive religious symbolism of flowers and candles that reached its fullest expression with Diana's death. The sociologists' debate continues: is church decline in Western Europe the norm for postmodernity, or is North America the norm and Western Europe the exception?

If Europe is the exception, contributory factors can be identified:

- The atheistic tendency of the European Enlightenment considered the church superstitious, unreasonable and repressive.
- The connection between church and state indicates that Christianity is part of the establishment, the traditionalist culture from which we seek liberation.

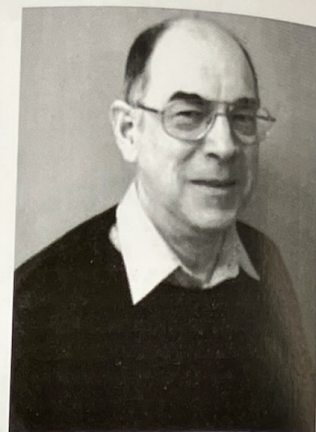
A singular lack of entrepreneurial drive and creativity in the British church – from Bill Hybels to John Wimber, from Jim Wallis to Rick Warren, fresh thinking has spread from the US to the UK, but little has been offered in the opposite direction. A culture with post-Christian instincts, plus a moribund and uncreative church, produces a natural conclusion: church is routinely considered part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Christians are identified more with yesterday than tomorrow.

If we want to express Christ's love in the real world, and not withdraw into some alternate universe of Christian escapism and denial, yesterday's religiosity cannot be imposed upon tomorrow's spiritual quest. In our secularized, pluralized and differentiated world, how can we best invite others to join us in discovering the availability of God? Dogmatic oversimplification lacks credibility – whether liberal or evangelical, charismatic or fundamentalist. Far more compelling is the central motif of the Gospels: life's journey into the unknown can be explored in the company of Jesus.

Rob Warner is one of our regular columnists. A pastor and author, he has served in London churches at Herne Hill and Wimbledon where he presently leads Kairos, a church that's been started from scratch. He has a wider speaking ministry and is involved in Alpha for believer baptising churches.

Sociologist meets leadership guru

Stephen Ibbotson
interviews
Elaine Storkey
and Bill Allen



Dr Elaine Storkey is an established communicator and author, and a widely respected contributor on secular radio and television programmes. She has written seminal material on gender and continues to research on a broad range of issues. For many years, Elaine headed up the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. Based in Cambridge, she now works with the Zacharias Trust is married to Alan.

Bill Allen, Formerly Tutor in Pastoral Studies, Spurgeon's College, where he taught the leadership course, is now a Regional Minister with the Yorkshire Baptist Association.

Traditional societies embodied leaders in the keeper of the traditions, modern societies in the expert, but what kind of leadership is demanded by our own 'post-modern' times.

Elaine Leadership demanded today can still be traditional in some respects – if by 'traditional' we mean keeping in contact with people. But it has also to be flexible, open, non-judgmental, visible, articulate and full of integrity

Bill There is a strong demand today for new forms of leadership. This has come from people who are dissatisfied with traditional approaches to leadership which were developed for very different times and tasks than our own.

Three issues are of significance. First, the character of the leader and his or her influence upon the group. Often this has been linked to the personal qualities of the leader. These are still of vital importance but the emphasis today is upon the beliefs and values of the leader which are recognised to be powerful in shaping the ethos of the organisation.

Second, followers can no longer be treated as 'sheep'. Many leadership models assume

the need of a leader to compensate for the inability of the followers. Today's leaders value people as people and for the contribution that their thinking and ideas bring to the group.

Third, today's leaders need to create the environment in which people can and will give their best to the cause. People want to be involved in leadership relationships which empower them and encourage personal growth.

How is leadership viewed today by the general public in British & more generally in Western culture?

Elaine Leadership is not 'sacred' in British society. People are not respected because of any office they hold anymore, but more because of what kind of person they are in that office. Of course, it is difficult to find out what kind of person a leader is, because most people only get to know them through the media.

Bill A great deal of current research into the leadership expectations of followers suggests that there are a few generic qualities that dominate our understanding and view of leadership. These are honesty, an

ability to be forward-looking and inspiring, and personal competency. Trust is vital to the leader/follower relationship and it is generated through the integrity of a leader whose attitudes and behaviours connect strongly with professed values and beliefs. Any credibility leaders have is gained through the demonstration of integrity. This is what is meant by honesty. The essence of leadership is real and intended movement and change. That is why followers expect leaders to be visionary people. I would suggest that the integrity is more fundamental than the 'vision thing', because followers will not generally support a vision if the leadership is considered untrustworthy.

There is a strong need for inspirational leadership. In Christian terms, we don't simply want 'good speakers' or 'good preachers', we need those speakers and preachers who move people to go out into the world to 'fight for the King'.

By 'personal competency' I mean followers look for leaders who can lead. This is why the inclusion of leadership studies and training is so important in the curriculum of those training for Christian ministry. Whether or not one agrees that ministers are leaders, they do actually have to

lead and they are expected to lead people on the journey of faith through life. That being the case, we should help them to understand and carry out leadership functions by appropriate training.

Does the vision of being the people of God demand a distinctive practice of leadership?

Elaine Christian leadership definitely demands distinctive characteristics. The ones outlined in the letter to Timothy are still important: spiritually mature, temperate, sensible, respectable, sexually faithful, hospitable, a good teacher, gentle and not violent, not quarrelsome, not greedy or motivated by money.

Bill Leadership is a natural phenomenon which occurs in all walks of life. Christian people are exercising leadership in business, commerce, industry, the armed forces and so on. There are three basic questions that need to be answered. These are - What does the leader need to be? What does the leader need to know? What does the leader need to do? These three questions apply equally to leadership and the people of God. It is interesting to see that in the Scriptures these three are in evidence. There is a lot written about the qualities

Any credibility leaders have is gained through the demonstration of integrity.

King was because he was better looking than everybody else and he stood head and shoulders above any of the people. There are logical reasons why such a choice might be made but there are better criteria for leadership in the people of God than that.

