

THE CHURCH AND MINISTRYPoringland Draft

1. Within our two churches there exists a special ordained ministry amongst a diversity of forms of ministerial service. The service of God and of mankind is the hallmark of every Christian disciple who seeks to follow the example of Jesus (Mark 10: 42-45). Specific ministries, such as those of prophecy or healing, are given by the risen Lord through the Spirit for the building up of the Church (Eph. 4: 11-14). A wide range of ministerial services, such as those of churchwardens and parish clerks, have long been recognised and authorised by local churches. The special ordained ministry can only be rightly understood within this broader context.

MINISTRIES IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

2. The church, in obedience to its Lord, is called to be faithful to its origin. The pattern, therefore, of the teaching, life and mission of the apostles is to be maintained in the church through the Spirit (Eph. 2:20). In this way the all-powerful love of God is manifested where the rule of Christ has been acknowledged.

3. Just as the life of the church is expressed in innumerable ways in a variety of situations, so the gifts of ministry are infinitely diverse. Externally they are concerned with the proclamation of the gospel and a demonstration of the divine compassion toward mankind. For God's glory and man's own good such ministry seeks to bring men into the fellowship of Christ's church and so under his rule of love. Internally these ministries are concerned with the worship of God and the church's spiritual health; seen in loyalty to apostolic doctrine, a Christ-like life and involvement in mission to the world. The rôle of the special ministry within the church's fellowship is a co-ordination of these varied functions, the promotion of what is necessary for the church's life and the exercise of a discerning judgment.

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THE CO-ORDINATING MINISTRY

4. Every community requires some focus of leadership to ensure its integration. The church is no exception. To be the kind of community that God intended he willed both the end and the means. Such a diversity of spiritual gifts is evidence of vitality, the more dynamic a church proves to be the greater becomes the need for a general oversight (episcopate). This is precisely the task of the special ministry which God provides for co-ordinating the life of the servant church.
5. In the New Testament a variety of images is used to describe the functions of this co-ordinating minister. He is servant, both of Christ and of the church, indicating humility. He is an apostle, since his commission stems from Christ and is authenticated by the church. As ambassador he is an authoritative representative of Christ who proclaims his message of reconciliation. As a shepherd he exercises pastoral care and guides the flock. He is a steward who may only provide for the household of God what belongs to Christ. He is to be an example both in holiness and in compassion. While some of these images are universally applicable, others suggest a special gift; but by the very nature of the Body of Christ it is not in the purpose of God that one man should be endowed with all the gifts. The special minister is to be a focus of unity, co-ordinating and promoting the full diversity of the church's life, while at the same time using whatever special gift he may have received.

VOCATION TO THE SPECIAL MINISTRY

6. Since Jesus gave assurance that his church would never be destroyed and since the life of the church requires a proper oversight, then God will ensure that such oversight will be provided. The contingencies of history necessitate a variety of ways in which this oversight may be expressed. Thus there is no clear blueprint

for this oversight in the New Testament, though the main lineaments are traceable there. Bishops and presbyters are interchangeable terms. The so-called threefold ministry was taking shape by the beginning of the second century, but it must be understood as one ministry historically diversified. Today in both our churches the nature of the diaconate is undergoing serious reexamination. The essential ministry is that of oversight (episcopate).

7. Just as the original apostles did not choose themselves but were chosen and commissioned by Jesus, so the special ministers within the church do not choose themselves but are called by the risen Lord. Not only is their vocation from Christ but their qualification for exercising such a ministry is the gift of the Spirit. "Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3: 4-6). They are placed in a new relationship of responsibility to Christ and his church.

THE SPECIAL MINISTER AS A SIGN AND REPRESENTATIVE
OF CHRIST IN HIS RECONCILING WORK

8. The reconciliation of men to God, made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is realised in the life of the church. Proclamation of the message of reconciliation on behalf of Christ is its continuing mission. The central act of worship in the church is the eucharist, a memorial of that reconciliation and the nourishing of the church's life for the fulfilment of its mission. Consequently the special minister is the one appropriate figure to preside at the celebration of the eucharist.

