

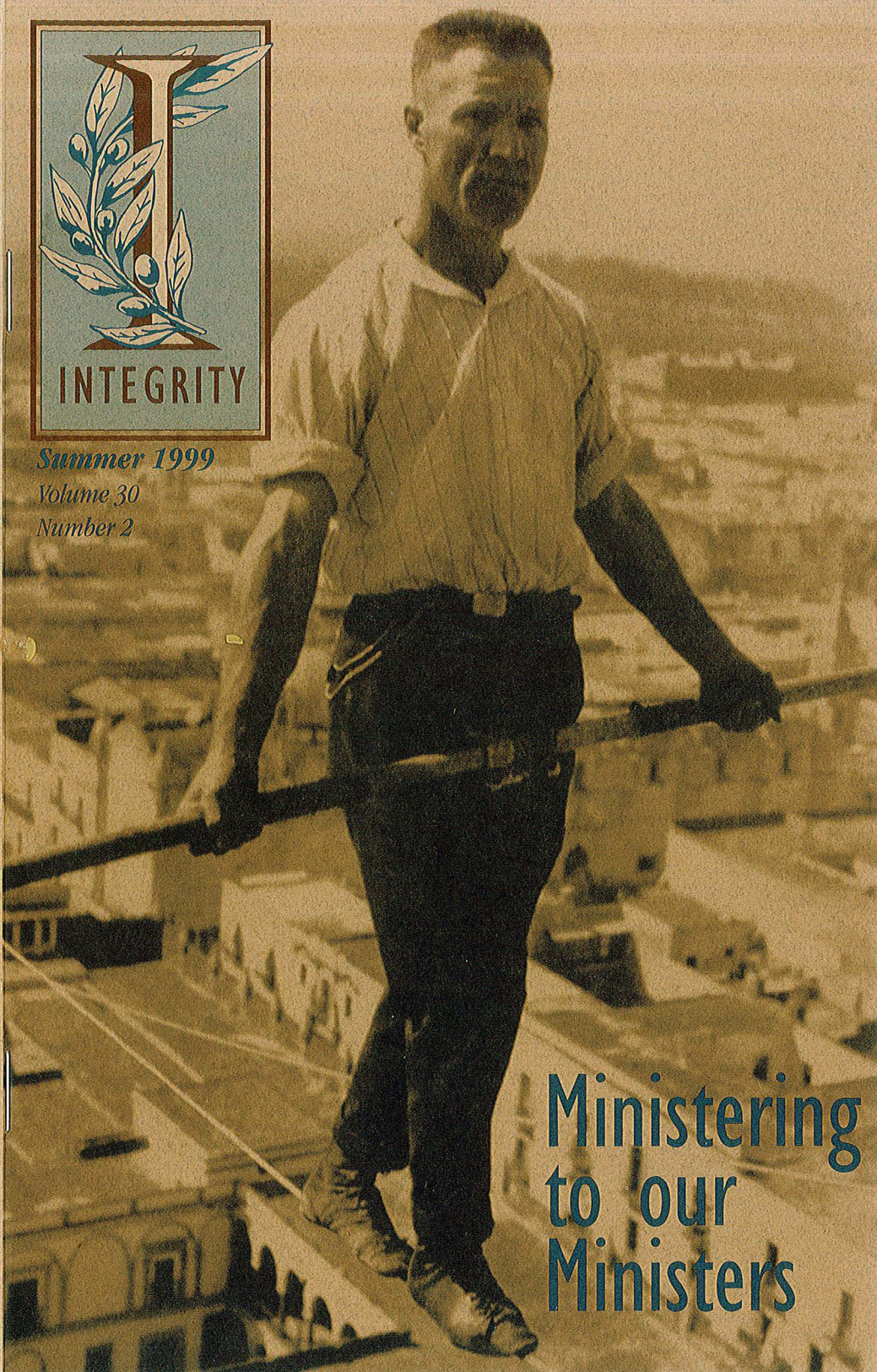


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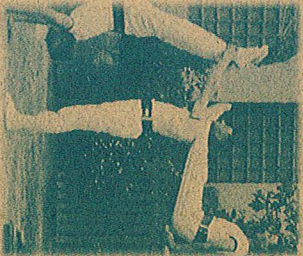
Summer 1999

Volume 30

Number 2



**Ministering
to our
Ministers**



*Are you a minister,
in a ministerial family,
or the friend of a minister?*

This special issue is for you!

We hope you're blessed by reading this issue of Integrity.

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Integrity is a quarterly journal dedicated to stimulating personal and public thought, prayer, and discussion about living the Christian life. Its roots are in Restoration Movement Christianity, encompassing Churches of Christ, Churches of Christ/Christian Churches, and the Disciples of Christ, but Integrity strives for unity among all Christians. Published by a nonprofit corporation, Integrity is intended to be a ministry of reconciliation which utilizes the varied talents of a large community of believers. These believers, united in faith but divergent in opinions, seek to accurately reveal God to both the church and the world so that all may become one as He is one. Accordingly, it should not be assumed that the views expressed by individual authors necessarily represent the opinions of either the editors or of the Board as a whole.

Summer 1999
Vol. 30, Number 2

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We welcome your letters, comments and suggestions. We also welcome submissions of articles, narratives, poetry, artwork, meditations, and the like. For submissions, please send a hard copy, along with a diskette in text-only format, to Curtis McClane. You can also append your article text to an e-mail message to diakonos@gateway.net. The editors reserve the right to edit materials for length, grammar, and clarity.

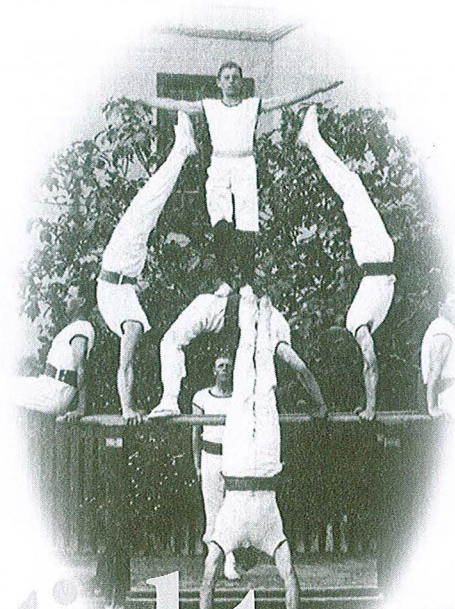
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We have over 25 years' worth of back issues on a wealth of topics. You can also access our web site, which has issues dating back to 1993.



What do we really want from our ministers?

"You can't be too careful—you have to speak the truth, but don't hurt the feelings of the conservatives. And whatever you do, don't discourage the liberals!"

"After you preach, can you go to that meeting Sunday? Then, while you're at the building, can you mow the lawn?"

"This situation is so complicated and sensitive! Let's have the minister take care of it."

"Your wife missed another baby shower." "You really need to pep up your class material."
"Why don't you get a new hairstyle?" "Can't you do something about those kids of yours?"

"Can't you make your sermons a little more entertaining?"

What can we do to get them out of the circus?



Held together by every



supporting ligament . . .
(Ephesians 4:16)

Support.

As any minister and ministerial family will tell you, the active support of friends and members of their congregation makes their complicated lives infinitely easier. That's what this issue of *Integrity* is all about.

New to *Integrity*?

If you are a minister, in a ministerial family, or a friend of ministers, this may be your first issue of *Integrity*. We have sent you this quarterly journal in hopes that you or someone you know will be especially blessed by articles in this issue.

We are a journal written by both laity and clergy, by scholars and "ordinary" Christians, and we are dedicated to helping people live the Christian life. Our special focus is on the unity of believers. For more information on who we are and what we stand for, please see the inside front cover. There is no charge for *Integrity*, but we are a nonprofit organization which gratefully accepts donations. If you find this issue of

The Twelve were with him, and also some women. . . . These women were helping to **support** them out of their own means. -Luke 8:3

If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this **right of support from you**, shouldn't we have it all the more?
(1 Cor. 9:11-12)

Integrity helpful, we hope you will consider ordering a free subscription. You'll find tear-out subscription cards inside this issue.

If you already subscribe, you can help us.

We are really praying that this issue in particular will be helpful to our brothers and sisters in ministry. With that in mind, we ask you to take advantage of the tear-out subscription cards you'll find in this issue, and fill them out for your friends who you think may be interested in *Integrity*. You may also order extra copies of this issue to share with your friends. See the inside front cover for our e-mail and postal addresses.

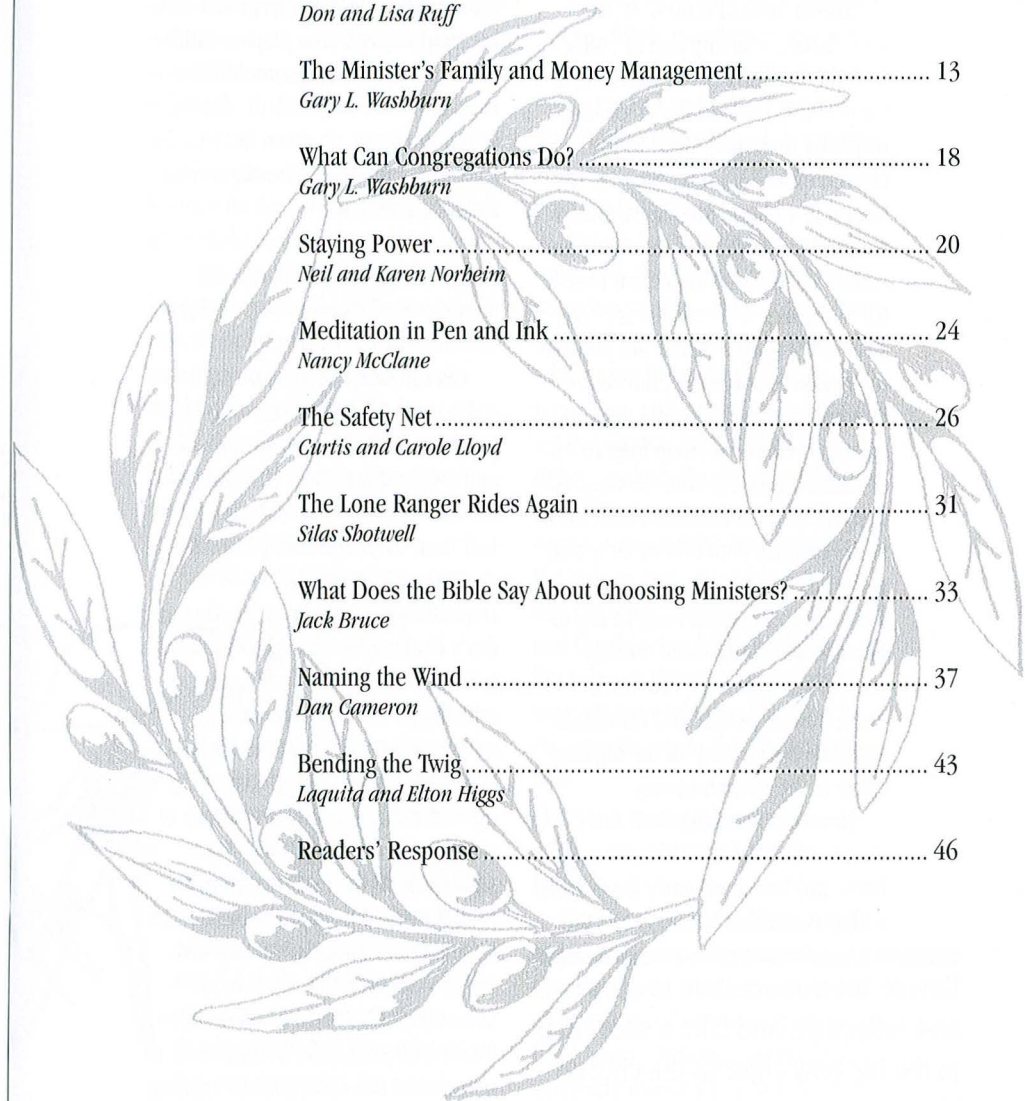
Let us know what you think!

