

Editorial

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By Paul Beasley-Murray

Benefitting from appraisal

All the articles in this issue of *Ministry Today* are devoted to the important subject of appraisal. In the view of the RBIM Board, a mark of a professional pastor is the willingness - indeed, an eagerness - to undergo an annual appraisal. Appraisal in our view is in the interests of the pastor. It is also in the interests of the church.

A delightful theological perspective for appraisal is provided by the United Methodist Church of America:

Evaluation is natural to the human experience. Evaluation is one of God's ways of bringing the history of the past into dialogue with the hope for the future. Without confession of sin there is no reconciliation; without the counting of blessings there is no thanksgiving; without the acknowledgement of accomplishments there is no celebration; without awareness of potential there is no hope; without hope there is no desire for growth; without desire for growth the past will dwarf the future. We are called into new growth and new ministries by taking a realistic and hopeful look at what we have been and what we can still become. Surrounded by God's grace and the crowd of witnesses in the faith, we can look at our past unafraid and from its insights eagerly face the future with new possibilities. ¹

We do not pretend that this particular issue of *Ministry Today* has the last word to say on appraisal. Indeed, in the next issue we hope to have a follow-up article by a Methodist minister reflecting on his experience of the new Methodist scheme of accompanied self-appraisal. Needless to say, we would always welcome contributions from our readers on this subject, as indeed on any other.

Benefitting from reading

Hopefully one of the matters raised in every ministerial appraisal is the reading habits of the minister. For even in this technological age reading is vital to keeping fresh in Christian ministry. We need the stimulus which comes from interacting with the printed page. We can only continue to give out Sunday by Sunday as week by week we feed our minds as well as our souls.

John Wesley was a great believer in reading. It was his habit to travel with a volume of science or history or medicine propped on the pommel of his saddle, and in that way as he journeyed around the country he got through thousands of volumes. He once told the younger ministers of the early Wesleyan societies either to read or to get out of the

ministry. Charles Haddon Spurgeon likewise believed in reading, and built up a massive personal library, now in the possession of the William Jewell College in the USA. Spurgeon in his pastoral primer, **An All-Round Ministry**, wrote: 'Some of our people think that we have little or nothing to do but to stand in the pulpit, and pour out a flood of words two or three times a week; but they ought to know that, if we did not spend much time in diligent study, they would get poverty-stricken sermons'.

I believe that Wesley and Spurgeon were right. In the midst of the busy pastoral round we need to make time to read. As a rule of thumb, a book a week keeps a pastor awake!