What particular insights does Jesus give us for leadership? Jesus talked about the need to handle power differently from the Gentiles (Mark 10) and from the style of Jewish leadership of his day. But what does this mean for us today?

Elaine Jesus' teachings and modelling of 'servant leadership' are really what it all should be about. It is the heart and motivation that is important. Being a servant means having time for those you lead, listening, trying to understand another's point of view, caring about their well-being, their growth, their walk with God and not simply exercising authority over them. The authority ultimately comes from God, and people can be leaders without authority if their hearts are not right. Jesus' whole approach was that the leader

Bill The concept of servant leadership is one that currently exercises the minds of secular and Christian writers. Clearly it is connected to Jesus, but we need to remember that the concept was around in the teachings of Lao Tzu, 500 years before Jesus. Jesus did more than introduce a model of leading. There is behind the servant leadership model, the issue of relationships in leadership. Jesus saw himself as the servant of the Father who had sent him. Paul saw himself as the servant of God. Servant leadership is not just about washing disciples' feet. It is also, perhaps more so, about 'knowing that the Father had entrusted everything to him, and that he had come from God and was going back to God' (John 13:3) that enabled him to wash feet. The teaching of Jesus serves to remind us that any leadership that might be given to us is 'delegated authority' and that we are servants first and then leaders.

How do we handle Bible texts about leadership that have come from ancient cultures? In what way can we assume they are a blueprint for today if at all?

Elaine Some of the more military and macabre aspects of Old Testament leadership serve not as a model but as a warning for us. We need to view the militarism of the Israelites, especially in the book of Judges with caution and ask what it is there to teach us. However, prophetic leadership in the Old Testament is very significant, for the prophets never sought popularity or admiration or the esteem of others. They simply spoke the truth and the Word of God, even when no-one wanted to listen. We get the wrong impression of prophets if we think of them as 'ranters'.

The teaching of Jesus serves to remind us that any leadership given to us is 'delegated authority', and that we are servants first and then leaders

required of the leader of God's people. The passages in 1 Timothy and Titus are well used to speak of what the leader of the people of God should be. Jesus clearly demonstrated to his disciples what they needed to know about his views on leadership and there are examples of Paul instructing Timothy in the functions of a Christian leader. It always fascinates me that one account of why Saul was chosen to be

should model what was right and good for those who followed. So for instance his 'foot-washing' which showed servanthood, his restoring the soldier's ear - cut off by Peter - which showed gentleness and peace not vengeance, his life of deprivation, which showed the unimportance of riches and his death on the Cross which showed above all the centrality of love.

Continued over leaf

Most of them were also deeply compassionate. They sorrowed over sin, including their own, because they had such a high view of God's truth and righteousness. We need this today.

Bill Circumspectly, is my answer to the first part of the question. We need all the leadership insights and help we can get and there are helpful lessons to be gained from both Testaments. There is, I believe, a leadership metaphor running through the Bible and that is the 'journey'. From Abraham, through the prophets to Jesus,

presidential leadership and have no critical framework for assessing it properly. Both these approaches are lopsided. What we really need are clear criteria of leadership which we expect people to live by, and be prepared to resign when they don't. But there are other pressures too - those that come from a very intrusive tabloid media, and pressures of overwork. The pressure to dishonesty is increasingly great - even amongst Christian leaders. Love of money is as big a problem now as it was when Paul was writing - probably bigger.

Some of the more military and macabre aspects of Old Testament leadership serve not as a model but as a warning for us

God calls his people to follow Him to a promised destiny, literally Canaan, metaphorically Heaven. God chooses leaders who act in his stead and are expected to lead the people of God on the journey of faith. There are lessons to learn about leadership character, leadership knowledge, relationship with God and leadership tasks in the Bible. The current interest in servant leadership, a growing secular movement in the United States which has its roots in the teaching of Jesus, suggests that some aspects of Biblical leadership can become a blueprint not just for the Church.

Does the culture in which we live put special pressures upon leaders in society generally & in the church particularly?

Elaine Pressures on leaders today are pressures to live with integrity. People in Europe have stopped expecting wholehearted integrity from their leaders and are not surprised when many of them turn out to be liars and cheats in some way or another. In the USA there is an opposite problem. Many people adulterate leadership, especially their own

Bill Yes, I agree. The greatest pressure on leaders is the issue of integrity. There is a clear relationship between credibility and integrity. People will forgive a lack of knowledge or a lack of skills but there is little forgiveness for the leader whose actions do not match professed beliefs and values. This holds in whatever domain leadership is exercised. Leaders have to 'walk the talk'.

There are lots of secular books looking at leadership, particularly from the field of management study. In what ways can they help, and are there any dangers in drawing from them?

Elaine Some of these 'secular' books are also written by Christians, and make an important contribution to the field. Books to avoid are the 'macho', self-conscious, image-centred kind that tell you how to manipulate other people without them realizing that you are doing it! A good number of these come out of the USA and are not really very helpful.

Bill I think we need to distinguish leadership and management and understand their relationship to each other. There are major leadership studies in the secular field that have dealt with leadership at a level that few Christian writers have done. Interest in Transformational leadership in the Church stems largely from James McGregor Burns' magisterial work on that theme. Robert Greenleaf's work on Servant leadership is another case in point. The Christian community ought to be interacting with writers such as John Adair, James Hunter, Warren Bennis Peter Drucker and Charles Handy.

What writers and books (general or Christian) would you recommend for anyone wanting to think about leadership in today's society?

Elaine I would recommend a course by Ian Hall on Entrepreneurial Leadership: especially the module called 'What makes a good leader?' It's a secular course for business people - written by a Christian who has taught on leadership programmes in universities - and I think it is excellent, and full of very important insights. Most of them can be easily adapted to a Church context. It's not published yet, but coming out soon.

Bill Alongside those mentioned I would recommend two books by James Kouzes and Barry Posner. These are *The Leadership Challenge* and *Credibility*, how leaders gain and use it. I would also recommend membership of MODEM, an ecumenical group which produces books and a journal on leadership, management and ministry. They can be reached at MODEM, Inter-Church House, 35-41 Lower Marsh Street, London SE1 7RL.