As always, but particularly with this important issue, we earnestly desire your comments and suggestions. Please drop us a line!

In the meantime, we look forward to welcoming many of you as new subscribers.



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A Day in the Life

A typical day in the life of a minister:

Rise at around 8:00 or 8:30 a.m., have a relaxing cup of coffee with the morning news, perusing it for possible sermon topics or other inspiring material. Head to the church office about 9:30 or 10, answer a few phone messages, attend to some correspondence, and spend some time in quiet reflection over a Bible passage or commentary. Answer a few phone calls from people interested in attending church on Sunday or perhaps from a dedicated church member seeking help in understanding an obscure passage of scripture. Have lunch at about noon at the country club of a wealthy and generous church member. At about 1 or 1:30 p.m., head back to the office and do a little work on next Sunday's sermon. Devote some more time to prayer and reflection, and take a short nap in the big easy chair in the church library.

Head out and pay a visit to a couple of sick and/or shut-in members, and knock off early for 9 holes with the assistant minister and the

Devote some more time to prayer and reflection, and take a short nap in the big easy chair in the church library. . . .

preacher from a nearby congregation. Head home for a nice meal (which your relaxed wife has enjoyed preparing, having spent a pleasant day at home playing with the children). Spend some uninterrupted quality time with the family, watch the news, sit down in the La-Z-Boy with a good book, and hit the sack about 10.

Ha ha. Just kidding. Here's something a little closer to reality:

Get up about 6:30, shower, shave, have breakfast standing up. Help get the kids ready for school and fed, and head into the church office about 7:30. Spend about a half hour in prayer and personal devotional, specifically requesting God's help in meeting the day's challenges. Spend a couple of hours doing "office work," answering phone messages and e-mails, contacting visitors from last Sunday's service, and catching up with the administrative details of various church programs. Take some time in the later morning for visitation—shut-ins, members in the hospital, and families dealing with crises. Get lunch around noon—sometimes able to go home to have lunch with your wife, but today, as is more often the case, grab something

from the drive-thru between appointments. (She's not home, anyway—she's out visiting a church member who has cancer. Maybe you'll run into her at the church office later.)

In the early afternoon, return to the office and devote an hour or so to sermon and Bible study class preparation, and more prayer. Later in the afternoon, teach a class at the local Christian college, and afterward visit a potential convert for a personal Bible study. Visit another elderly shut-in, and head home for dinner around 6.

After dinner, spend a couple of hours with the family before putting the kids to bed.

Spend another hour or so calling ministry team leaders and other church members, helping plan and organize various specific church ministries. Get to bed finally at 11 or 11:30 with a nagging sense of having missed an appointment or neglected some other responsibility somewhere in the busy day.

And that's just a weekday. How about a typical Sunday:

Get up about 5:30, shower, shave, have breakfast standing up. Get to the building by 6:00, fine-tune the sermon plans, and make sure the auditorium is properly set up, and that the building is generally in order. Spend some time in prayer and personal devotion before the scheduled activities start at 9:30. Teach a class at 9:30, and deliver the sermon during the worship

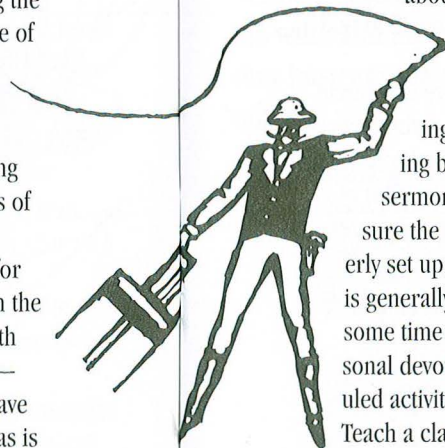
service which runs from 10:30 till noon. After the service, be sure to meet all visitors, and try to speak with as many of the regular congregants as possible, particularly those who are dealing with personal or family problems. Leave the building for lunch with the family at around 1 or 1:30, feeling a lot like Jesus after a few weeks in the desert.

After lunch, bring the Lord's Supper to elderly members in the nursing home. Get back to the church office for two sessions of marital and family counseling. Later in the afternoon, spend a couple of hours with the family.

Before the Sunday p.m. service, meet with the elders for the weekly planning session. Deliver the sermon during the evening service, which runs from about 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Visit with several members after the service, and shut off the lights and lock the doors on the way out. Have a re-warmed dinner at home at about 8:00, and help get the kids to bed. Spend an hour or two planning for the coming week, and finally get to bed, dead tired, but relieved that another Sunday is over, all the while thanking God for the opportunity to glorify and serve Him.

Do you recognize yourself—or your minister—here?

These "days-in-the-life" are, of course, fictionalized composites; they are drawn from interviews and observations of various ministers I've known. Although every church and every ministry position is



unique, I'm sure most ministers and their families will see much of their own work in these accounts.

And I haven't even mentioned the unscheduled responsibilities. The minister of our local congregation (pop. 250) reports that he officiates at about five or six weddings per year, conducts an average of 10 or 12 funerals a year, and about once or twice per month, on the average, attends to various serious crises demanding his immediate attention.

What about the rest of us?

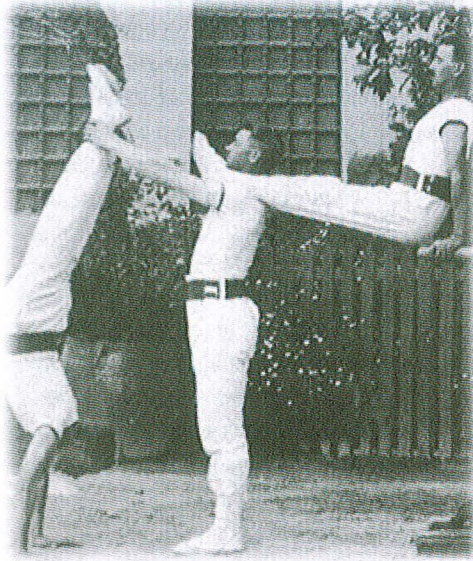
Okay, fine then. How is this different from a secular job? Aren't we all busy, with our own responsibilities and struggles? Don't we all have similar burdens to bear? What about us mothers with young children and their constant needs? What about us factory workers, trying to keep up with the bills and plan for the future with what's left over? How about us teachers, nurses, engineers, janitors, truck drivers, and office managers with our work that's never done and the mountain of other obligations that we can never seem to crest? Isn't the ministry just like another profession?

Not by a long shot. A minister has an extraordinary position both in the world and in God's kingdom.

Ministry is different

In the community, the minister is the face and personality of the local church, and must rise to standards

far higher than those placed on other leaders, including elected officials. The community has similarly high expectations and standards for the minister's family. Within the



congregation, the minister sets the tone for the church, in its various works and in the mood of its praise to God. Ministers are accountable not only to the elders or a similar board, but to the individual members of the congregation and to God Himself.

The support structure is different as well. The minister's main interface with other people is through the congregation, but for a number of reasons, including the employer/employee relationship, it is more difficult for a minister and his wife to develop close personal friendships with other Christians than it is for regular members. Quite often, when a minister does run into problems, the only avenue is to start updating

his resume.

Finally, the work of a minister and his wife is far more crucial and serious than most other occupations. They deal with people who are dying, whose marriages are dissolving, or who are experiencing other kind of acute personal pain. Ministers aren't there to entertain and uplift us each Sunday; rather, they are there to help us with the most important aspect of our lives: our relationship with God. In an emotionally draining profession with eternal consequences, ministers are often, in fact, on the front line in the battle for people's souls.

Challenges of ministry

In this issue we explore some of the unique aspects of this honorable calling, and shed light on some of the particular challenges that ministers face. We can't possibly cover all aspects of the profession; indeed, with apologies to the apostle John, I suppose a medium-sized church

I would like to challenge you first to seriously think about your minister, his wife, and their family. . . . Do they have anyone they can *really* talk to?

parking lot wouldn't hold all the books that could be written about it! Our intent, rather, is to open hearts and minds, to generate thought, and, if we succeed, to stimulate action.

Our regular editor, Curtis McClane, who is also the pulpit minister to the Troy, MI, Church of Christ, wished to take a hands-off approach to this edition, in order to

allow *Integrity* to be as objective as possible in our treatment of the important subject of our ministers. I am honored to write the editorial, as God has placed a special burden in my heart for ministers and missionaries.

I want to thank Curtis and Carole Lloyd, fellow *Integrity* board members, for their outstanding efforts in soliciting, editing, and compiling the articles for this issue, and for contributing an article themselves.

A challenge

As you read this issue, I would like to challenge you first to seriously think about your minister, his wife, and their family. What are your minister's real responsibilities and obligations? What is expected of his wife? How about their children? Are their financial and emotional needs being met? What about their future? Do they have reasonable job security? Do they have adequate health insurance? Will they be able to put their kids through college? Will they be able to retire? Do they have anyone they can *really* talk to?

Second, I would like to challenge you to pray for your minister and his family—and not just petition God to meet their needs, but ask Him how you can better support them, and commit yourself to follow through.

Do I hear an "amen," brothers and sisters?

Amen!

Bruce Bryant
for the Integrity Board



*Growing
and learning
from a first
ministry
experience—
the way it
ought to be.*

Our Journey in Ministry

Don and Lisa Ruff

When we began our first ministry 13 years ago we were young, idealistic, and full of energy. We began making the six-hour trip to Illinois to begin our first job in ministry on weekends during the last two months of my senior year at Great Lakes Christian College. This “commuter ministry” was not the wisest decision that we ever made! Papers began to hang over my head and final exams were on the horizon. However, we both wanted to get busy in ministry and we did. We plunged in with both feet!

Despite our crazy schedule, we had an excellent experience in our first ministry. What made our first ministry such a blessing and a time of learning was not necessarily our abilities or our four years of preparation. In saying this, I am not minimizing training for ministry. I think that the more education one has the better. Yet, what made those early years so good were the people around us, especially older members in the church. They were patient and wise. We found that two major factors contributing to the success of our first ministry experience were, first and foremost, the existence of wise, older mentors in

the church for both of us; and second, reading the Christian writings of wise and good people from across time.

Below is a perspective from each of us about what made this first ministry experience so wonderful for us; indeed, such mentors and other sources of wisdom are what we would hope other young ministers and wives in ministry would be able to benefit from. If you are a ministerial couple, look for mentors. If you are an established member of a congregation, take care of your minister and family, no matter how long you’ve known them!

Lisa:

In an age when it is easy for generation gaps to exist in the church, I had found (or had been found) by more than one mentor. There were older women in the church who took me under their wing. Long before mentoring came to be in vogue, these women were doing it. They did not just want to be ministered to, but they wanted to help me to grow in ministry. They encouraged me to lead Bible studies, even though I knew that they were far more knowledgeable and experienced than I was. They taught me how to do a missions report. I loved to sing, but speaking

before such mature Christians was intimidating. Like Don, I felt inadequate at times, but I was always encouraged. These older women became good friends with me, spending time with me but also giving me the space I needed. All was not church work, either: we went shopping occasionally and went out to eat. I appreciated them so much! The only regret we had was that we did not stay longer. There was still so much that we could have learned from them.

