

## STATEMENT ON "RECRUITMENT TO THE MINISTRY"

While we believe that God calls every believer to a ministry in His Kingdom, we also believe that He calls some to the specific ministry of the preaching of the Gospel and teaching and pastoral work in the congregation. We believe that God calls through His Spirit and by His Word, but we also believe that He often uses the Church, individual members of the church and perhaps particularly the pastor of the church to make such a call specific and effective. The Home and the Christian school can do much to make a person sensitive and responsive to God's call to the ministry. The church must provide opportunity for such persons to experience the testing and confirming ministry of the congregation. Over against the often negative views of the ministry that find expression in our time, we must find ways of presenting the ministry in Biblical perspective and set it forth as a contemporary and meaningful service to God and man. We believe that the church should call and commission men to this task even if such persons will not serve in a full-time church-related ministry. Through persistent, believing prayer (Matt. 9:38) and through a constant and dynamic awareness of the gifts which the Lord gives to His church (Eph. 4:11), the church works toward the goal of providing the workers that the work of its Lord requires.

## THE COMMISSIONING OF SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

In the New Testament, induction into office of those appointed by the church seems to have occurred rather spontaneously in most instances, (e.g. Acts 6) although never in a spirit of lightness. While "laying on hands" is sometimes associated with such induction, it is also clear that in most instances the description of ordination basically means to "elect, appoint, vote, choose." A careful examination of the biblical accounts does not explicitly show that laying on of hands was essential or obligatory in the ceremony of induction, but it is equally apparent that such an act is a proper symbol of the identification with and the representation of the people in the congregation with the assigned worker. For the sake of order in the congregation we believe there ought to be an official induction for the minister of the Word.

It is also evident that the biblical evidence does not answer questions about the length or duration of the ordination, whether or not such ordination is reserved only for one or for a variety of services, how a person is "un-ordained", or who or what kind of "officials" should participate in the induction ceremony.

We believe that ordination, while symbolizing authorization for a specific task, is an induction into SERVICE, never into office or status. Just as there is really neither black nor white, male nor female in the brotherhood of believers, just so we are all priests to one another, responsible for each others' spiritual care. However, the New Testament indicates that the man assigned to the specific task of proclamation nevertheless has a unique responsibility to exercise spiritual care over the whole flock. It is service in that particular responsibility to God and His people, not primarily office or status, that forms the biblical rationale for esteeming those "who have the rule over you." (Hebrews 13:7,17)

## The Place of Preaching in the Contemporary Church.

The study conference recognizes that the proclamation of the Word of God is an integral part of the life and witness of the Church. It is also aware of the fact that many are seriously questioning and criticizing this kind of ministry. The conference agrees that preaching, if it is to continue to be relevant, must find its roots in the Scriptures.

This means, on the one hand, that the minister of the Gospel must seek seriously to understand what God is saying in the Scriptures. On the other hand, he must learn to translate this message of the Scriptures into contemporary language and life. If preaching is to be an event, an experience in which God addresses us in mercy and judgement, it is of great significance that the audience respond to the message. Ministers are encouraged to be imaginative in eliciting the response of the hearers to the proclamation of God's Word.

Because there is a diversity of needs in every congregation, as well as a diversity of ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ gifts among those who are asked to proclaim God's message, it should be recognized that one preacher alone can hardly satisfy all these needs. Therefore, ways and means should be found to supplement the ministry of the pastor.

In the face of the criticism to which preaching is being subjected in our day, ministers of the Gospel are encouraged, by the prayers of God's people, the help of the Holy Spirit, and faithful labor, to fulfill their high calling to make known "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

## Other Media of Communication

The Christian who understands himself in the modern world knows himself to be a spiritual deviant among men. There is a deep cleavage between the community committed to Christ and the world which does not know him - nor acknowledges his kingship - which places upon believers the necessity to attempt "by all means" to witness to the recreating work of Christ.

While we say this we are well aware that not all that is new is good. Neither can we wipe away the offense of the Cross. But the presence of a culture-- and of people--which are alien to Christ force us constantly to explore new ways, new idioms, and new containers for the proclamation of the Word. A genuine concern to penetrate the secular mind will force us to the new. Indeed it will lead us to do again what the church in every age has done, namely, use the words and vehicles of the day for a new and higher end.