All at sea – an industrialist's take on leadership

by Bob Rigby



Dr Robert Rigby attends Altrincham Baptist Church. He was Managing Director, BAE Systems-Marine.

During recent treatment for a troublesome back condition, I was asked by my physiotherapist about possible sources of external stress – 'environmental stress factors', he called them – as he investigated causes of poor muscle tone and posture.

Employees are commonly anxious during times of rapid change, and yet – even at such times – they can assimilate knowledge regarding their employer's business, if encouraged to do so. For this to happen, their leaders require excellent communication skills which aim to lessen anxiety whilst creating an atmosphere of integrity and trust. In my experience, there are many simple ways to assess the cultural health of an organisation, but I will confine myself here to just one. It was a requirement of my company that we present our annual corporate plan to all employees, a process necessitating many sessions to cover several thousand people. The laudable aim was to create an understanding of the business upon which their livelihoods depended. However, during my years in the audience, I was always struck by a feeling of collective intimidation. This was borne out by a lack of response to the customary request for questions at the end of the presentation – an excellent example of my physio's 'environmental stress factors'.

Years passed and the dreadful day finally dawned when it was my responsibility to present our plan. Resisting the

temptation to exercise my delegation skills, I discussed our company's cultural problems and especially the muted response to requests for questions. By way of preparation, I had introduced routine communication sessions throughout the year, where we gave everyone an opportunity to comment on all things relating to their workplace. To achieve this apparently straightforward initiative, all leaders attended courses to develop their listening and facilitation skills.

During my period of listening, I met the interdenominational Chaplaincy Team, who helped me to appreciate the fears of the local community, especially when so dependent on a dominant local employer. They also confirmed the lack of mutual trust between employer and employee. My response was to issue an open invitation to the chaplains to attend our regular communication meetings.

For the presentation itself, we resisted the seductive charms of Powerpoint and limited the material to just one slide, containing only headlines of the main strategic issues. Furthermore, I was to dispense with a podium and prepare to gather questions, answering them where possible with the assistance of everyone in the room. We gave lengthy consideration to the room layout, deciding on a horseshoe-shaped seating arrangement that enabled me to access a questioner by crouching or kneeling at their side – a technique commonly used by

television presenters on chat shows such as Kilroy. Support and comfort are seen to be offered to the questioner by sitting slightly behind and below their speaking position.

Thankfully, questions and discussion flowed for hours per session, and all questions were acknowledged and answered within a day by giving everyone access to the Intranet.

This problem of collective intimidation is common to many situations, and it is incumbent on the leadership of an organisation to understand why this is happening. It is noticeable in many public gatherings such as church services, where several front rows or pews remain empty until the rest of the space has filled up. Yet it is also noticeable that young children will merrily wander through this 'no man's land', so does this indicate that inhibitions are formed through conditioning? Surely our old foe, the environmental stress factor, cannot be evident in such a loving environment.

So when my physiotherapist recently mentioned those environmental stress factors, I was mindful of my chaplains and their role in making me aware of my responsibility to create an atmosphere and place in which people felt more at home, where integrity leads to an intimacy and trust. As leaders, we must remain aware of Henri Nouwen's words that fear conjures either too much distance or too much closeness, and both prevent intimacy from developing.



off the shelf

compiled by Daniel Pritchard

John P Kotter, *Leading Change*
(Harvard Business School Press,
£20.99, ISBN 0 87584 747 1)



Daniel Pritchard is a member of the pastoral staff at Battle in Sussex. He has an interest in theological studies and compiles reviews in each edition. Reviews and suggestions for reviews can be submitted to: daniel@thepritchards.freemove.co.uk

'Change is here to stay' was the often-quoted summary of life at my previous church in Sheffield. However, the reality for many ministers is that they genuinely struggle to process change in their churches. Kotter's book, subtitled 'An action plan from the world's foremost expert on business leadership', appears initially to be focused on the world of business. He talks of competitiveness, of re-engineering and of right-sizing. But he writes with a level of wisdom which, with discernment, will give genuine help to those planning the vision and strategy for the churches they lead.

The book is essentially in two main parts; the first addresses the familiar errors that hinder organisational change. It is helpful to be reminded that change is a process and not a one-off event. Short-term wins are advocated and the dangers of under-communication are highlighted among eight potential pitfalls.

The second part of the book offers an eight-stage plan for

bringing about change. If the reader is prepared to apply this to the church context, it provides a thorough and challenging guide to becoming a organisation which changes, not for the sake of change, but because it wants to reflect its own vision and strategy.

Despite the commercial context, many of the book's ideas and challenges can be easily applied to the congregational structure. For example, the chapter entitled 'Creating the guiding coalition' recommends finding a group of people who share the vision objectives, is trusted and has the right composition (gifts). Kotter regards this as essential. Many would share the author's concerns about isolated individual leaders or low-credibility committees, and the difficulties they have in bringing about change. He gives good advice on team-building in order to ensure togetherness in leading change.

The other stages in the plan include the development of vision and strategy, how to communicate vision and how to make sure that change and culture adapt to each other.

If change is part of your vision, this is a worthwhile book which will provoke your thinking!

*Andrew Wooding-Jones,
Ashburnham Place*

John White, *Excellence in Leadership - The pattern of Nehemiah* (IVP, £4.99 pb, ISBN 0 085111 497 0)

In a period of ministry when leaders are passionately seeking guidance from those who have trodden the path, climbed the mountains and dissected the valleys, John White's re-released volume is timely. And once you've read it, you'll realise why this small (some 125 pages)

paperback, first published in 1986, has gone through nine reprints already.

White roots his pattern for leadership in Nehemiah, whose attitude and actions are timeless. As a mentor of church leaders, the author invites you to join him for an intimate encounter with God's word. Your ministry is the land before you, the author holds the 'map' – the book of Nehemiah – and your hand, and together you face up to the everyday issues of leadership, seeking a God-honouring response.