I also continued to read books that challenged me personally and helped me to grow in my own understanding of ministry. Since I did not have training from a Christian college, it was extremely important. Don and I discussed what I had read. I even had books given to me from my mentors—they were not given to drop subtle hints! Instead, they were given to help me grow as a godly woman.

Don:

While Lisa was growing and being encouraged, so was I. My years at GLCC had been very formative for me. I did not grow up in the church, so I had a great deal to learn about ministry.

I had many mentors at GLCC while I began my career in ministry. Even though I had studied at the public university for 1 1/2 years, I had never, to my knowledge, studied under a godly man. Those that I had sat under had great academic qualifications, but their world-views and priorities in life said more than any lecture I had ever heard. When

I became a student at GLCC I saw godly men who had academic credentials, but their lifestyles and priorities were very different.

It was because of this new “quality” of teacher that I really developed a desire to learn. What I was getting in the classroom was more than instruction for a career, it was instruction for life! These men had great insights, but their lives made the lessons they taught more significant. I needed to see how godly men lived, and how they nurtured their families.

As I continued to work as a minister, on I went to Lincoln Christian College and Seminary. Here, as at GLCC, I found individuals passionate about their faith, committed to Christ and his church, and interested in me as a person. It was in this setting that my faith began to grow in ways that I could not have dreamed of. The experience of developing a thorough Christian world-view was a thrilling journey. I learned that the Christian faith was more than a personal faith, it was a way of thinking that could deal with all of reality in a most effective way. It enlarged my appreciation for the lordship of Christ. This helped me to realize that any pursuit in life is a missionary activity. This understanding has definitely shaped the way I teach, preach, and approach ministry. I try to keep in mind that in this challenging world, I am to equip others to challenge it. We are not to teach people to foster a survival mentality, but a missionary mentality. We are to help people to possess confident hope and purpose in their lives. Giving them mere

entertainment and good feelings won't help them to do too much, if anything.

Writings of wise Christians

It was at Lincoln that I was introduced to the writings of Eugene Peterson. He was a guest lecturer on the campus for a few days. His conviction that ministry should possess integrity and insight, rather than following the latest fad, impressed me deeply. One not only had to be wise in analyzing the surrounding culture, but also in choosing models that were to be followed in ministry.


He challenged me not only to be reflective and wise, but to have a balance between rest and work. We can often imitate the ways of the world when it comes to our work ethic in ministry. In the Biblical way of thinking, work is honored but it is not idolized. There must be time given for refreshment and reflection. If this cannot be done, we are still in Egyptian slavery without a Sabbath rest! Deuteronomy 5:12-15 is a passage that has a great deal to do with ministry. If one is not growing personally, he or she does not offer a very good model worthy of imitation.

Early in my years of ministry, I had short-changed my wife and also I had begun to short-change my family. I was glad I had met Mr. Peterson! His books, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*; *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*;

Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity; and *Take & Read*, were both wise and imaginative. He explained how reading great works of literature had provided a backdrop for analyzing his ministry and life. The penetrating analysis of Dostoyevsky, Augustine and C. S. Lewis helped him to realize some of the errors he was committing. They helped to cultivate a more "God-aware life." His insights stretched me and encouraged me to continue to grow as a person and as a pastor.

One way of doing this was by reading good books. Novels, as well as poetry, have a way of shaping the imagination. This is crucial if we are to develop a truly Christian life and mind. These literary treasures help us to ask the important question, "What kind of person am I?" They are not read to sophisticate, but they are read to help one grow. Reading, conversation with fellow Christians, and time spent with family are practices that have enriched my life significantly.

Don and Lisa:

Our journey in ministry has not always been easy. We have made our mistakes. We have had our struggles. We have succeeded and failed. Learning to accept these experiences and grow from them has been a journey that we would not trade for the world! May God bless you as you struggle and grow in your efforts to serve the risen Christ, the King of Kings! 

Don and Lisa Ruff were both loved and cared for by the DuPlain Church of Christ in St. Johns, MI. They are currently working with the Barryton Church of Christ, also in Michigan.



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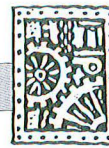
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REAL-LIFE APPLICATION

The Minister's Family and Money Management

Gary L. Washburn

My wife, Beth, and I are both 50 years old and have been in ministry for our entire aggregate 100 years. Both our fathers are retired career ministers. I began a student ministry at age 19, three months before our wedding. After graduation from Bible College, we began a full-time ministry. In 1994, after twenty-six years of ministry, I began a full-time career in financial services, specializing in serving the financial needs of ministers. For over two years I supplied pulpits and presented financial workshops in churches. In 1997 I began a part-time position as Worship Leader at a vibrant, rapidly growing church where I continue today.

The combination of a lifetime in ministry and five years in financial consulting puts me in a unique position to understand the financial dynamics at work in the parsonage family. I've observed that few families in general do much financial planning. Ministers are no different. Few parsonage couples maintain viable financial goals or have ongoing financial discussions. Since most ministers are comparatively underpaid, good family money management and stewardship is even more important for them!

In the past five years I have no-

ticed the same financial mistakes occurring over and over. Some of these mistakes seem to appear more in the minister's family. Some are the same mistakes Beth and I made. From my unique vantage point, I would like to highlight the Top Ten Money Mistakes Ministers Make, in the hope that this will help you avoid these traps that have caused so much difficulty to others.

Mistake #1: Most parsonage couples spend little time discussing finances.

The minister and spouse have only two choices. Choice #1 (preferred) is to have constructive discussions about future spending plans. Choice #2 (default) is to have destructive discussions about past spending failures. If you don't

Since most ministers are comparatively underpaid, good family money management and stewardship is even more important for them!

choose #1, #2 will choose you! Every minister knows the role financial stress plays in divorce in our culture. I strongly urge the husband and wife in the parsonage to proactively initiate constructive

discussions about their spending going forward. See below for the issues you need to lay on the table.

Mistake #2: Most parsonage families have no spending plan.

No one really wants to live on a budget. But most of us do like to spend. The term "spending plan" better describes what we need to guide our money management. Developing a family spending plan will place some checks and balances on family spending. First, determine exactly what your usable (net of taxes) income is. Second, clearly identify your fixed obligations (bills). Third, subtract fixed obligations from usable income. This is your discretionary income. Make the joint determination to live within your income. You'd be amazed at how many parsonage families spend more each month than they earn, through the use of undisciplined credit spending. This isn't rocket science. Deficit spending will ultimately destroy the family. Get it under control before it controls you.

Mistake #3: Most parsonage families have no financial goals.

Here's another item you need to discuss: financial goals. In your constructive discussions about spending, set clear, measurable, achievable, written financial goals. You need short-term goals (0-2 years). Examples might be accumulating money for a vacation, to buy a car or house, or paying off a credit card. Set mid-term goals (up to 5

years). Examples might be establishing a college fund, accumulating a down payment for a house, or increasing/maximizing your contribution to a retirement investment. Set long-term goals (5+ years). Examples would be increasing retirement investment, college fund, wedding fund, etc. Review and adjust your family goals at least annually.

Mistake #4: Most parsonage families have no financial strategies.

Once the goals have been established and bought into by both parties, strategies must be established that will allow these goals to be realized. Investment strategies are numerous and there is no one-size-fits-all. Tax issues, risk tolerance, objectives, cash flow, and a host of other questions come into play in establishing your financial strategies. This brings us to the next common mistake.

Mistake #5: Most parsonage families don't seek professional advice.

This was our biggest mistake. I thought we could do it ourselves without a professional. I see others doing the same. Many mistakenly think they cannot afford a professional financial consultant. Truth is, you can't afford *not* to have professional advice.

Financial professionals get paid in one of three ways: 1. Some charge a consulting fee. 2. Some are paid a fee for service by the companies they work with. 3. Some are paid in some combination of #1 and #2. For example, my practice is

operated on a #2 basis. Under this method, financial consultants don't charge clients the hefty fees that most associate with financial professionals. The fees they receive are built into the cost of the financial products their clients purchase.

My point is this: You can obtain quality financial advice without out-of-pocket expenses. It is mandatory in this maze of financial products, tax law changes, and technical language that you have a financial professional you can trust. Oh, how I wish Beth and I had had someone to walk us through the maze 30 years ago! A good financial professional knows the language, the products, the tax laws, and the key questions that get to the heart of your financial objectives. Make sure your financial professional will meet with you at least annually for a "tune up," ensuring that you keep on track.

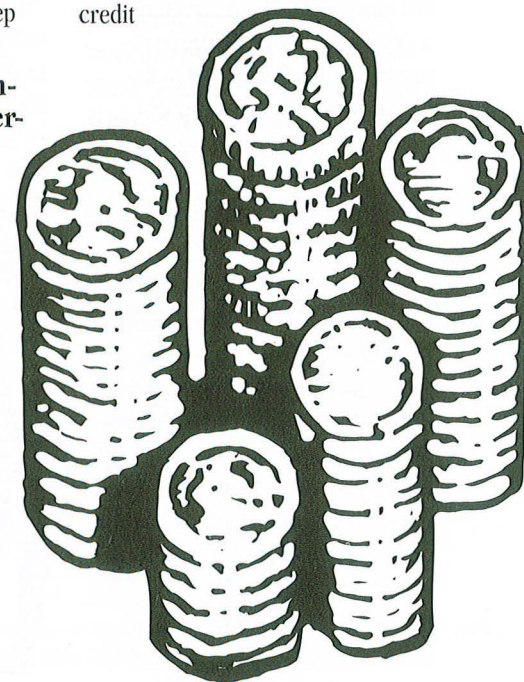
Mistake #6: Most parsonage families have no emergency fund.

This is the #1 problem with ministers. In the past, Beth and I failed badly here. Every family needs a savings account that is liquid and accessible without penalty to meet unexpected expenses that come into our lives. The question is not *if* these unexpected expenses will come, it is *when* they will come. Set as one of your goals the accumulation of a minimum of 90 days' living expenses in your Emergency Fund.

Mistake #7: Most parsonage families misuse credit.

The absence of an Emergency Fund almost always leads to a panic use of credit. For when those emergencies arise and there is no cash to cover them, we whip out the credit card. Then when we can't pay off the credit card balance, high interest rates raise the cost of that emergency to even greater heights. And often, since the balance is there and can't be paid off, families rationalize further credit purchases, creating a greater debt.

This has been our greatest problem. And since we didn't rely on a financial professional, we had no advisor to set us straight. I've noted that in many families one spouse is a spender and one is a saver. Not in ours. We both like to spend! In ministry families, undisciplined credit



spending is a killer. The minister's income usually isn't sufficient to cover the debt.

The resulting stress often leads to bankruptcy, or the wife working when she needs to be home rearing the children, or the family leaving ministry in favor of a better wage, allowing them to get out of debt. That last happens a lot!

Here's a practical strategy: Set a goal of establishing a family Emergency Fund. I use a money market fund with check writing privileges. The interest is higher than a bank savings account, almost as safe, and just as liquid. Set up an automatic investment that comes out of your checking account on the same day each month—electronically. It's a great forced discipline and will build that fund up quickly, without deciding each month whether or not to write the check. Accumulate a minimum of 90 days' living expenses. You'll be amazed at the peace of mind this strategy provides. As the balance grows, you will feel a huge relief in the knowledge that now, if an emergency arises, you won't be undone.

Mistake #8: Many parsonage families have no retirement investment.

