

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

THE MINISTRY: ORDINATION AND FAMILY LIFE¹

I. ORDINATION²

II. CONDUCT AND FAMILY LIFE

A. Expectations in Conduct

Since every person who has accepted Christ as Savior and Lord is a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17-18), the former life becoming transformed, “being changed into his likeness” (2 Cor. 3:18), this new life is one of constant challenge for growth, so that one may develop toward the maturity and stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13). Thus, every person committed to Christ will seek to develop the lifestyle of his/her Lord. It is important that the minister shall earnestly strive to achieve it because of his/her leadership role in the body of believers and in his/her community and world.

The lifestyle of Jesus, which we seek to develop, is discovered in dynamic relationship with him. As we live in close fellowship with Christ, we are forever aware of our shortcomings and failures, and we constantly receive new insights and challenges that keep us aware of our need for further growth.

However, we believe that out of our heritage have come values, which have been derived from our best understandings of the mind of Christ, for our personal and interpersonal relationships. This frame of reference has produced the distinguishing characteristics that have brought well-being and wholeness to our day-to-day living. When we have digressed, we have experienced brokenness in our personal and interpersonal living. We have believed in integrity in all aspects of our living—word, deed, and transactions that have been dependable and worthy (Matt. 5:33-37). The sacredness of all human life is at the heart of our existence (Matt. 5:21-24). The reconciliation of our differences is essential (Matt. 5:25-26, 43-48; 6:12, 14-15; 18:15-17; Rom. 12:14-21). The life of moral integrity and marital fidelity was and is God’s intention for us (Matt. 5:27-32). Life centered in the eternal values calls for devotion to one’s Master and has the only true values (Matt. 6:19-24). Since we are temples for God’s indwelling, we find wholeness and well-being for ourselves and others when we discipline our lives to abstain totally from those things that destroy our bodies and our mental

1. Approved by the 1975 Annual Conference.

2. This section, which included the Definition, Origin, Function, and Duration of Ordination, was eliminated as directed by the 1999 Annual Conference paper on “Ministerial Leadership.”

powers and we use moderation in those that, when rightly used, are wholesome

and good (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In recent years medical research has affirmed much of what we have believed.

These are but a few of the values that have come to us from our study of the teachings of the Lord and the practice of his church as men and women have earnestly tried to understand and fulfill his will. Certainly these are not all. In the New Testament church, other admonitions were given, which pointed out the changes from the old life to that which was increasingly beautiful and new (see 1 Tim. 3:2-13; Tit. 1:5-8; 2:2-8; Gal. 5:19-24).

B. Concerning Deviations

In view of the development of a person as a gradual, dynamic process, deviations come into focus. These deviations should not be viewed as isolated events, but in terms of long-range perspectives and the directions in which the individual's development is generally moving.

In this process it seems likely that those who are growing most could be the most vulnerable. Immediately after Jesus' baptism came the temptations. Just when Peter was sure who Jesus was, he denied him. And David, at the height of his leadership, fell victim to his own passions (2 Sam. 11:2-12:14; Ps. 51).

But God never deserts those in trouble; he confronts them. He raises questions and clarifies the issues so that those who deviate recognize themselves in their digression and prescribe their own retribution and reconciliation. He sets the stage for judgment, confession, and repentance. When the person is thus enabled to respond, something creative and redemptive can happen.

Because we have tended to view ordination as changing the person—making the person more holy or reverend, and therefore immune to normal problems and temptations—we make it difficult for the minister to take the initiative in admitting that he/she has problems. Jesus was tempted as we are, but we often forget this when we deal with a minister in a moral crisis. When a minister expects or is expected to live according to a stereotyped role, problems and frustrations result.

Too often the minister has immature or unreal self-understanding and as a result feels inadequate. Having few helpful channels for working through these feelings, ministers may snatch for ways to prove adequacy or find personal support. Often the most meaningful affirmations are in deep, interpersonal relationships. While such deep and shared relationships may be helpful and healthy, they may sometimes move into intimacies or sexual expressions, which are unethical and immoral in their violation of the people involved. When this happens, we are all involved and responsible.

How, then, ought we to proceed? Matthew 18:15-17 offers some advice. First, it suggests one-to-one confrontation, which in Christ's method would involve pointing up the problem and considering the options available. This may need to involve one or two others to confirm what the difficulty seems to be and to witness to its meaning in the life of the group. Only when this fails is the entire group involved. Should these efforts fail, then the deviant becomes as an outcast. Remembering that it was to outcasts that Jesus was frequently found ministering, we must then minister.

A person's usefulness, rather than ending, may have a new beginning. Brokenness not

recognized hinders the development of God-given potential without the minister or lay person knowing why; brokenness acknowledged can open the way for God's grace to transform a life, and with it other lives.