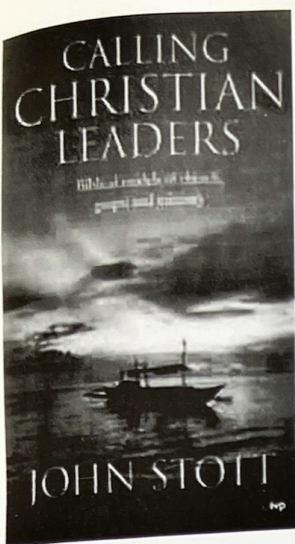
What issues? Well, how about prayer, or organisation, or the work we are meant to do competing with what others think we should be doing? Then there's the opposition from within and outside the church. He stops you in your tracks, sizes you up and asks the question, 'Did you really think this would be easy?' He underlines the fact that when you're involved in leadership, 'things can get really messy for you and your family', and counsels us to be particularly on our guard against direct personal attacks.

John White illustrates well from his experience and there's plenty straight talking with real-life application. Not the first book on leadership based on Nehemiah nor the last, but well worth the couple of hours it would take to read.

Dave Bishop Sidley Baptist Church, Bexhill-on-Sea

John Stott, *Calling Christian Leaders* (IVP, £7.99 pb, ISBN 0 085111 257 9)

John Stott is one of my heroes. I love his style of writing, his obvious love of the Bible and his almost unsurpassed ability to teach. One of my goals in ministry is to monitor my own effectiveness as a leader and



develop my leadership skills through books on leadership, so I was glad to be asked to read and review this title.

Stott's conviction is that models of church and particularly leadership are influenced more by the world and our culture than by the Bible and Jesus. Specifically, he believes that Christian leaders should be different from the leaders and leadership styles presented to us by our culture.

Those expecting a thematic approach to leadership will be disappointed; instead, the book is an exposition of 1 Corinthians 1-4 with a slant towards leaders. Stott argues that Paul, as the most influential leader of the early church, has something to say about leadership, and that the complex Corinthian situation of power play, personality cults and immorality is where he says it best and with most resonance to the modern church. The study has five themes: 'The ambiguity of the church', 'Power through weakness', 'Holy Spirit and Holy Scripture', 'The church and the Trinity' and 'Models of ministry'.

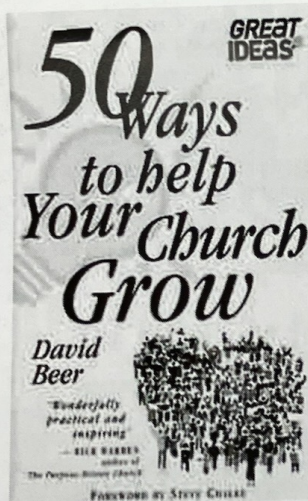
I benefited most from his chapter on 'power through weakness'. Stott reflects that in an age when power is worshipped by society, the clergy are as susceptible as anyone. He writes of his fright at the contemporary evangelical quest for power and asks why we want it. For greater holiness? More

humble acts of service? Or is it a quest for power so as to impress, manipulate, or serve our own ambition and self-importance?

Stott reminds us that the central theme of the Corinthian letters and of Christian leadership is divine power made real through human weakness. I found this incredibly refreshing, and liberating, as was the section on the foolishness of Paul's message. We are not the only age to elevate style over substance; it was true of the Graeco-Roman world, and it was to this culture Paul taught and ministered without compromise with divine power.

My biggest disappointment was that this is not a book solely on leadership, but instead more of a commentary on 1 Corinthians 1-4. However, do not let that put you off. It is a great exposition, written with the church leader in mind. I enjoyed it and will lead differently as a result.

David Beer, 50 ways to help your church grow (Kingsway,



£8.99 pb, ISBN 0 85476 810 6)

This book is one of Kingsway's 'Great Ideas' series. In it, David Beer draws heavily on Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, combining extracts from it and other books to look at ways of unlocking the potential of the local church and growing healthy biblical communities. For me, the main

attractions of this book are that it addresses the UK context and it is realistic, written by a Baptist minister who is aware of many of the tensions that exist in church life.

The book comprises short, pithy chapters that focus on four key themes. First, the need to preach a positive message about the kingdom of God – not simply on a Sunday morning, but through everything the church does. Second, the need to develop disciples and equip them for ministry. Third, the need to both pray and plan for growth, and fourth, the need to be clear about our purpose and to practise it.

Many of the ideas and concepts are not new, but taken as a whole they function as a useful refresher, helping us to stand back, take a wider view and evaluate the different areas of our church life. Within my own church, our leadership team has been taking a section every couple of months and using it as the basis for discussion and action. This has worked well because the book is easy to read, well laid out and includes a good number of anecdotes and illustrations. So far it has been a positive experience, and we have been encouraged by the fact that we already do much of what is suggested. We've also been provoked to look afresh at things we had overlooked, or at areas where we need to sharpen our focus.

There is always a danger that books like this focus on practical issues at the expense of getting to grips with bigger questions about the church. It is important that we look, not just at what works, but what is faithful to God. That is not part of this book's remit, but as you ask some of the big questions, it will help you at the level of putting your answers into practice. I suggest that you buy the book, read it, pass it round the church leadership and see what impact it has.

Neil Brighton, Keyworth Baptist Church



Rob May, Senior Pastor of Horley Baptist Church since 1998, trained at Spurgeons College, London. He is married to Lindsay and they have 3 children.

Out of confusion

by Rob May

I don't know what kind of leader I'm supposed to be any more!

My present confusion goes back a long way. After I had become a Christian, I went to a Pentecostal church with no membership system or congregational government. Direction came from the leaders alone. They were decisive, and it never occurred to me that they could or should be questioned: they were God's 'anointed and appointed' and we simply followed. The next church I attended was similar. There was membership, but meetings were more for 'informing' than 'asking'. However, I was growing as a Christian and beginning to see that leadership wasn't infallible after all. I was happy with most of the decisions, but I was concerned that other decisions were flawed and we had no means of questioning them.

'deacon'. However, I also began to wonder if we were in danger of losing the cutting edge of following decisive and courageous, godly leaders, simply because we were not willing to let them lead and to say together, 'Let's go for it!'