9. But not only is there a necessity for a co-ordination of the life of the church in a given locality. It is necessary to be assured that this church is one with its historical origin and

with the universal church. Ordination is a sign of continuity with the past and of universality in the present

10. In our two churches oversight is supremely associated with the bishop. When a person is to be ordained bishop, bishops of other churches lay hands upon him as they request the gift of the Spirit for his ministry. Because they are the overseers of other churches, by their participation in his ordination they signify the fact that this new bishop and his church belong to the communion of local churches, that is to say to the universal church. Moreover, because they are bishops of churches historically rooted in the teaching of the apostles and faithful to it, their participation also indicates the continuity of this church and its bishop with the original apostolic community. The communion of the churches in faith and holiness, thus transcending time and space, is maintained in the bishop. This is what our churches mean by ordination in the apostolic succession. In the local church presbyters and deacons are associated by their ordination with this responsibility of the bishop in oversight. Traditionally in our two churches the main tasks of this ministry have been the preaching and exposition of the gospel, pastoral care and the administration of the sacraments.

11. A priestly ministry, the fruit of the sacrifice of Christ, is exercised by the whole people of God, 'a royal priesthood' (I Pet. 2:9). The office and function of ministers are not a particular expression of 'the priesthood of all believers' but exist to promote the holiness and mission of the whole church. The church has one High Priest and one sacrifice, all sufficient and unrepeatable, which took place in history once for all. Christ gave to his disciples the sacrament of the eucharist to be a continuing memorial of his sacrifice. It was reflection on this that led the primitive church to affirm the priestly quality of the ministry, although in the New Testament the ministers are never called priests (hiereis).

The minister who presides at this commemoration of the sacrifice, repeating the words and gestures of Christ, presents before the Father the perfect offering of the Son. To affirm the priestly quality of the minister of the eucharist is not to question the new, unique and definitive priesthood of Christ; any more than to call the eucharist sacrificial is to question that the sacrifice of Christ is once-for-all and sufficient.

The special ministry has therefore a priestly quality which is wholly relative to the unique priestly act of Jesus and intended to assure the contact of the community with that act in the here and now.

Alternative text

11. Similarly the organisation of the liturgy and of public worship in the community of the faithful has belonged in a special manner to the bishop. Early in the history of the Church he became the one who presided at the eucharist and no other could preside without his consent. Since Christ gave this sacrament to his disciples to be the continuing memorial of his own unique sacrifice, wherein he exercised the unique and definitive priesthood of the New Testament (cfr. Hebrews), the ministry of the eucharist itself became a sign of this priesthood, and the bishop, as its chief minister, acquired a certain priestly character. All the more so in that just as Christ is among his people particularly in the Eucharist, so to the bishop, as his representative, exhibits the presence of the High Priest the memorial of whose sacrifice he celebrates. This element of priesthood in his ministry is, therefore, totally relative to and dependent on the Lord's own and unique priesthood, and is in no way derived from 'the priesthood of all believers' (I Peter 2:9), the 'royal priesthood of the People of God'. Ministers are priests because of the Eucharist and the Priesthood of Christ.

10. As early as Ignatius, at least in some churches, the man exercising these functions presided at the eucharist and no other could preside without his consent (Smyrn. 8:1). Because the eucharist is the memorial of the sacrifice of Christ, its minister bears a special relation to the sacrificial act of Jesus our High Priest. Thus the church saw ~~in him a~~ reflection of the priestly rôle of Christ ^{reflected in the work of the minister} and used priestly terms in his ~~description~~. ^{describing him} Nevertheless in the faith of our churches the priestly sacrifice of Jesus was unique, as is also his continuing High Priesthood. ^{however} It ~~is why~~ in the New Testament ministers are never called 'priests'. Their ministry is of a distinct character from that of the 'royal priesthood' of the people of God (I Pet. 2:9), from which it does not derive but which it exists to serve. The royal priesthood stems from the one sacrifice of Christ and is expressed in life and witness. The ordained ministry furthers the service of the whole church for the good of mankind and the glory of God.