This proclamation, we believe, should occur both within the fellowship of believers and wherever Christians are scattered. However, and this we believe needs to be underscored, it must become widely understandable to the Christian community if it is truly to bring men to a sense of their accountability to God and result in the growth of the fellowship of believers. We want to affirm by the media we employ that there "is one body, one Spirit . . . one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all."

SUMMARY OF PAPERS PRESENTED AT STUDY CONFERENCE ON "THE MINISTRY: MEN AND MEDIA" -  
BUHLER, KANSAS - March 5-6, 1970.

"THE PLACE OF PREACHING IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH" - John Regehr.

- A. Current questioning of the primacy and value of preaching - by theologians, laymen (secular-oriented), and youths:-
- B. Possible reactions to such criticism of preaching:-
- become defensive; counter-attack upon critics through preaching itself.
  - become philosophical and assert that such criticism is but a passing phase and phenomenon or comfort oneself with the assurance that the return to larger groups and to the primacy of preaching is inevitable.
  - become accommodating and join the critics; possibly even become a leader (new prophet) in the new movement of protest and change.
  - be hesitant; remain uncertain about the actual VOICE speaking in and through the current criticism of preaching.
  - become honest, courageous and creative in response; become self-critical and consider once again the essentials of Biblical preaching
- C. Approaching the matter from the basis of God's Word:-
- Testimony of OT - primacy of proclamation in Jesus' own ministry - testimony of early Church (Acts) with regard to means and experience of proclamation.
  - Ideals for preacher and preaching set forth in NT; careless, pompous, and/or sham preaching deserves all the criticism which may be leveled against it.
- D. Kind of preaching that will survive:-
- The writer called such preaching "contemporaneous preaching" and described it in several ways:
- Bible used in a way which renders it contemporary and vitally relevant; persons in Bible brought alive; emphasis upon personal subjection to the living force of the truth in the Biblical text.
  - Bible applied to actual life-situations
  - preaching itself becomes a spiritual "event" in the very process.
  - preaching becomes an experience in which the congregation itself participates, in a sense, in the proclamation; specific means to promote such participation.
  - preaching places Christ at the very centre and invites hearers to fellowship with Him; it depends upon Holy Spirit for power and expects changes in view of this fact of the SPIRIT.

"THE GHETTO, THE LAUNCH PAD, THE DESERT" - Rudy Wiebe.

Inability of the church - our church - to communicate the faith of the Gospel effectively to the thoroughly secular world around it.

Three broad approaches which the church can and does take in an effort to proclaim the Gospel and to nourish the faith - the "ghetto": church and its community insulate itself rather carefully against the secular culture of surrounding society

- the "launch pad": church and its community adopts every new means or medium of communication which happens to be in vogue in a frantic effort to become relevant to the secular world.
- the "desert": church knows and feels itself to be estranged from the culture of secular world, to be in a sort of "cultural desert", but wholly trusts God to somehow make it a vital and witnessing church in that world. Individual character of faith and fellowship stressed and meeting of believers in homes, in smaller groups, and at various times (in the week) urged. A different understanding of

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER.

1. What, do you feel, are the main weaknesses in the preaching, generally, in our own churches - today? Do you think that preaching - as a principal means of proclaiming the truth of God - is on its way out?
2. How (by what criteria) do you yourself assess a "preaching event" in a worship service? Do you find that you can discern whether God has in fact spoken to you (and others) by His Spirit? through a particular message or sermon?
3. How can we best help a pastor (or preacher) discover what issues and/or problems he should address himself to in his preaching ministry? How can we help our preachers do their very best preaching - preaching that in fact influences and guides people in definite and decisive ways?
4. What elements, or features, other than those already present, do you feel should be introduced into our worship services in order to render them spiritually more effectual?
5. Do you think that Christian fellowship could be nurtured more effectively in smaller groups within our church? How would the unity of the larger group (church at large) be promoted if basic worship and fellowship meetings were held regularly within smaller groups?

The Commissioning of Servants in the Church

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Does our view of the Scriptures call for a precise adoption of the practices described, or is there freedom in the Spirit to adapt its principles for our time?
2. Does the teaching of the priesthood of all believers permit the strong, directive influence of leaders in the church?
3. Is a "call to preach" still a valid expectation in our day?
4. How can we reconcile the "permanency" of the ordination concept in the church's history with evident changes in the experiences of ministers as to vocation?
5. Is a commitment to specific Anabaptist or denominational beliefs a prerequisite for commissioning and ministry in our brotherhood?