Many charismatic churches moved away from congregational government because of meetings full of animosity and indecisiveness, at which minor matters dominated while major issues were sidelined, where intransigent minorities held churches to ransom because of voting procedures that ultimately led to despair and decline. Many of these churches that became 'eldership-governed' have seen growth and blessing which, for them, only proved that congregational government was an inferior model for a mission-minded, forward-thinking, visionary people. I have been part of that kind of church and, while I wouldn't want to go back to all of it, I still miss some of it. Is there a way forward?

I am privileged to be part of a church that is willing to recognise that leaders are set

apologising for giving strong leadership. We must, however, first demonstrate our love both for God and for our church fellowships. They should have no doubt that we would, and do, lay down our lives for them both. Our church members are our brothers and sisters in Christ – although some leaders talk as if they were the opposition! I believe that effective leadership flows out of an unashamed passion for God and his ways, and for his people, both lost and found. Too often, sadly, so-called 'effective leadership' flows out of insecurity hidden by a drive for status, success and power – hardly God-honouring.

So, we should expect and encourage our church members to work with us, not against us. We should expect them to hold us accountable but not try to trip us up, to thoughtfully question us but not to fill meetings with needless discussion. We should expect them to actively (but not blindly) demonstrate their trust, to know they can pull us up but to ensure that they do it lovingly. They should be reminded that leaders are fallible, but have still been called and equipped by God to lead. And a leader's fallibility operates in the midst of a fallen people – saved by the same grace and the same God.

When both leaders and those they seek to lead operate with these heart attitudes, local church life really can be a wonder and a privilege. It becomes a shared adventure in which the reaching of lost souls with the gospel of Christ and the maturing of believers is far more important than getting side-tracked into power games and ego-massaging. It becomes what it should be: a place where all are loving servants and none is master, except Christ, the head of his body, the church.

church members want to be led and not dictated to, engaged as co-equal partners not as silent followers

In time, I transferred my membership to a BU Baptist church. Here I met congregational government for the first time, and saw the exciting potential of engaging the whole church in vision and direction. I discovered that it is healthy for leaders to make themselves accountable. There are indeed those whom God has gifted who can bring God's word, even though they don't bear the title 'elder' or

apart by God to lead, and so expects and encourages its leaders to lead. However, church members want to be led and not dictated to, engaged as co-equal partners not as silent followers. They appreciate that there are levels of decision-making: many decisions can be left with recognised leaders, but some need the whole body.

Perhaps, as leadership teams, we need to stop

Effective Communication for Leaders

We live in a world where the power to communicate with clarity and effectiveness is paramount to gain a listening ear of an audience constantly bombarded with mass media messages. The ability to present the life-changing message of the Gospel and biblical truths in ways that impact the hearers, is a model that Jesus left us to follow. He demonstrated the power of the story to the people of His day in life-related examples: the vine bearing fruit, a seed falling on the ground, the results of the use and non-use of talents. The people heard and understood. Today we need to effectively reach the culture we live in.

Rob Harley is one of New Zealand's most accomplished television journalists. He has numerous international awards for reporting and documentary making over nearly 25 years in the industry. He is now also one of New Zealand's most sought after teachers on the art of communication. Rob brings a unique insight for pastors and teachers from thirteen years as a pastor of a lively New Zealand church. Sponsored by Willow Creek Association, Rob visits the following venues: Oct 16th Cambridge - Bar Hill Church; Oct 17th Bracknell - Kerith Centre; Oct 19th Sutton Coldfield - Baptist Church Centre
www.theleadersedge.org

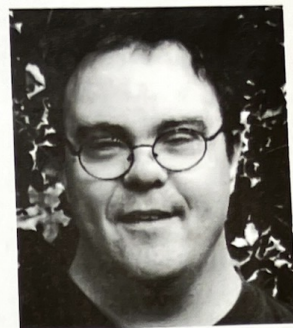
Nigeria: what is God doing in – and through – Nigeria?

What has been described as a "book of Acts-like" move of God is sweeping through Nigeria and spreading overseas. Large meetings and confirmed healings are order of the day in the western African nation, writes J. Lee Grady in Charisma Magazine. "And: some of the world's largest churches are led by Nigerian pastors. The world's largest church building, seating 50,000, is situated 30 miles west of Lagos, and stadium-sized churches are springing up throughout the nation. The annual 'Holy Ghost

Congress' has become the world's largest Christian gathering, with an attendance somewhere between two and four million last year.

Prophetic mandate for Nigeria "Nigeria's Christians have a prophetic mandate," says Matthew Ashimolowo, a former Muslim who now leads England's largest church, the Kingsway International Christian Centre in East London. "God gave us a prophetic word that his servants will go out from our nation and shake the world."

Source: Charisma News



Craig Millward brings us information from the Christian world. Pastor at Ormsby in Norfolk, Craig is a member of the Mainstream leadership team.

Pray for the Persecuted

The Geneva Report 2002 revealed that an unprecedented number of Christians now face disinformation, discrimination, and outright persecution worldwide. It detailed specific cases of persecution in India, Greece, Cyprus, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, China and Sudan. Read the article, along with a list of ten reasons why Christians are persecuted at: www.worldevangelical.org

Is Jesus a Christian?

If, like me, you were fascinated by the recent Lent Talks broadcast on BBC Radio 4 - in which members of other religions challenged us to reconsider how much of our church culture it was necessary to import into our faith in order to be followers of Christ, you may also be

interested in the following article. Found on the John Mark Ministries page, Rowland Croucher's article assesses '13 varieties' of Christian and wonders where Jesus would fit in. www.pastornet.net.au/jmm/aclm/aclm0004.htm

Faithworks

The Faithworks Movement is a response to the challenges facing churches and faith-based projects as they engage in their communities. Built around a core of ten leading organisations, Faithworks commits to provide expertise and leadership in the many components of effective community action.

More specifically, Faithworks aims 'to empower

and inspire every local Church to rediscover its role at the heart of community' by aiding churches to initiate projects in their local communities. It will give these, often small, projects a national voice and representation at the highest level.

Faithworks also works 'to challenge and change the public perception of the Church by engaging both media and government', by

ensuring that local church and other faith-based community projects are accurately represented in the media and have a high priority in the setting of local and national policy and by promoting Christian values within society.