Unless the ministerial family is in the rare church that proactively funds a retirement program, it's all up to them! And if they have opted out of Social Security, a cool 100% of the responsibility for funding retirement is on their shoulders. The time to start is yesterday! Life expectancy is about 21 years after re-

tirement at age 65. That's a really long time to be broke! You cannot recover lost time. Strangely, many ministers wait until their 40s or 50s to begin serious retirement savings. *Big mistake!* The magic of compound interest means that if you start in your 20s, the total cash outlay is much less, and your nest egg much more, than if you start in your 40s or 50s.

Unless the ministerial family is in the rare church that proactively funds a retirement program, it's all up to them!

What kind of retirement program should you establish? The answer depends on your situation. The best pre-tax retirement investment is a 403B plan. Contributions are tax-deductible in the year contributed, all growth is tax-deferred, and taxes are paid upon withdrawal. However, some ministers pay little or no income tax. For them, the new Roth IRA is the best option. Contributions are after tax (at a 0% federal tax rate), and all growth is tax-free. Withdrawals after age 59 1/2 are tax-free if the Roth IRA has been held for at least five years.

A third option, which works well for some, is a permanent life insurance policy. Which of these options best fits your needs can be easily determined by a financial professional familiar with ministers.


Mistake #9: Many ministers opt out of Social Security but don't replace it.

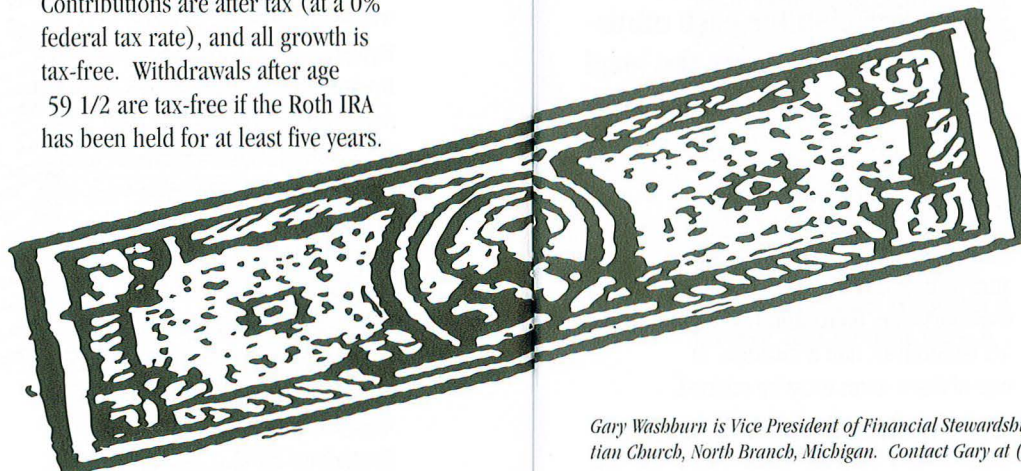
That makes no sense! I refuse to work with a minister who just wants to opt out of Social Security and pocket the savings. That is an extremely shortsighted mistake, yet I see it too often. Opting out of Social Security is your choice. But if you make the choice, understand that you leave behind some important benefits, namely retirement income and disability insurance. If you give up the government's plan, have the smarts to replace it with something equal or better. It's not all that hard to find something better! In most cases, the 15.3% of your income saved by opting out of Social Security is more than enough to fund a

good retirement investment program and a quality disability insurance policy.

Mistake #10: Many ministers are willfully ignorant of tax laws.

That also makes no sense! You spend all year earning a living for your family and yet spend little or no time seeking to understand how to minimize your tax liability. Is that good stewardship? Does that make sense for anyone, especially for the minister? Please find a qualified tax professional who is familiar with tax laws for ministers and ask him/her to educate you. Unfortunately, tax professionals with expertise in clergy tax law are not that plentiful. But they are out there for those who look.

Beth and I have often wished we had had this advice when we were younger. It would have helped. You don't have to repeat our mistakes. You have resources at your disposal that previous generations didn't have. Be a good steward of the material wealth God has brought into your life—all 100% of it, not just 10%. Take the necessary steps to get quality advice. Most of all, both of you must determine that today will begin a new chapter in your financial lives—a chapter that honors God with good financial stewardship. 



Gary Wasburn is Vice President of Financial Stewardship in Troy, Michigan, and Worship Leader at Country Christian Church, North Branch, Michigan. Contact Gary at (248) 269-4114 or GWasbb6065@aol.com.



What Can Congregations Do?

We asked church financial advisor Gary Washburn to continue his discussion about ministers and money by talking about what churches can—and must—do to give adequate financial support to our ministerial families.

Long before the independent church was fashionable, the Restoration Movement made a choice to be undenominational. It was the right choice. But in so doing, we left behind some important things, including retirement security for ministers.

The average American worker with a company pension and Social Security takes a 50%-70% cut in pay at retirement. Independent ministers have no pension. Many have opted out of Social Security. Something's wrong with this picture!

The local independent church must accept the responsibility of making certain our ministers are cared for in retirement. But most independent congregations don't seem to care, and thus take no initiative to contribute to a retirement investment plan for their minister(s). Most congregations don't see that as their responsibility. That must change!

By failing to shoulder this responsibility, the independent church contributes to an underpaid and overstressed ministry – and losing many promising young preachers!

Often, after a few years of ministry, young ministers leave for a career that pays a respectable wage *and* gives opportunity to retire with dignity. It doesn't make sense to spend tens of thousands of dollars to train a minister in Bible College, only to see him leave ministry – due to substandard compensation and bleak retirement prospects.

Our choice to be independent carries a moral and ethical responsibility on the congregational level to mandate and help fund an appropriate retirement plan for each minister called to serve the local congregation. If not us, who?

The average independent minister must carve from that minimal salary enough money to fund retirement, health care, disability insurance, life insurance, food, clothing, transportation, education (his and his children's), and a vacation. If one of these items must be omitted, it's almost always the farthest one removed: retirement savings.

Our choice to be independent carries a moral and ethical responsibility on the congregational level to **mandate and help fund an appropriate retirement plan for each minister called to serve the local congregation.** If not us, who?


I challenge each local church leader reading these words to revisit what your congregation is doing to insure a dignified retirement for your minister(s). Here are some specific steps you can take as a result:

1. Establish a relationship with a financial professional with expertise in tax and investment law for ministers. It is important that you work with someone with church tax law expertise. We routinely must undo the damage done by well-meaning accountants and financial consultants who don't know the laws unique to ministers. You need a specialist.
2. See to it that your minister owns and contributes to a 403B Plan. (The 403B is the non-profit world's equivalent to the 401K in the for-profit world.) Set the plan up so the church matches his contributions. While there are other usable retirement plans, the 403B generally provides the best tax benefit and a larger allowable contribution. One major plus for the 403B is that retirement income may be taken as housing allowance, thus escaping income

tax in retirement. Consult your financial professional for proper procedures in compliance with the tax code.

3. Make sure your minister(s) are compensated enough to fund their retirement plan at more than minimal levels. A reasonable goal is that 10% of their compensation goes into retirement savings. The 403B plan allows up to 20%.

If each independent congregation will accept and fulfill its responsibility, in only a generation we can fix a deficient system that is driving away many capable and gifted young ministers. And we can insure retirement with dignity for veteran preachers who have given a lifetime of service to you, your children, your church, and your community.

Our spiritual forebears fought many battles to gain the spiritual freedom we enjoy today. We, their heirs, must pass it on. We must train, maintain, and empower a viable ministry to lead, preach, teach, and evangelize with vision and faith. If it makes sense to send millions every year to our Bible colleges to *train* ministers, then it makes sense to pay them properly, and fund a retirement plan that will *keep* them in the ministry for life. It is the ethical responsibility of a nondenominational local church. 

Gary Washburn is Vice President of Financial Stewardship in Troy, Michigan, and Worship Leader at Country Christian Church, North Branch, Michigan. Contact Gary at (248) 269-4114 or GWashb6065@aol.com.



Staying Power

Neil and Karen Norheim

Ministry is survival of the fittest these days. Schedules are hectic, people are cynical and apathetic about sin even in the higher echelons of power in this nation. Parents are stressed out from ferrying their children to school, church, soccer, Little League baseball, swim class and ballet. Husbands and wives are both trying to make it to the top of the heap in their chosen careers, while also carving out “quality time” (who coined this misnomer?) for the family, scurrying to the latest self-improvement class or seminar, sandwiching in their favorite recreational diversion, and frantically trying to stay “young” in a youth-obsessed culture. Yes, siree, back in the good old days. . . .

But wait a minute! Were the “good old days” any better than ministry today? After all, people are people and they have the same needs. Maybe things were just different. Join us as we look back over our thirty years in ministry. We hope this will be a helpful tool as we learn from past mistakes while recapturing what was good about those earlier years. Armed with this information, we then make some recommendations for and about ministers and their families today.

Ministry Contrasts

- Thirty years ago, a minister was respected by the community at large. He was an integral part of the community. Today his profession is often looked upon with suspicion, cynicism and disillusionment.

- Thirty years ago the minister's role was largely pastoral; he was a generalist. Today's ministers are highly specialized. Not only that, they are expected to be CEOs, the chief fund raiser in the church, a supervisor, an administrator, a pastor, and most of all—an evangelist.

- Then, salaries were so inadequate that businesses granted a 10% discount for ministers' families; Today ministers can earn a decent living wage, but the discounts are gone.

- In the past, ministers were considered ready for service after earning an undergraduate degree. Today, more education is required, and continuing education is expected.

- Thirty years ago, the pace of living was slower. Sometimes people wanted a lot of your time to build relationships. Today people are too busy. There is no time to just build a relationship.

- Then, friendships with church people were frowned upon. They were afraid of favoritism, and

enjoyed having ministers and their wives on pedestals (all the better to see you, my dear!). Today we've fallen off the pedestals, and also feel free to cultivate friends.

- Thirty years ago more people practiced hospitality. Ministry families were considered an extension of their families. Today, people often keep an emotional distance from them, relegating them to a “professional role.” And how can they be hospitable with their frantic schedules?

- Then, some churches considered the minister an employee and his wife was a bonus (two for the price of one). Ministry meant sacrifice of time and salary and retirement funds. Today ministers are team leaders, vision casters, and the wives don't necessarily come “free” with the package.

- Yesterday's minister was consumed with pastoral work—taking care of the flock, keeping them contented. Today's minister is market-driven: attendance and offering and

Then, the church was “the other woman” for many ministers. It vied for most of his time at the expense of his wife and family. Today, time constraints haven't changed very much.

giving to “missions.” He's like the coach: the crowd is fickle; if his team doesn't score, he is out of a job, no matter how many past victories were his.

- Then, the church was “the other woman” for many ministers. It vied for most of his time at the expense of his wife and family. Today, time constraints haven't changed very much. Fifty to sixty hours weekly are required; he's on call around the clock—even while on vacation. However, both ministers and churches have had to learn from the folly of this type of thinking. Ministers have to continually safeguard their marriages, and churches must curb their expectations of the pastoral family if it is to remain intact.

Given these comparisons and contrasts, what can we learn about successful ministry for the next three decades?

Going for the Long Haul in Ministry

All of us who start out in ministry do so with the idea that it will be a lifetime career. But the sad facts are that the average length of time trained ministers spend in the ministry profession is now only seven years following seminary graduation. That means somewhere along the line they decide against staying in the pastorate. If you as a minister are going to be able to stay in the ministry profession for a lifetime, here are some recommendations we have for you:

- **Cultivate a vital personal relationship with God.** This is not for sermon preparation or class teaching, but for your own edification and spiritual growth. Spend daily time in prayer, Bible study and meditation. You can't lead a church where you've never been. Put on the whole armor of God; this begins with the belt of truth around our waist.