C. Counseling and Discipline³

D. Preventative and Instructional Counsel and Discipline

1. *Support groups provide one ongoing avenue for ministers to help themselves and each other in times of crisis.* The following are ways in which support groups may help the pastor:
 - a. To work through self-concepts and concepts of the pastor carried by others in the church.
 - b. To come to terms with desires for advancement, status, recognition, as they relate to God's will for a person's life.
 - c. To deal with personal problems.
 - d. To deal with conflict.
 - e. To learn how, when, and where to express hostilities.
 - f. To improve interpersonal, including family, relationships.
 - g. To learn interdependence in relating to the congregation.
 - h. To encourage continued growth and study.
 - i. To know when referrals should be made in the counseling process.
 - j. To provide opportunities for study and reflection.
 - k. To clarify role expectations.
 - l. To confirm and/or renew his/her sense of calling.

2. *How individuals may help themselves.* Where support groups are not available, individuals may respond in personally helpful ways:
 - a. Counsel with qualified counselors or career center as designated by the district.
 - b. Participate with mate in marriage enrichment experiences.
 - c. Choose a trusted confidante within the local congregation who can give judicious, wise, spiritual, and objective counsel.
 - d. Give individual support to colleagues at times of personal crisis; e.g., separation or divorce.
 - e. Periodically engage in self-examination of motivation, priorities, and commitments.
 - f. Consult with District Executives/Ministers concerning professional/personal growth and personal goal evaluation.
 - g. Counsel with denominational staff members (especially those related to ministerial personnel).
 - h. Attend Bethany Theological Seminary's Advanced Pastoral Seminars (especially those relating to personal goals and growth and those for pastoral couples).
 - i. Participate in denominational or ecumenical area support groups for deep-level sharing.
 - j. Take advantage of the many audiocassettes on ministry.

3. The section entitled Counseling and Discipline in the original statement was replaced by the 1976 Annual Conference statement "Discipleship and Reconciliation," which was amended in 1977.

3. *How the person's family can help:*
 - a. Let the pastor and mate spend time alone together to work at their relationship, so that communication between them may be open and meaningful and the relationship may deepen and grow at corresponding levels.
 - b. Provide an atmosphere of love, acceptance, and understanding of each other's personhood.
 - c. Consider role expectations and conceptions of each other as they relate to marriage and family developments and enrichment.
 - d. Invite the district-approved counselors to explore with the person and the family ways of enriching family relationships.

4. *How the congregation can help:*
 - a. Work to establish the concept of the pastor as an enabler rather than a holy person or a chore person.
 - b. Review and evaluate regularly with the pastor his/her job analysis and work performance.
 - c. Creatively face conflicts and disagreements openly and honestly as they occur.
 - d. Live out attitudes of acceptance and forgiveness for one another and for any resident minister where there is disagreement over role or where there is any previous record of personal indiscretion.
 - e. Provide each pastor with a professional growth allowance as a part of the pastoral agreement with the congregation.
 - f. Grant sabbatical leave for the pastor at regular intervals.
 - g. Direct the pastor to take regular time off each week.
 - h. Provide competent and efficient secretarial help for the pastor.
 - i. Do not require the pastor's presence at every routine meeting. The pastor should serve as resource person, not as a convener, chairperson, or secretary.
 - j. Encourage the pastor to schedule and spend uninterrupted hours with the family, and enable him/her to do it.

5. *How the district can help:*
 - a. Provide counseling service that is not related to placement procedures.
 - b. Select a qualified counselor or counselors.
 - c. Identify supportive resource agencies, such as Career Development Centers.
 - d. Provide in-service training through workshops and retreats.
 - e. Assign "support colleagues" who are geographically near enough to be of assistance to pastors.
 - f. Assist pastors and mates financially in attending Advanced Pastoral Seminars and other marriage enrichment experiences.
 - g. Encourage and assist pastors' mates to participate in personal enrichment experiences.
 - h. Activate the mediation committee (now known as Discipleship and Reconciliation Committee) as provided in district constitutions.

6. *How the denomination can help:*

- a. Cooperate in sponsoring workshops and retreats at the district level.
- b. Provide a bibliography on the ministry and its related joys and problems, including books, pamphlets, cassettes, and audiovisuals.
- c. Initiate a study of divorce and remarriage through an Annual Conference committee.
- d. Ask the General Board to provide staff leadership in the area of family life enrichment.
- e. Provide funds to assist districts and individuals to underwrite personal/family resources available for counseling on a confidential basis not related to district placement procedures.

7. *How Bethany Theological Seminary can help:*

- a. Continue to provide Advanced Pastoral Seminars based on the needs of the participants.
- b. Continue to provide educational opportunities dealing with interpersonal relationships and conflict management.
- c. Provide guidance for pastors planning a program of professional growth experiences.
- d. Develop a program providing family life enrichment for students and mates.
- e. Include curriculum offerings in the seminary degree program in the area of organizational development that will help the pastor with skills and methods for working at understanding and negotiating role expectations with the local church.

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