For more information visit <http://www.faithworks.info/>

Creativity for the Creator

by Simon Hall



Simon Hall has been involved in youth ministry since his theological studies at Oxford. He is presently the Pastor of revive, a congregation linked with Sharing Life, reaching out to the extensive night club and pub culture of Leeds. He has become known as a writer, speaker and thinker about Church, mission and youth culture.

Creativity for the creator. This is the strap-line that our church, revive, has used since its inception as a youth service nearly ten years ago. Originally just a throwaway comment, we now find it hard to part with, because it says something which we have discovered is pretty rare: that the gift of creativity is high on our agenda. Over the years, as we have developed some understanding of what God has called us to do, we've come to realise that in our own little way we have something prophetic to say to the church.

The little-known Old Testament character Bezalel was the first person in the Bible to receive a specific gift of the Holy Spirit. And that gift wasn't healing, prophecy or preaching. He was the leader of the team that created the artefacts that adorned the Tabernacle (Ex.31:2-5). As I've thought about Bezalel, he has helped me bring together a number of

for fight or flight and into the realms of pure pleasure.

Why is so much (modern? Protestant?) Christian art rubbish?

My mum plays a major part in this particular part of my journey. I remember returning home from university one holiday and noticing on her desk a standard *Blue Peter* pen-holder, two loo-roll middles and some sticky-back plastic. I was mortified that such an embarrassing sign of my uselessness at crafts ten years previously should be on display, and my mum reluctantly threw it away. But not without a little protest: 'That was the only thing you ever made for me'.

I wonder if our worship and discipleship can in any way be analogous to giving God a gift. We want to give him the best, so what do we do? Go out and buy a standardised worship product off the shelf: well produced, well packaged, well known. A little bland, perhaps, what could

In a small way, getting a group of young people together for a few hours, with some newspapers, magazines, scissors and felt tips can often result in something amazing. The product may look naff, but it's the start of an experience of engagement with skills that are not often encouraged in the church. My own journey began through reading Charles Kraft's *Christianity in Culture*, and trying to apply it to the world of young people. Just starting to ask different people, 'What would you do? How would you do it?' was a big step in the right direction.

Like all of God's gifts, creativity has been misused by Christians down the years, but surely we are missing something if we declare it either dangerous or unimportant. In *Apologia*, Max Stackhouse suggests a trinity of tests of a fully developed Christianity. Orthodoxy we know, orthopraxy we have been introduced to by liberation theology, but what may be new is the idea of *orthopoiesis* – a right sense of awe and reverence, which leads to worship. Surely just as we say that God's creation serves that purpose, our own creativity must also lead people to an overpowering experience of wonder.

Creativity happens when we take away the map. We have a map for worship, for church, for discipleship. Only when we take away these maps can people really be freed to 'just make stuff up!' The theology we have developed over the years to understand the gifts of the Spirit generally should aid us in

every church is going to come face to face with our dynamically changing culture over the next few years, requiring a creative response

niggling 'back-burner' questions:

If God's first act of self-expression and self-revelation was to create, why don't we make more of creativity when we talk about being made in the image of God?

Why did God give us such developed senses of sight, taste, touch, smell and hearing? They all go well beyond what's needed

possibly be wrong with it? Well, I wonder. I wonder if something forged in the hearts of my community, albeit made out of toilet roll and sticky-back plastic, might be more honouring to God. And I am pretty sure that creating something of outrageous beauty and wonder that cost time as well as money is much, much better.

understanding creativity also. When we 'make stuff up', any of us could receive a gift of creativity, but we will also have people who seem to have something analogous to the 'office' of prophet: some of them are musicians, artists, actors, writers, but also people who create ideas, or who just see things differently.

In a church like Revive, which in some ways is journeying without maps, the need for creativity is obvious. But every church has a responsibility to reflect the image of God in this way, and every church is going to come face to face with our dynamically changing culture over the next few years, requiring a creative response. But how can we make it happen? Just as with the incorporation of prayer ministry into the life of the church, it takes leadership from both above and below, and an ability to accept a few red faces every now and then. Also we need to get scared. In Leeds, we have set up a year-out training scheme with the intention of enabling young people to take the initiative in planting new forms of church, and it's been amazing to see the fear in everyone's faces – trainees and trainers alike – when we talk about their placement being 'the street'. The vision is that instead of just working alongside existing ministries, these guys will pioneer new ones *ex nihilo*. And it's happening, with five out of the seven trainees committing to staying in Leeds for the long term to see their visions become reality.

Perhaps the time has come to take away some of our maps and let God and the people create something beautiful together!

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Dear David & Alistair et al

Re Baptist Assembly – an open letter

Thanks for all the hard work that went in to this year's Assembly. Having not been a resident at the Assembly for many years, I found it a welcome surprise – well worth giving time to. I will be encouraging leaders to make it a priority in future years – not as a matter of loyalty, but as a not-to-be-missed event that will equip leaders for ministry. So whatever is written below takes nothing away from the encouragement you deserve for the ministry given to the body – the body has been ministered to!

Some highlights for me:

- Sensitive worship led with creative flair and quality musicianship
- Stunning graphics and stage presentation that set a standard *not to be lost in future years*.
- Excellent content, well delivered, timed and well paced
- Positive ambience and welcoming atmosphere
- Spiritual energy allied to professional competence

It betrayed both our strength and weakness as a denomination. Cut into the emphasis and content of the Assembly at any point and it bled mission. But in this it betrayed our *anxious activism*. We need to transcend this Achilles heel of our life together, as well as celebrate our strength. Bev Thomas, with quiet authority, gave a prophetic call that pointed the way for us. Yet I fear we may only be receptive to words and styles that confirm us in our anxiety and activism. Where are ecstasy, rest and rhythm amongst us?

Bev's and Geraldine Latty's contributions gave *new and alternative models* of leading and speaking that challenged the boundaries set by white male activists and enthusiasts who confirm us in our busied and worried ministries. But only seven women amongst all those male fully accredited ministers welcomed. Indeed, where have all the women gone?