• **Strive to lead a balanced life.** Some people are so Heavenly-minded they're no earthly good. There is no holiness in busyness. Jesus' life was well-balanced; he took time for himself, for God, and for others. We need to do likewise.

• **Remember that your family is your closest church.** If you pursue success in your career at their expense, you still have failed with the ones who know you best. What have you accomplished if you win other families to Christ, but lose your own?

• **Be a Godly example.** A high profile comes with ministry—don't squander it. Be good stewards of the position God has entrusted to you. Reek of integrity!

• **Keep your eyes on the main goal: your commitment to Christ and his church.** Minister for the Lord Jesus, no matter how you are provoked. It is the Lord God whom you serve and not people. Don't let circumstances or others deter you from your vow of service.

• **Love the people.** Truly care about them. This is the second great command of Jesus. He wasn't followed for his building programs, his praise teams, his missions output, or for areas wherein the world counts success. People were drawn to Jesus because of his unconditional love. The people knew he really cared about their souls. They were not just scalps on his belt to brag about his number of followers. Real love for the people teaches them to place their hope in Christ alone.

• **Communicate your hopes**

and dreams with the people. It avoids conflict. Rick Warren, in a recent seminar about the "Purpose-Driven Church," noted that church people who were interviewed expected 90% of the minister's time to be spent in caring for membership and 10% in outreach. But the ministers of those same churches thought 90% of the job was to witness and evangelize, and only 10% for caring for the membership. No wonder ministers and churches are in conflict! Communicate! Communicate!

• **Keep your marriage vibrant.** Your oneness will protect you from discouragement and temptation. Neither the husband nor the wife can do all the work in a relationship; it takes a concerted team effort to continue growing in love and commitment to one another.

How Churches Can Minister to the Minister

The times in which we live are complex for churches, too. They are influenced by the corporate practice of hiring specialists to do the work. This simply frustrates the Biblical concept of the "ministry of all believers." As a result, ministers may be seen as commodities and often expendable. This lack of loyalty and

Jesus wasn't followed for his building programs, his praise teams, his missions output. . .

brotherhood leads to conflict between the minister and the church leaders. How can this be remedied? How can the church minister to the minister and his family?

• **Build him up spiritually.** Be mutually accountable with your personal and spiritual disciplines. Encourage and expect him to be a Godly (not worldly) leader.

• **Build him up physically.** All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Encourage him to develop a hobby. You benefit from a well-balanced leader, and he can understand the people to whom he ministers.

• **Build him up professionally.** Encourage your minister to attend seminars, conventions and

Respect his family time. Let him rest on his days off!

workshops that will sharpen his skills (and provide the financial resources for him and his wife to do so). This benefits you. They'll come back renewed and equipped to help the church.

Provide a Study Leave once a year for the minister's emotional, physical, professional renewal, where he can plan the coming year's sermons without interruption.


Consider granting a paid three month sabbatical after seven years of service. It promotes loyalty and incentive.

• **Build him up in the eyes of the community.** Pay him a competitive wage so he has resources to care for his own family. If you keep him poor and humble it demeans him in the eyes of the community, and they will also withhold respect. He is

your brother. Treat him like one. Encourage him to be involved in the community. He represents you.

• **Build him up emotionally.** Respect his family time. Let him rest on his days off. Encourage him to be a good family member by allowing time off during traditional family holidays. If he's a workaholic, make sure he takes his days off. Give him regular increases in salary. If that's not possible, give him an extra week of vacation in lieu of a raise. All people need to be valued and appreciated.

Minister to his family, too. Respect and thank them. Show your honor and appreciation for their selflessness in sharing him with you, often at their expense, and for their ministry to the church.

We need each other. A church needs a pastor and a pastor needs a flock. While expectations of both the pastor and the church come and go, our primary calling remains the same. Together we are to share the Good News with a lost and dying world, to demonstrate the love of Jesus to them while it is yet day. Lest we forget in these days of phenomenal church growth, CEO style leadership, and accent on worship styles, God calls us not to be "successful," as the world measures success, but to be faithful—God's definition of success. For long term "staying power," the church leaders and minister must work carefully together so that the influence of the Kingdom of God is not hindered or detoured in any way. 

Neil and Karen Norheim minister to the Town and Country Christian Church in Crown Point, Indiana. Neil is Senior Pastor there, and Karen is a freelance writer and author of a book, Mrs. Preacher.




Drawing and text by Nancy McClane

Often an artist chooses to make a philosophical point visually through the beauty of color or the simplicity of line. My goal here was to make a theological point with the visual energy of many shapes expressed through the different positions of the hands. Each hand position represents a Christian's attitude toward the minister. Every person in the body interacts with the minister differently depending on spiritual maturity, expectations, needs, personality, and many other variables. There can be as many different performance expectations as there are people in the body.

Every minister knows his power to serve is not based upon man, but upon the power of God to guide and sustain. However, the power of evil will try to use the minister's situation with the people he serves to destroy the healthy relationships that are so crucial to the productive work of the church. Perhaps Satan's greatest way of undermining the effectiveness of the church is to demoralize and discourage its leaders through harsh criticism, judgments based on hurt egos, power struggles, gossip, negative thinking toward and destructive words about leaders. A congregation can focus on its minister's shortcomings to the point of totally becoming blind to his particular gifts and how God wants to use him.

A person of God can blossom and flourish when the congregation he is ministering with becomes his armor bearers, supporting, encouraging, and believing in him as he serves Christ.

My rendition of the minister here endeavors to show visually the dynamics of all of these elements, positive and negative, coming to impact his ability to be used by God in the kingdom.

Don't let Satan cause you to become negative and critical of your minister, tearing him down and disrespecting him. Pray for him, look for the good in him, encourage him, and build him up. What you believe about him is what he will become in your eyes. 



Nancy McClane is an artist and art teacher in Troy, Michigan. She and her husband, Curtis, minister to the Troy, MI, Church of Christ.



The Safety Net

Curtis and Carole Lloyd

The 16,445 ministers, including ministers, associate ministers, secretaries and others working with the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ (Instrumental) are serving over 5,490 congregations in the United States. This network of professionals serves the needs of 1,126,944 individuals doing ministry in various capacities. On average, according to the 1998 Directory of the Ministry, each ministerial person must care for 68 or more worshippers!

These numbers are just a sample of all those involved as paid ministers for congregations all over the world. The minds, hearts, and gifts of such people are to be highly valued.

However, our ministers and ministerial families are often seriously overburdened with, among other things, unrealistic expectations and too many responsibilities. Furthermore, the very nature of their vocations—kingdom work—is so serious that it often weighs heavily on their shoulders, even at the best of times.

Because of the burden each minister and ministerial family must carry, there is an alarming amount of burnout, depression, and disillusionment among those doing this

kingdom work.

That's why Safety Net exists. Says Silas Shotwell, a Director of Safety Net:

Safety Net is a ministry to church leaders. We are available to ministers, elders and their families. While we offer personal counseling, encouragement, education, and nurturing, we do not give advice or get personally involved in local church situations. We do not charge the people we help. During the past five years, we have assisted over four hundred people. During the past year

Because of the burden each minister and ministerial family must carry, there is an alarming amount of burnout, depression, and disillusionment.

alone, I have talked with over one hundred ministers and twenty elders in this Samaritan ministry. We try to help whomever is left beside the road bleeding. I have worked with people from at least 15 denominations.

In looking at the beginning of the Safety Net program I am reminded that it is a "networking" approach to focus existing brotherhood resources on the dilemma of hurting servants.

Studies of occupational groups indicate that the clergy are among the most frustrated occupation segments in America.

Simply put, the goals of Safety Net were and are:

1. Encourage discouraged ministers and their families.
2. Secure and apply the needed counseling, medical, or legal resources to bring healing to those who find themselves out of ministry.
3. When appropriate, we seek to bring some back into productive ministry. This can be a tremendous resource to augment our desire to act as a brotherhood.

A serious problem

The scope of the problem of hurting ministers is pointed out well by George Barna in *A Barna Report on the Church Today: Insightful Statistics and Commentary*, pp. 41-43:

1. Studies of occupational groups indicate that the clergy are among the most frustrated occupation segments in America.
2. Nearly six out of ten pastors (56%) admit that the Church is

- having "little positive impact on their souls and society."
3. The greatest frustration among pastors is the feeling that they, alone, are bearing the burden of ministry. More than four out of ten pastors feel this way.
4. Pastor's wives are increasingly discouraged about the roles they are expected to play within the Church—and the lack of encouragement and friendship they receive from members of the congregation.

Many ministers get so burnt out that they just leave the ministry altogether. When even the leaders of our movement are so frustrated that they are seeking other outlets for their talents, there is a serious problem to be addressed. How can all worshippers help those in ministry today? Conclusions that quickly dawned on me as I worked with Safety Net include:

- **Encourage them about all aspects of their lives and ministry.** Leadership is not highly regarded by many today, so it is helpful to those in ministry when they are regularly encouraged by many in the congregation.

- **Help them build healthy, close relationships with leaders and members in the congregation.** This has not been conventional wisdom, but it is obvious that both ministry families and church families have overreacted on this issue. Exclusive or possessive relationships are to be avoided, but normal relationships are critical to a balanced life for all human beings.

- **Insist that your minister be involved in continuing education.** Far from the fear that such efforts will distract from his ministry to you and the local church, it will renew and challenge him to become all that God wants him to be. Continuing education—of any type—will help keep your minister focused and happy. Learning needs to be lifelong, especially in our rapidly changing world.

- **Encourage him to meet regularly with one or more of his peers locally or regionally.** Ministers need the fellowship of their peers, as do all professionals. Safety Net has noticed very few examples of those actively involving themselves in this type of fellowship dropping out of ministry. (Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

Continuing education—of any type—will help keep your minister focused and happy.

- **Help your minister and his family know when and where to ask for help.** Assure them that the congregation will stand with them through all of life's circumstances.

Advice for ministers and their families:

Conquering discouragement

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8.37, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him

who loved us. . . ." Conquering discouragement is needed by nearly everyone at one time or another because everyone is familiar with being discouraged. Primarily situations and other people tend to be the causes, when we are discouraged. When we are discouraged we tend to feel deprived of confidence and hope. We find ourselves disheartened and discouragement hampers everything we do in our lives. In reality, I can do much to eliminate discouragement at its source—me! Yes, situations seem impossible to navigate and people can be troublesome intentionally or unintentionally, but we have much more control in the matter than we like to believe. Discouragement has much in common with disillusionment, burnout, and depression. In fact, this trio describes the long slippery slope that follows discouragement. *In order to keep simple discouragement from worsening, you, with God's help and the help of a close friend, must take control.*

Discouragement with God's people

In our idealism, which often touches all ages, we set ourselves up for discouragement.

1. Often we fail to communicate our ideals with church members and leaders, an obvious invitation to having an unfulfilled agenda. We then feel let down by people we regard highly—Christian people, who we will have less tolerance for than people outside the Church.

2. Our expectations, correct or

erroneous, of church members and especially leaders can be the fault line of our next "quake" experience.

Discouragement with your spouse or children

Especially in ministry, discouragement is likely to begin or land in the marital and family circles.

1. If our relationship with our spouse is solid and growing, we will have a place to retreat and feel loved. If our relationship is at risk, we are even more tenuous at home than in our work.

2. Today we feel very pressured to have fine children and nearly perfect family relationships, especially if we are living in the "manse." This is an expectation that has little likelihood of fulfillment.

Discouragement with self

The desire to be excellent at everything in the church is a setup for discouragement.

