

## **EVERY MINISTER NEEDS TO WRITE FLOWER CARDS**

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One of the idiosyncracies of our churches is that we have fresh flowers in church. In many places on the Continent, for instance, Baptist churches will instead have a wonderful display of plants. Furthermore, unlike our Anglican friends, who also have fresh flowers in their churches, we British Baptists tend to get rid of our flowers by sending them to the 'sick and needy'.

I think there is a lot to be said for our present British Baptist practice. True, it would be less expensive and would involve less effort, if we were to use plants – for plants last a good deal longer than fresh flowers, and all they need is for somebody to remember to water them. Furthermore, since most Baptist churches tend to use their 'sanctuaries' only on a Sunday, it is a waste of good money letting flowers rot quietly on their own.

In my first church I confess that I took precious little interest in church flowers – on the whole I let the flower ladies sort out where the flowers should go. But now I take a keen interest in the destination of the flowers. In the first place, I decide who should receive the flowers (we normally send out three large bunches every Sunday). I certainly remember the 'sick and the needy' – but others too. We send flowers to the bereaved, but also to everybody who is baptised (including the young men!). People who are 'trying us out' receive flowers – sometimes on the first visit, otherwise on the second. I send flowers to people who need to be encouraged, and to people who need to be thanked. After weddings, when we have loads of flowers to give away, then I will often ensure that a whole church department (e.g. all the Sunday School teachers or all the Brigade leaders or all the helpers with the Child Contact Centre) are sent flowers. Furthermore, with every bunch of flowers, a flower card goes out, which is always penned in my fair hand! On the reverse of the card, along with the name, I always write a personal note. No doubt this task could be delegated. And yet for me this is a real pastoral privilege, and all the more so when I realise how many people hold on to these cards, long after the actual flowers have died. The flower card – and not just the flowers – is valued.

Writing flower cards does take a little effort. It can be a bit of a 'bind', just before the evening service, to have to sit down and think who should receive flowers and then write an appropriate note. But when I think of the work undertaken by the ladies who arrange the flowers and the people who then deliver the flowers, as also of the generosity of those who provide the flowers, the actual task of writing flower cards is minimal – and yet so appreciated.

So, let me encourage you to make the most of the ministry of flowers. It is a small, yet significant ministry.

Paul Beasley-Murray