My word we are a *wordy denomination*! On occasions our words threaten the Word! Witness Sunday night – wonderful in so many ways but wordy, wearying and ultimately self-defeating. Where's the trust in the Spirit to touch the hearts of God's people to give as they encounter mission 'face to face'? I was awash and drowning in words by the end.

Wouldn't a younger age-profile amongst delegates have best responded to the Assembly? Let's have a campaign to ask churches to delegate under 40's plus ministers and, for one year at least, get a younger constituency. However much middle-aged or elderly delegates tell of the change, nothing replaces first hand experience.

Perhaps if there was a weakness it was the use of seminar time. Most of those I went to had the feel of the old assembly. How about tying a good number of them to the overall theme? It would give a feeling that we were engaged in a *shared exploration*, rather than following different pathways to who knows where.

Assembly-going will always be a minority sport! However smart it is and however good the content, it can never be more than a shop window. Contents in the store will always count for more with our constituency as a whole. But our actual agenda has probably been more distant from the average church leadership group and membership. Nothing switched us off quicker than the predominating message of the last ten years – *a denomination re-structuring itself*. Added value and initiatives that touch leaderships and members directly are desperately needed. Our main focus must be for the re-evangelisation of our nation in the kind of ways outlined by Graham Cray. The mission imperative must become the clarion call of the whole senior leadership of our denomination – and it must be concrete. But here I am sounding again like an anxious evangelical activist. Give me a good talking to Bev.

All of you down at Didcot are doing a great job –thank you!

Stephen Ibbotson

Hands across the world:

making relationships work across continents

By Simon Jones

From its earliest days, the church has been a global affair. People from all over the Roman empire met Jesus on the first day of Pentecost. The church at Antioch was led by believers from Africa, the Mediterranean, Turkey and possibly Italy. And today churches are again capturing the joy of relationships with congregations from other continents from our own.

Tony Cross the director of the Kent Baptist Association spells out the simple reason why this is happening: 'any church that gets involved with this is invigorated by the experience'. And Michael Jones, minister of Queens Road, Broadstairs agrees: 'we've learned lots about worship and the simplicity of faith,' he says. 'Our folk have been made aware of things we've sometimes lost sight of over here – especially the seriousness of our sinfulness.'

Many associations are linking with unions overseas from Eastern Europe to Israel. And links at association level are being earthed by visits both ways made by ministers and church members and 'twinning' arrangements made between individual churches.

For Broadstairs it started during a sabbatical visit Michael Jones made to Uganda in 1998. 'I focussed on the Eastern part of the country,' he recalls, 'taught a bit in the seminary and made contact with the churches.' He followed this up by bringing Richard Otim, a pastor from Seroti, over to the UK.

Broadstairs caught a vision for partnership as they listened to Richard talking about doing church planting in Uganda. As a result, in September 2001 a mixed team of 10 doctors, dentists, social workers and teachers went out with Stephen

Cave, Broadstairs' associate pastor, and his wife Ann. Steve taught pastors, Ann taught English.

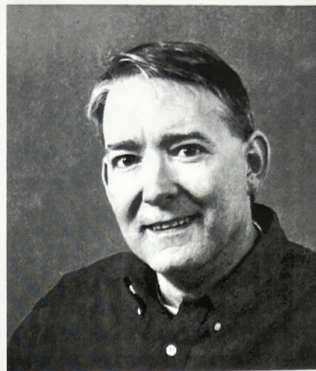
'As a result,' says Michael Jones, 'the church here knows about the church over there, they've met the pastor, some of our people have visited, we're responsive to their needs and the church has really begun to own this partnership'.

He stresses that Broadstairs has focused on one area so that it can commit itself to promises that it can fulfil. It's likely that another team will go in September 2003, possibly with some youth specialists in their number.

Tony Cross stresses that any church getting involved in this way needs to be careful, as Broadstairs has been, not to promise things it can't deliver. 'At an early stage we talked to the union in Uganda so that we could hear from them what kinds of things they wanted us to do,' he says. He thinks the advantage of having associations involved in these links is that it helps to ensure that what individual churches do is part of an overall strategy that has been agreed between the associations.

'The danger otherwise,' he says, 'is that churches can focus on a single church overseas at the expense of other, equally needy, churches in the country.'

David Kerrigan, BMS director of mission agrees. 'There are pitfalls with local churches getting involved in this kind of this relationship – paternalism, inadvertent favouritism to particular individuals, churches making promises that they can't deliver on. In short, churches risk making the same mistakes that missionary societies made 200 years 'ago'.



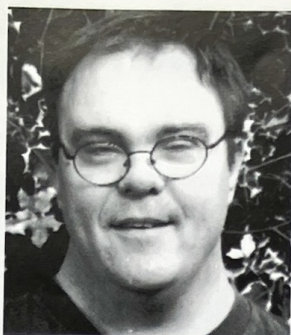
Simon Jones is BMS World Mission co-ordinator for London and the South East and author of *Why Bother with Church?* (IVP 2001), *Discovering the New Testament* (Crossway 2001) and *Discovering Luke's Gospel* (Crossway 1999). A former editor of *Christianity* magazine, he was pastor of Peckham Road Baptist Church from 1989 to 1996.

BMS – which is sending its first full-time long term missionaries to Uganda this summer – is keen to help churches make the most of their links with churches overseas. It's been involved in meetings with all the UK churches and associations linked to Uganda to ensure that the relationships work to maximise the benefits for everyone.

'These links can happen without missionary societies,' says Tony Cross, 'but I'm thrilled at BMS' involvement. Everyone who goes should really have some training and BMS is in the best position to offer this.'

As well as Pat Crook and Mark and Susannah Barrel who'll be working long-term in Uganda, BMS is also regularly sending summer and gap-year Action Teams to work alongside Ugandan Christians in mission.

What is emerging with here – a loose partnership between churches and associations in the UK and Uganda and BMS World Mission – could be replicated all over the world. British churches have a huge amount to contribute to the building of the church across the globe. We also have a lot to learn about living our faith in an increasingly hostile climate from brothers and sisters from whom this has been a reality for years. Together we can make Jesus known.