1. Ministers feel pressured to be specialists in human relationships, the pulpit, and as writers, educators, counselors, planners, and administrators. Their view of their role may be beyond anyone's ability to manage.

2. The minister's wife wonders to herself, "Who am I, anyway? What is my role? Where do I fit?"

How to avoid discouragement

1. Examine your expectations, carefully determining their appropriateness to the group you are working with.

2. In a personal manner, com-

municate clearly and heart-to-heart your dreams and ideals with members and leaders.

3. Constructively work on your marriage relationship, taking time together for relaxation and intimacy.

4. Accept your children as normal, working with their successes and failures without undue comparisons with other church families.

5. Discover your gifts and inter-

Seek time alone and especially, seek God. Release your frustrations to God and let Him speak to you through silence or meditation of Scripture.

ests, utilizing them to serve the Lord and to feel personally productive and satisfied.

6. Develop avocational interests to distract from daily tensions and to improve your self-image. It is okay to enjoy life some!

What to do when you become discouraged

1. Take a deep look inside yourself and determine the reason(s) for your discouragement.

2. Test your findings with your spouse (if appropriate) and with a close friend that you trust to receive objective views. Have them pray together with you and for you.

3. Determine whether this is primarily a problem of your own making, or whether others have imposed this problem on you.

4. Let up in the areas of tension, seek time alone and *especially* seek God. Release your frustrations to God and let Him speak to you through silence or meditation of Scripture.

5. Decide on a course of remedial action and solicit your spouse's and your friend's support in working out the action plan. They should also help you judge whether progress is being made or if a wrong diagnosis has been made—in which case professional counseling may be necessary.


6. Do not let discouragement linger. Without seeking help, you may already be moving toward disillusionment, burnout and depression.

7. Know when and where to ask

for help. Call us any time at Safety Net. We exist to help you. Please call 1-877-4-SAFE-T-NET (toll free) or dial 1-877-472-3386 if you need help in locating resources for your situation, or to talk with someone confidentially.

I hope that this advice, culled from years of working with ministers in various situations, may be of help to you—whether you are a minister, in a ministerial family, or simply a friend of someone in ministry. Organizations such as Safety Net exist to help, and they can often make all the difference in the world!

“Spiritual exhaustion occurs when the responsibilities of being a Christian are emphasized more than the resources available.”

- Hannah Smith, *Everyday Religion* 

What ministerial families say about Safety Net

“Our last ministry ended in my husband forcibly resigning, and now we're confused and hurt. We're not sure we want to get into another ministry. I'd appreciate any advice or guidance that you can give.” - *Southwest Minister's Wife*

“Without Safety Net, we will continue to lose hundreds of our preachers!” - *Midwest Minister*

“Please send us more information about Safety Net. When I saw your address in the *Lookout*, I cried. It's God's blessing to have the hope this project seems to hold for us.” - *Northwest Minister's Wife*

“I believe that your service might provide some help for my family and myself. Both my wife and I need time to heal and to find that which we have lost in the last few years. We are not satisfied with where we are now, but are at a loss to know where we should go. It may or not be the ministry that we are seeking, but I hope that we can restore our faith in God in this process.” - *West Coast Minister*

“I think the idea has great merit and I want to commend and thank you for bringing it to the attention of our fellowship. I think it is an idea whose time came a long time ago.”

- *West Coast Bible College President*

Curtis and Carole Lloyd have been helping ministers and their families through Safety Net and the National Church Growth Research Center for many years. Curtis is the former President of Great Lakes Christian College, and both he and Carole serve on the Integrity Board of Directors.

The Lone Ranger Rides Again

Silas Sbotwell

Dear Ones,

It's bad enough to suffer. But it's horrible to suffer alone!

At least six times in the last week I have heard about people in ministry that are in trying circumstances—facing them alone. I've been able to intervene with a couple of them and offer some encouragement. But the others have so distanced themselves from members of their congregations that a call from a stranger is simply another threat.

Last night, as I was praying for them, I asked, “Lord, help us to reach out to others and not be Lone Rangers.” I have prayed that many times.

Ah, the Lone Ranger. What a part of my childhood past. “A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a hearty, ‘Hi Yo Silver!’ The Lone Ranger. ‘Hi Yo Silver, away!’”

And then a thought hit me. Even the Lone Ranger wasn't completely alone. He had Tonto!

Remember the story? If so return with me now to those thrilling days of yesteryear. The Lone Ranger rides again!

According to the story of author

Fran Striker, a group of Texas Rangers was ambushed by outlaws. All were killed except one lone Ranger, Dan Reed. And Reed would have died, except that he was found by a Good Samaritan—an Indian named Tonto. Tonto nursed him back to health and together they set out to oppose evil.

So to the strains of the William Tell Overture, mounted on the fiery horse Silver, and “*with his faithful Indian companion Tonto, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early West. Hi Yo Silver, away!*”

The Lone Ranger could not have survived without Tonto, his faithful Indian companion.

Too many of us in ministry have such a heavy burden—because we don't have a faithful Indian companion. I'm not talking about mates. That's another letter. I'm talking about friends, outside our family, who we can trust in, confide in, and lean on in times of difficulty.

David had his Jonathan. Hezekiah had his Isaiah. Paul had his Silas. And even Jesus had John. There is really something to be said

*A letter
from the
Director of
Safety Net
to ministers
everywhere.*

for having close friends, especially when one is involved in the heavy task of ministry.

I had teachers who told me (back in the Dark Ages) that preachers shouldn't make close friends. If we did, they warned, we'd be accused of favoritism. We needed to remain aloof to serve the entire flock fairly.

In fact, in a sermon I gave during my teenage years I admitted some feelings of hypocrisy because I was asking people to do things I wasn't doing myself. An older preacher took me aside and told me that I should never admit weakness as a preacher. He said that if people thought preachers had emotions like others, they would become discouraged and disillusioned. He told me to "keep it all inside." Probably the worst advice I ever got.

Now, I'm not advocating that we splash our struggles in the headlines. However, we need trusted friends with whom we can share our deepest needs and concerns. I assume that we all have family members with whom we can share, but they are often in the same difficulties, and we hate to make their burdens heavier. Therefore, I believe it is imperative to have a friend or friends of the same gender—outside the family—who can be our confidantes.

How do we choose our Tonto?

Trust is the key issue when choosing a confidante. It is a fragile thing and must be handled delicately. When it is damaged, it is harder than ever to rely on it. Find someone you know you can trust to keep confidences, especially about delicate matters.

Many preachers tell me it is too risky to look to an elder as confidant. While preachers and elders share many private and confidential matters and should be spiritually close, some preachers who have confided personal matters to an elder have been fired as a result.

Still others tell me that it is not always safe to trust other preachers. That may be cynical, but I have known preachers who would listen in apparent sympathy while coveting the position of the one they were listening to. I know this for a fact, because it happened to me.

Admittedly, there aren't too many faithful Indian scouts out there who are willing to give—and give without asking a lot in return. But the value of companionship is worth taking some risks. We really do need others.

If you're struggling alone, pray for a friend. Hire a counselor if needed. Call us here at Safety Net. That's why we're here. We remember that even the masked rider of the plains needed his faithful Indian scout. "Hi Yo Silver, away!"

Yours in Christ,
Silas 

Dr. Silas Shotwell is the Director of Safety Net, a ministry for ministers. He and his wife, Edna Mae, live and minister in Ft. Hood, Oregon. You may contact them through Safety Net at (541) 352-7636, or (877) 4-SAFE-T-NET.



What does the Bible Say about Choosing Ministers?

Jack Bruce

Look at any list of requirements enumerated for the "acceptable" applicants for ministry positions within our fellowship.

Now, let's look at the men Jesus chose to follow him and carry his message to the world:

Matt. 10:2-4: These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. (NIV)

Peter, Andrew, James & John

Matt. 4:18: As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. (NIV)

Matt. 4:21: Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them . . .

Mark 3:17: James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); (NIV)

Philip & Bartholomew (Nathanael)

Matt. 10:3: Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; (NIV)

Mark 3:18: Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot (NIV)

John 1:45: Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote— Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (NIV)

Matthew

Matt. 9:9: As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. (NIV)

Thomas (The brave and the doubter)

John 11:16: Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of

the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (NIV)

John 20:24-25: Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." (NIV)

James (The son of Alphaeus also called Judas, son of James)

John 14:22: Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" (NIV)

Acts 1:13: and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

Simon the Zealot

Mark 3:18: . . . , James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot (NIV)

Luke 6:15: Simon who was called the Zealot, (NIV)

Acts 1:13: and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. (NIV)

Judas the betrayer

Matt 26:14-16: Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. (NIV)

Matt 26:47: While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve,

arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. (NIV)

Matt 27:3-5: When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. (NIV)

Matthias

Acts 1:25-26: to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles. (NIV)

Saul of Tarsus

Acts 7:58: dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. (NIV)

Acts 8:1: And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. (NIV)

Acts 9:1-2: Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way,

whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. (NIV)

Acts 9:22: Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. (NIV)

Acts 11:26: and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (NIV)

Acts 13:9-12: Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. (NIV)

Acts 22:3-5: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as also the high priest and

all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished. (NIV)

Acts 23:6: Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." (NIV)

Emphasizing the simple, straightforward Good News

Now read the first 4 chapters of I Corinthians and the last 4 chapters of II Corinthians as Paul defends his ministry, apostleship and evidently his style of preaching and teaching. Notice the value of "worldly knowledge." The emphasis is on the simple, straightforward good news that God sent his Son to redeem sinful man. No lessons in language translations or scriptural misunderstandings—just Christ and him crucified (foolishness to the learned men of his day). Simply using Jesus as an example of righteous living and learning to imitate him as seen in Paul. (No one can come into contact with Christ and remain the same. This calls for lifestyle changes. Preaching must reflect this or it is simply imparting knowledge.) Has the simplicity escaped us in our learning? Only you can answer this question for yourself.

How many of these men would have been considered for the minister's job today? Judas Iscariot

was probably the best educated of the original Twelve. Nathanael was becoming educated. Simon (the Zealot) had a lot of fire in his belly (for national Israel). Paul probably had the equivalent of a Ph.D., but he would have been disqualified because of his prison record. Judas had committed suicide, so the list is of no value based on today's requirements for a "full time minister of the gospel."

What we need today


Young, dynamic preachers who have a sense of demeanor will not challenge a large congregation. They may be great communicators (able to transfer knowledge from themselves to an audience), but in order to keep their job and not "rock the boat" most do not present challenging, life changing sermons. Therefore most large congregations are starving to death spiritually.

Those who fill the pulpit on a temporary basis are the exceptions. They present thought provoking, challenging lessons, but, at the same time, their livelihood does not depend on their work in the pulpit. Fred Craddock says there are two kinds of preaching our fellowship will not accept—good preaching and bad preaching. Funny—but the only thing left is mediocre preaching and that is what we are putting up with because it doesn't ruffle any feathers. Our fellowship has fallen into the same trap as some other denominations. We have become respectable and moved to the "right side of the tracks," and now our

"pastors" need a title to be respected. When the Churches of Christ were growing so rapidly and setting all kinds of records reaching the lost, how many of those preachers were measured first by their titles and degrees?

Too much education?

I am not against education, but I am frustrated with the "screening processes" most congregations go through while choosing a minister. I am one that has very few credentials but through self-study and seminars, lectureships, correspondence courses and workshops have been pretty effective in ministry, but will never be considered in most of our congregations because I haven't had the finances and time to achieve a degree in Bible. I know this sounds like sour grapes and to a point, it probably is, but I want leaders within the restoration heritage to consider breaking with tradition and considering some for the job who may not have the degrees you seek, and yet have been effective in preaching the gospel and "equipping the saints" to serve and become more Christlike.

