

## **Editorial: Ending Well**

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For almost a quarter of a century Ministry Today UK (initially called the Richard Baxter Institute for Ministry) has been committed to the well-being of ministry. On the back of the early issues of the journal we printed the words of Richard Baxter, the great 16<sup>th</sup> century pastor of Kidderminster:

*“All churches either rise or fall as the ministry doth rise or fall – not in riches or worldly grandeur, but in knowledge, zeal and ability for their work”.*

Or in other words: “The key to the health and growth of the churches is its leaders”. And I dare to think that the many ministers who have read our journal and attended our conferences have been the healthier for it.

However, nothing in life is permanent - and as members of Ministry Today UK will know, this summer we made the decision to close down Ministry Today as from April 2018. As members of the Board will testify, I struggled with that decision. It is not easy to give up on an organisation which one founded. However, I much as I enjoyed chairing Ministry Today UK (MTUK) and serving as the General Editor and Review Editor of the journal, I realised that now that I was retired from stipendiary ministry the time had come for me to step down from leadership. Although I still am involved in preaching and teaching, the fact is that I am no longer running a church – and so no longer experiencing the stresses and strains of ministry today. I believe that a strength of MTUK is that it has been an organisation run by working ministers for working ministers, and so I gave notice to the Board that another chairman was necessary.

We spent a good deal of time looking for younger leaders to take over, but unfortunately were not successful. We explored the possibility of a partnership with one or two theological colleges, but the Board felt that such a partnership would change the character of Ministry Today UK as a body run by working ministers for working ministers.

Inevitably I feel somewhat sad about this outcome. Yet the reality is that there is much to celebrate. MTUK has occupied a very special place in the life of many ministers – there has been no other British cross-denominational organisation focussed on the practice of ministry. Over the years I certainly have been blessed by the insights of others from traditions not my own.

The good news, however, is that even with the closure of Ministry Today UK, the journal will continue to bless ministers for a good number of years to come. For as a Board we have decided to leave a permanent legacy by republishing all 520 articles of the 72 issues of *Ministry Today UK*. Entitled *Ministry Today UK 1994-2018*, we will deposit sets of the 8 hard-backed volumes in all six British copyright libraries, and are also expecting that sets will be bought by many theological colleges.

We are particularly keen that working ministers will be able to afford to buy the legacy volumes. So, from our own funds as also from help elsewhere, we have been able to make a substantial subsid to publishing costs, with the result that provided people order by the end of November 2017, they only need to pay £48 (plus £10 postage for UK residents) for a set of eight hard-backed volumes. After December 2017 people can still put in their orders, but by then the cost will be in the region of £95.

Topics covered are amazingly wide-ranging and include: leading a building project; a call to excellence; abuse in the church; adolescence, popular culture and the church; appraisals; all-age worship; the art of preaching; building visions; care for the dying and the living; care for those struggling with terminal illness; blogging; celebrating families; cathedrals and growth; Celtic spirituality; chaplaincy; children and communion; children in the church; Christian grandparenting; chronic illness and the church; church

design; church growth; competency; creating a learning community; creating safe community; Damascus or Emmaus; depression; developing a health cell movement; digital faith; dreaming dreams; ending and beginning well; fishing nets or safety nets; forgiveness and faith; disability; finding holy ground in dull terrain; forty days of purpose; funeral of a baby; gathering a harvest of righteousness; funerals are not always celebrations; goal setting; God gave rock'n roll to you; grave inscriptions; growing old; helping large congregations to stop the right; home groups; imagination and fun; immortal longings; inviting a response; is Allah God? Jubilee ethics; keeping sermons fresh; lay ministry; leadership; leadership in the Book of Esther; lessons in leadership failure; liberation theology and the local church; losing a staff member; lost souls – who we do think we are?; loving God and nation; managing is not enough; ministry and revivalism; ministry and technology; ministry burnout; ministry from the margins; ministry in a small community; ministry stages; ministry to survivors of sexual abuse; multi-ethnic worship; pastoral counselling; pastoral visiting; prayer; prayer and midlife ministry; preaching amidst the ruins of Christendom; preaching the messianic prophecies; the preacher as poet; race, class and the Gospel in multi-cultural Britain; real men don't do church; reforming worship; reliability in ministry; reshaping worship for evangelism in a missionary church; responsibility without authority; retirement; resolving difficulties in the local church; rural evangelism; same gender relationships; seven keys for survival in ministry; spiritual accountability; suburban and urban spirituality; suicide; supervision; surviving the culture of criticism; the care of seniors; the challenge of assimilation; the Christian leader as contemplative; the cultural context of mission; the Gospel-driven church; the long-term pastorate; the Lord's prayer and terrorism; the male identity crisis in the church; the ministry of little things; the care of the homeless; the violence of language; theological reflection and stress management; time to move on; transition planning; turning leavers into returners; understanding the changing patterns of church attendance; where have all the prophets gone?; why we should not commemorate World War 1; working with asylum seekers; and working with young people.

What a bargain for this wide-ranging collection of articles on almost aspect of the practice of ministry! Although this offer is being made primarily to members of MTUK, we are willing to make the same offer to others too.

UK residents are encouraged to pay by bank transfer £58 (£48 + £10 postage and packing) before the end of November 2017. Sort code 30-00-05 (Lloyds TSB: Park Row Leeds Branch); account number 02979946 (account name: Ministry Today UK).. At the same time confirm your name and address by email to our Treasurer: [rev.william.ruddle@gmail.com](mailto:rev.william.ruddle@gmail.com). Alternatively, cheques can be made out to Ministry Today UK and sent to Rev William Ruddle Northgate House, Northgate, Pinchbeck, Spalding, Lincs PE11 1SQ. People living outside the UK can also order the set of legacy volumes at this special pre-publication price, but clearly the postage will be higher – they need to contact William Ruddle to find out the cost of postage.

One final comment: I am proud that MTUK is going to end well by leaving this legacy for future generations of ministers and church leaders. Would that every Christian or church organisation knew how to end well!

Paul Beasley-Murray