Faith in the future:

Reflections on the Baptist Assembly

by Craig Millward

Craig Millward is Pastor at Ormsby in Norfolk. He is a member of the Mainstream leadership team and contributes a regular column to Talk Magazine.

I've been hearing comments for a number of years now: 'That was truly inspiring', 'It's getting better each year...' And, of course, I was delighted to hear that the Assembly was apparently becoming an event not to be missed, but I couldn't quite picture it.

My experience of past Baptist Assemblies is hard to put into words. They have always been helpful and informative events but, in a way I could never quite put my finger on, the Assembly experience never gave me any great confidence that the Baptist family was on the move, together, and in the same direction.

This year, I can truly say I was inspired. All the old ingredients were tossed together in much the same way, but with a new touch of confidence and faith – perhaps because structural reform is almost at an end, and we all know that our need now is for more of God's Spirit to fill the wineskins. It is now over to him more than ever.

It goes without saying that a

Of course, the only way to check this all out is to go yourself, which is why I deem it pointless to continue in these general terms. Instead, I want to comment on Nigel's theme: 'New Baptists, New Agenda'. The man is right. Little is new in his plea for us to embrace a four-stage conversion: to God, the church, the world and the future. Baptists have always been conversionists as far as Christ is concerned, and our insistence upon the local church as the

the New Agenda – the suggested set of 'Hows' that would justify the claim that we are 'New' Baptists. But instead we got an unexpected fourth conversion – to the future.

Yes, I was initially dismayed by Nigel's reticence to suggest a new agenda, because I am one of those who has consistently felt frustrated by our Baptist habit of forming a committee or voting on a resolution instead of taking a lead. I am yet to be persuaded that our penchant for forming

being willing to step out in faith in the God of the future – before we see the way ahead

body into which we gather means that conversion number two is also meat and drink to us. However, the kind of church God has in mind to build us into is a topic of legitimate debate – and if it is not, it should be.

Conversion number three, after a bit of qualification from

committees that can do little more than debate and then urge a particular course of action is not somehow rooted in some historical fear of being led astray by enthusiasts. But, as his address drew to a close, I began to see that Nigel is right. Being converted to the future is about each one of us being willing to step out in faith in the God of the future – before we see the way ahead. And stepping out without a single agenda opens the way for endless and unlimited agendas – each of them requiring the kind of prophetic direction and apostolic leadership that we may look for in our national leaders, but with which God is promising to gift us in our local situation. It really is over to us.

structural reform is almost at an end, our need now is for more of God's Spirit to fill the wineskins

national Baptist showpiece will draw upon a rich seam of preaching talent, but this year's major speakers must themselves have felt deeply indebted to the team of worship leaders, dramatists and highly gifted multimedia liturgists, all of whom contributed to a magnificent effort.

Nigel, must also be self-evident. After all, we are redeemed from the world by the Lord of creation, in order to then represent the One who is in the process of reconciling the world to himself. But at this point I was eagerly expecting that, after initially listing just three conversions, we would be on to

Is there a future for the monarchy?

by Nigel Wright



Photo: Jackie Sheppard

The arguments against the monarchy seem to me overwhelming. When the reform of the House of Lords was recently contemplated, it was (to me) irrefutable to say that no person should sit in Parliament simply on the basis of their birth. Take this argument one step forward, of course, and you end up abolishing the monarchy. No one should govern on the basis of inherited privilege and without the mandate and consent of the people. Our whole political system is based upon the principle of equality, and yet when it comes to the monarchy we suspend the logic and retreat into tradition.

In both politics and religion I find myself to be a radical egalitarian. When my father died some years ago, I took his funeral. I tried to make the address a 'warts and all' tribute to him. But of all the things he bequeathed to his children, it was the sense of pride in where we had come from that shone out. I could not have felt more proud of the ordinary, hard-working, decent, principled people who are my forbears. For all the tea in China I would not have exchanged this heritage for 'royal' blood. Equality does not mean that we are all the same. It asserts that we are not made superior or inferior by reason of our birth, our ethnicity, our colour, our education, our social position, our creed or our work. We share equally in the stuff of humanity, whoever we may be.

Whether my religious convictions follow on from this instinct or produce them (or both), I can never be sure. There

is a radical egalitarianism about the Baptist way of being church. It follows from Jesus' exhortation that we are all brothers and sisters, and that God is all in all to us (Matthew 23: 8-12). For this reason we reject prelates and popery in favour of the gathered congregation which elects and appoints its own leaders under God. We don't deny we need leaders, but we see them as coming from among us, as being first of all and finally members with us of the people of God, on the same fundamental level but extruded for a time to serve through leading. Even they are servants of the servants of God.

The logic of Jesus' teaching can be taken in two directions. Because he affirmed the divine Kingship, it can be claimed (as it was by Charles I) that kings have a divine right to rule. This leads to monarchy. On the other hand, because Jesus affirmed that God alone is King, no one else has this right or deserves this status.

Monarchy is based upon inherited wealth, but to justify itself in the future it will need to be seen to be on the side of the poor

This leads to equality. The divine right of kings is overthrown by the 'crown rights of the Redeemer'. Baptists accurately perceived that this is how Jesus thought and taught.

Where does this leave leave monarchy? It means that it is contrary to both political and theological logic. It is an

anomaly. If it is to be justified at all, it must be justified against this logic and this is an increasingly difficult task. If we were starting afresh we would not invent it. The pro-monarchy lobby does indeed have the weight of history and tradition on its side. But for the monarchy to survive, it must also have the affection of the people. Paradoxically, to maintain this, the monarchy must work against the very instincts on which it is based.

Monarchy is based upon inherited wealth, but to justify itself in the future it will need to be seen to be on the side of the poor. Authenticity will require most of its wealth to be passed over to be held in trust for the people. Monarchy is based upon exclusion, the maintenance of an aristocratic elite of which the monarch is the apex. But to justify itself it will need to be seen as a means of including and honouring communities which

feel themselves to be on the margins.

Recent monarchs have made much of the ideal of service. The future must demonstrate whether this is actually a rhetoric designed to justify privilege (Luke 22:25), or whether it can become service in a way that Jesus would have recognised.

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