That may not come across in a resume, but can be determined in an interview. Give some people a chance who feel they have none. (Sound Biblical? Preachers are human, too, and have very human feelings and needs just like the other members of Christ's body.) You could be rewarded in more ways than one. 

Jack Bruce lives and worships in Lubbock, Texas.

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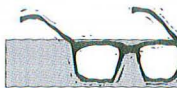
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Naming the Wind

Dan Cameron

My apologies to Langdon Gilkey for mimicking his book's title, *Naming the Whirlwind*, but my concern in this article is not the naming of God, but the naming of the preacher. The Restoration Movement has a history of confusion over what it calls the pulpit preacher, the earlier options being primarily evangelist or preacher. In more recent years in the independent Christian Churches, my locus, the name for the person in the pulpit has typically been minister, to some, more colloquially, preacher (this is rather unofficially determined from surveying my own experience and exposure to churches in the American Midwest, West, Northwest and the Canadian West). My sources tell me that minister is the overwhelming name of choice among the a cappella churches. But in the past decade in the independent Christian Churches there has been an increasing use of the term "pastor" as the title for the pulpit preacher—to the chagrin of some and the applause of others within the churches. What about this?

The identity crisis

I remember my first class in seminary where we explored the issue of the identity of the preacher. The teachers asked the class to

identify the correct title/role of the preacher. Almost every possible title was suggested and discussed in class. But the conclusion of the teachers as to which title was "right" was as frustrating as the discussion—they concluded that the preacher wears all of them at times! Though there is some truth in that idea, it begged the question. We preachers in the Restoration Movement have always had an identity crisis. I know, because I suffered this identity crisis for many years myself. I believe it stems, at least to some degree, from Alexander Campbell's personal dislike and mistrust of clergy (Campbell reveals his antipathy toward them in the very first installment of the *Christian Baptist*, August 3, 1823). Paid ministers were not accorded high praise from him and this attitude was inherited by later generations of Restoration leaders. I have heard this attitude toward preachers expressed in the ungracious word occasionally used of them, "hireling." This is not only unflattering, but may be explanatory as to why it has taken so long for our churches to consider if the word "pastor" is a viable name for the man in the pulpit, let alone the best name.

But is the term "pastor" justified or is it only a recent heresy, as some

think? Are those who name the “wind” pastor merely “in error?” I want to explore this issue and make a case that the “preacher as pastor” has both strong Biblical and practical warrant. It is the assumption of this article that the proper title for the preacher should pass not only the “Biblical” test but also the “practical” test. The title should be both a viable, biblical one, and it should also reflect what the man does in ministry. Let’s review the options for “Naming the Wind.”

preacher

We begin our search for the “correct title” with the word preacher. Surely this is descriptive of a major task the person in the pulpit performs. He preaches often and is visibly recognized for so doing. While this is true, one still needs to ask if this title is properly descriptive.

Practically speaking, does the preacher spend most of his time

Practically speaking, does the Preacher spend most of his time preaching? No.

preaching? No. Even if one includes the sermon preparation time, this title is still not the most descriptive name for him. Since ministers work 60+ hours a week on average, a realistic appraisal of his time spent in his church work would not be summarized by the title, preacher.

Does this term have good biblical warrant? Actually it has weak support when one considers the tiny New Testament evidence for this

“office.” The term preacher in Greek is *kērux*, a “herald, or preacher.” In secular culture this would refer to the “Town Crier,” the newsman of the day. This noun is found only three times in the NT, 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11 (both in self-reference to Paul) and 2 Peter 2:5 (in reference to Noah, “the preacher of righteousness”). While the verbal forms of “to preach” are found 60 times in the NT in various contexts, there seems to be no NT precedent for an office of “preacher” in these verses. Paul’s reference to his “preacher identification” does not imply an office of preacher, but a function of proclaiming the gospel of Christ as part of his apostolic mission. No located minister was labeled preacher in the NT.

Evangelist

The next title or office to consider is that of evangelist. This term has had long accepted usage in our fellowship and has the advantage of being named as an office/function in Ephesians 4:11 (along with Apostle, Prophet and pastor/Teacher). The Greek term is *euangelistēs* and means “one who preaches (announces, proclaims) good news.” The term is not religious in origin—but is used almost exclusively so in the NT. There are two other times this noun is used in the NT, the first is Acts 21:8 in reference to Philip. Philip was called “the evangelist” because he helped evangelize the Samaritans. Later, after Philip evangelized the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:40 says that he

“traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.” Now, the reader is not told what his duties were (if any) in Caesarea—but until that time we see him evangelizing the lost. When Philip is called “the evangelist” in Acts 21:8 it may only be a reference to Philip’s “evangelizing” past and not a reference to his status as the “evangelist” of the church in Caesarea. So, in Philip’s case, the term evangelist definitely has reference to his vocation of preaching to the lost.

The second usage of the term evangelist is Paul’s command to Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” in 2 Timothy 4:5. Many believe that Paul is calling Timothy an “evangelist.” But actually we have a command—without description—among the pastoral Epistles’ 14 chapters of pastoral commands! These 14 chapters of commands regarding pastoral work surely do not fit well under the heading of “evangelist”—one who announces good news to the lost. Timothy is not titled as an evangelist, but simply told to do the work entailed by the term, in addition to all the other commands and expectations on him. The breadth of his pastoral ministry is being defined. Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus to set the church in order, train, preach, confront, and help evangelize, etc. To present the gospel to the lost is a part of every Christian’s work, as well as the leader’s work—but not the defining title which summarizes his work.

There is an office/title of evangelist that Ephesians 4:11 identifies, but what is it evangelists do? The only clues come from the meaning of the term and Philip’s example. Philip preached the gospel in a groundbreaking way to certain Samaritans (et al.), thus illustrating the term and defining the office. To preach the gospel to the lost would seem to be the work of an evangelist. preachers do this, yes. But how much time is spent each week by our preachers doing this? preachers

Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus to set the church in order, train, preach, confront, and help evangelize, etc.

Speak to believers mostly—some almost exclusively. My experience and observation is that they spend little time pursuing this activity, sadly. At issue is that in order for this title to be descriptive of the preacher he ought to spend at least the majority of his time doing so. If a preacher does this regularly and mostly, then the title is appropriate. Perhaps certain Missionaries or Church Planters or ministers of Evangelism are evangelists by virtue of their schedule and work—and this is great! We need more. But my contention is that the typical preacher does not do this, so, merely naming him an evangelist does not make him one. No, this term is not the one most descriptive of the preacher’s work.

Minister

This has been the title that I have always had attached to me as a preacher in Restoration churches. The English term, minister, usually translates the Greek word, *diakonos*, and means “a servant.” (Our term “deacon” is a transliteration of this Greek term, much like “baptize” is a transliteration of *baptizō*). But the word, minister, has an ancillary origin. The Latin term, minister, is the equivalent to the Greek term, diakonos, and appears to be the ancient root from which the English word minister was invented (transliterated). This being so, the term minister is technically a term defining a “deacon” or a “servant” in a local church (in the Church one can be an official Servant [deacon] or an unofficial servant—as all Christians are). Biblically, then, the office/function of minister is actually the office/function of deacon. There is the problem. How many preachers would call themselves a deacon? Or believe that they serve in the function of deacon? Granted, there are different perspectives on what deacons do, but this writer’s belief is that this person carries out specific tasks within the local assembly on behalf of the elders and the Church (leaning on the Acts 6 model). The deacon is not assigned the care of souls, preaching the Word, or many other tasks that preachers do regularly—which are actually elders’ jobs. The office/function of deacon is an honorable, important job in the church, it just is not equivalent

to the office/function of the preacher.

I will not deal in detail with the biblical material on minister since it is actually material about deacons when referring to an office, or of

The term “minister” is technically a term defining a “deacon” or a “servant” in a local church.

servanthood when not. We are familiar with the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8–12 and the reference to those holding this office in Philippians 1:1 and Romans 16:1. Four other times Paul refers to people as faithful “servants” of Christ, though not meaning to call them deacons (Col. 1:7; 4:7; 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 Tim 4:6). It is interesting that our culture and our churches accept the title, minister, as the title of choice for the preacher, but there actually is no biblical support for the “preacher as deacon” and it has the least practical warrant of all the options we have discussed so far.

Pastor/Shepherd/Bishop/Overseer/Elder:

The final title we will discuss is that of pastor/shepherd. The Greek term is *poimēn* and means “a shepherd.” The Latin, *pascere*, means “one who feeds,” and this word evolved into Middle English (AD 1150-1475) which eventually formed the background of the English word, pastor. While this noun is used primarily in the NT in reference to Jesus it is used one time in reference to church leaders

(Ephesians 4:11) where Paul refers to “evangelists and pastor/teachers.” But the verb, “to shepherd,” is used five times in reference to church leaders (John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 9:7; 1 Peter 5:2; and Jude 12). Though the use of this term is somewhat limited, the following paragraph may explain why.

There are 3 Greek terms (and, therefore, English) that are used interchangeably in the NT. These terms are 1. *poimēn*, or pastor/Shepherd. 2. *episkōpes*, or overseer/bishop (etymology is “one who looks over”). 3. *presbūteros* or elder. To survey the interchangeability of these terms the reader is directed to Acts 20:17-28, 1 Peter 5:1-5, and Titus 1:5-9. In Acts 20:17 Paul sends for the “elders” of Ephesus and charges them to be “shepherds” of the church of God. . . over whom the Holy Spirit had made them “overseers” (28). This is the classic text that equates these offices with each other. But also Peter tells the “elders” to “be shepherds” of God’s flock . . . serving as “overseers” (1 Peter 5:1-2). Then in Titus 1 Paul gave qualifications for “elders” but he calls them “overseers” midway through his list of

But one day in my study I reread 1 Timothy 5:17ff. and things finally clicked!

qualifications.

These three passages establish the case that the terms elder, pastor and overseer are in fact different

names for the same office/function. While elder emphasizes maturity (in the writer’s view, spiritual maturity), pastor emphasizes the shepherding care of souls, and overseer emphasizes the managing, visiting, oversight of the church. If you think of these titles as describing the same office then a clearer picture begins to emerge. The elders/pastors/ overseers have the teaching, caring, oversight of the church—her people and programs. This is very distinct from the deacons who were given specific tasks & responsibilities in their area of expertise. The deaconal office is not a teaching office nor an authority-laden office, except for their specific assigned areas of ministry. With this breakdown of job function in the church (deacon and elder/shepherd), where would one fit in the preacher? Or the evangelist? Or the minister? Maybe this artificial squeezing in of a hypothetical office is part of our problem in the churches we know and love.

Resolution

As I wrote earlier, I had an identity crisis for many years in ministry and my first seminary class didn’t help resolve the issue. But one day in my study I reread 1 Timothy 5:17ff. and things finally clicked!


“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.” (NIV)

Paul goes on to explain that the “double honor” refers to paying the elder a wage for his work. The

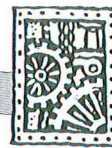
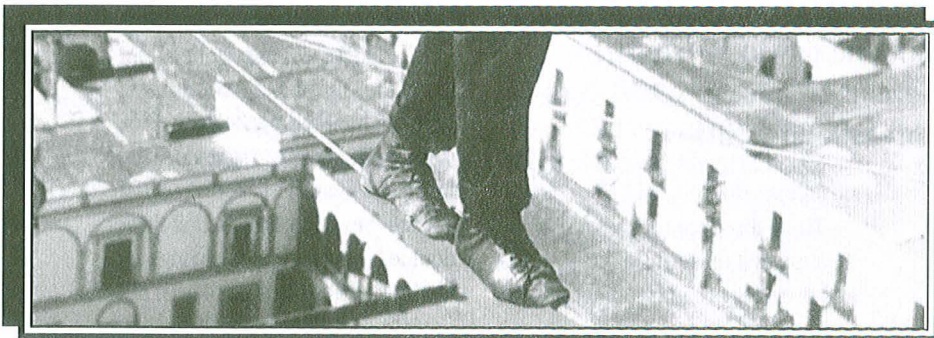
church laborer has a right to live by the means of his work. A paid elder? Or a paid pastor? As I remembered all the tasks native to the elder/pastor/overseer found in the pastoral Epistles, I added to this that he may be an employee of the church! The Lord finally resolved my identity crisis! As a minister I had always cared for souls, taught, counseled, preached, visited the flock, and lead and directed the affairs of the church in concert with my elders. It dawned upon me that I was one of them! I was not above them nor below them, I was just one of them.

This was “revelation” to me. Instead of using the term preacher, which was not representative of my full job, instead of using the term evangelist, which was descriptive of only a small part of my work, instead of using the term minister which was more illegitimate than the rest, I found the term that actually described what I, and most every other preacher I knew, did for a living—right there in my Bible all along! I am a vocational pastor/elder/overseer of the church, in league with the other paid and non-

paid pastors/elders/overseers of the local assembly. We are a team, they are my boss, but we are the leaders of the church. No forcing of titles that don't properly fit or have biblical warrant, no inventing of offices not really in the Bible, just reveling in the fact that who I am and what I do is clearly defined in Scripture. What a relief and a joy!

Is this capitulating to other denominations? Is this copying other groups blindly? Is it the end of one of the planks of the old Restoration platform? No to all three questions! I believe it is a return to a biblical pattern that has been in Scripture all along, we just didn't utilize it. (In fairness, B. W. Stone titled himself “elder” rather than any other title.) I believe it just may be time we begin using this biblical name—or at least allow those who see this as biblical teaching to utilize what their biblical study says is right—without decrying it as “heresy!” The preacher is a pastor, it has both biblical and practical warrant! It is who he is and what he does, and it has been this way from the beginning, whatever we have called him. 

Dan Cameron, who holds a D.Min from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is a former Professor of Ministry at Boise Bible College. He is currently Professor of Ministry and Theology at Great Lakes Christian College. He and his wife, Donna, have been in the pastorate for 18 years.



Bending the Twig

Laquita and Elton Higgs

Teaching moral standards is a challenge for any parent. Charles Colson, the former aide to President Nixon who went to prison for his involvement in the Watergate scandal, became a born-again Christian, founded the Prison Fellowship ministry, and has become a leading spokesman in America for Christian thinking in our society. He has some thoughts about teaching moral standards that we parents should consider.

In a recent article, Colson emphasized the change in moral thinking in America by noting that two-thirds of Americans believe that “the nation's chief law-enforcement officer committed perjury—but so what? It was only covering up a sexual relationship” (“Moral Education after Monica,” *Christianity Today*, March 1, 1999, 104). In the past, Colson writes, one might challenge “a moral point through reasoned argument, appealing to commonly accepted standards of right and wrong,” but, sadly, that is not true today, at least not on our college campuses, where past standards of morality are viewed as only one approach to life. How then, Colson challenges, can we “affect moral sensibilities?”

Colson suggests that we use good

literature. If our younger generations are not engaged by moral philosophy, then perhaps they can be moved by an appeal “to the moral imagination through classic literature.

Stories change us because they reach the whole person, not just the cognitive faculty. As we read, we identify with characters who demonstrate courage and self-sacrifice, vicariously making choices along with them—and in the process, our own character is shaped.”

That all sounds very good, but how does this affect our role as parents? Colson writes, “So if we don't like the image of America we're seeing in the mirror, a good place to start is by changing ourselves: Read the classics and stimulate our own moral imagination. Then read them to our children.”

In another short article (“Good Books for Good Kids,” *Jubilee Extra*, Feb., 1999, 8), Colson gives some examples of the classic stories that parents and grandparents should be reading to children. The story of Pinocchio (the original, not the Disney version), for example, tells of a wooden puppet that becomes a real boy by overcoming his habit of lying. Not only does the story teach about truthfulness, but it

reveals the Christian truth “that we whose hearts are ‘wooden’ with sin can become ‘flesh’ through a process of moral regeneration.” Classic stories can “imprint moral lessons deep in a child’s heart.” If reading such stories seems frivolous, don’t forget that Jesus himself taught with parables.

Those opposed to Christianity are certainly willing to use books to teach our children. When I help our Rachel pick out books at the library, I am appalled at the number of books depicting witches or monsters and teaching materialistic and amoral values. Many current children’s books stress multiculturalism, and a story Colson told helped me understand why I feel uncomfortable with some of those books, although I firmly believe that our children need to know other cultural groups and races.

Colson described a meeting where a schoolteacher urged the mothers to get their children to read books which emphasized diversity. She handed out a list of the right books, noting that a child can’t be started too early to learn such lessons. The mothers nodded their assent. No one, says Colson, “even questioned the basic tenet of multiculturalism—that all cultures are morally equivalent; that Western culture, with its Christian roots, is no better than any other.” Colson warns that we need to be able to spot anti-Christian philosophies in our children’s books and be ready to challenge with tough questions those who would push such

philosophies. On the matter of multiculturalism, for example: “Are all cultures really morally equal? Even those that practice slavery? Or suttee (widow burning)? or genocide?” Though we must teach our children to respect other people and other cultures, we should not do so at the expense of neglecting our own rich heritage of literature and history, both of which were shaped by Judeo-Christian thinking.

So how about turning off the TV tonight and finding a good book to read to your children?

Colson urges parents not only to read classics in the home but to support programs for reading the classics in schools, as they will get children “to think about enduring moral and spiritual themes.” He concludes, “As the country wrestles now with its moral identity, Christians have an opportunity to help it regain its moral direction, and literature may be one of the best landmarks we can offer.”

So how about turning off the TV tonight and finding a good book to read to your children? One suggestion is the fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen (but not the Grimm fairy tales—too violent). Not only will a well-chosen book teach moral values, but the time together will draw your family closer and, at the same time, give your child an “ear” for good language which will be an asset in school.

Since we have brought up the matter of multiculturalism (and with a negative slant), let me stress the positive value of inviting many diverse people into your home. For the past year, our family has been befriending three families from China. We have also been teaching them about Jesus, but whether they become Christians or not, it has been an enriching experience for all of us, including Rachel. It takes time and effort to get to know other peoples, but it is worth the effort, and crossing cultural boundaries is a part of being ministers of Jesus in the world.

Other suggestions:

The publishers of *Christianity Today* have a bimonthly journal for parents called *Christian Parenting Today* which we recommend. Most of the short articles deal with practical subjects such as getting your toddler to eat, stopping whining, and adjusting to family moves to a new home, but parental attitudes, as well as suggestions for a child’s emotional development, are also explored. A few articles deal with spiritual and moral development, such as teaching gratefulness, but my favorite is a regular column which gives short reviews

and ratings of new books, videos, CDs and software. Other regular features include a column for single parents and parenting ideas from readers. Most of the articles are aimed at parents of preschool and elementary school children, but a few address the problems of the teen years. The cost is \$17.95 per year (465 Gunderson Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188); this magazine would make a nice gift for a family with younger children, or with children of various ages.

One of the articles from *Christian Parenting Today* has really stayed with me. It noted that the years from 13 to 16, during the junior high and early high school years, are the most crucial, for it is then that many families “lose” a son or daughter, although it may not become evident until later. The article cautions about giving a child too much freedom too soon. We need to keep reading about good parenting—and we must keep praying! And how about sharing your ideas and concerns with other readers?

Contact us at 9 Adams Lane, Dearborn, MI 48120, or at <Ehiggs@umich.edu>.

Laquita and Elton Higgs, both graduates of Abilene Christian University, have generously offered time, talent, and spiritual direction to the Integrity ministry for more than 17 years. Both are occupied as professors at the University of Michigan, and as parents to four-year-old Rachel.

Says Laquita, “Alexander Pope, the 18th century English poet, said, ‘Just as the twig is bent, the tree’s inclined.’ Accordingly, we call this regular feature of parenting advice ‘Bending the Twig.’ All of us as Christian parents should be committed to a great deal of unashamed ‘twig bending’ for the Lord, and we need each other’s help to do it.”

Nigeria, West Africa

The paper (*Integrity*) means so much to me as someone who has been freed in Christ Jesus. I will never forget the late brother Ketcherside, who introduced it to me.

Here I serve a small congregation as a minister and also direct a small Christian community for needy adults and children. Already we have started a junior secondary school for orphans and needy children. We really want to serve the poor here.

The Church of Christ here, though small, is a church that has taken a stand to know nothing apart from Jesus. The Bible is our guide book. We practice concerted prayer as seen in Acts 4:24, and do this on bended knees. In our assembly, we are free to shout hallelujah, clap hands, and dance. We believe the word "rejoice" contains these. We are shunned, neglected, and called names by other Churches of Christ here. They say we preach false doctrines. We know our call and we don't want to give up.

We are looking for fellow Christians to visit us here and teach and encourage us. There is a big need for a missionary to serve here.

I wish *Integrity* could help to advertise for a missionary to serve here. We live in a small farming village called Betem. There is no electricity or running water. From the

village to the state capitol is 76 kilometers.

Please kindly consider this humble appeal.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Ernest Udom
 P.O. Box 1710
 Calabar, CRS, Nigeria, West Africa
 erjobum@unical.anpa.net.ng

Krum, Texas

Thanks for all the work that goes into *Integrity* magazine. The article "The Still Center of the Storm" by Diane Kilmer was especially helpful to me.

I also enjoyed the issue a while back focusing on spiritual creativity. As a professional artist, it has been my experience that the art world is just as phobic about expressions of faith in art as the church world can be.

Fortunately, the priest at our parish appreciates visual art as an effective means of communication, and he lets me decorate the church in non-traditional ways. For Pentecost Sunday, I made a very large mobile of tongues of flames that hung in the middle of the church over the congregation. The flames moved in slow, seemingly random arcs, occasionally pausing over someone for a moment, before moving on again to appear at an unanticipated location. Pretty much like the spirit of God's Holiness its own self.

Clay Foster Krum, Texas



Coming up in *Integrity*:
 An article *you* wrote?
 A poem from *your* heart?
 A drawing from *your* pen?
 Wisdom *you* have to share?

If you would like to submit materials for any of these upcoming issues, please do so! We are always interested in seeing manuscripts from new voices. You will find submission guidelines on the inside front cover.

Fall 1999

Graceful Living, Graceful Dying

Winter 1999

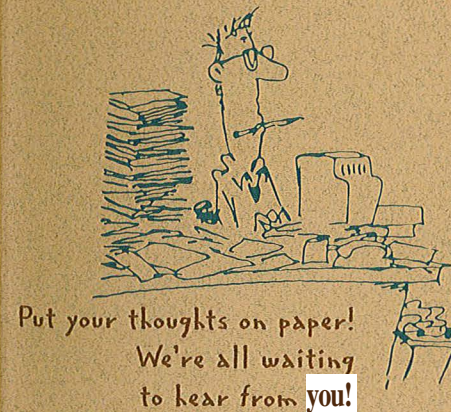
The Richness of the Christian Faith: What I've Learned from Other Believers

Submission deadline: September 30, 1999

Spring 2000

Prayer

Submission deadline:
 December 1, 1999



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