

Ministry Of The Whole Church

Practical Application Paper

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The following presuppositions, affirmed with scriptural support, are submitted as essential ministries within Christ's Church.

Whenever "Church" is capitalized, it refers to the Church Universal, whenever "church" is in lower case, it refers to the local church.

A) Christ is the Head of His Church

Scriptural Support:

That Christ is chosen by God to be the Head and the Foundation of the Church is clearly demonstrated in Matthew during the conversation Jesus had with Peter when Jesus inquired of him, "Whom do you say that I am?" and Peter responded saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God", (Matthew 16:18). With His response, "Upon this rock, (*knowledge*), I will build my Church and the gates of hell will never prevail against it," Jesus accepts that Peter comprehends that Christ is God dwelling among men in the flesh, (Matthew 1:23; John 1:1).

Paul, writing to the Church in Colosse, emphasizes that "Christ is the Head of the body, the Church . . . that in all things He might have preeminence", (Colossians 1:17 & 18). Later, he states that this position was granted to Him by God, the Father to the praise of His glory, (Colossians 1:19). When writing to the Church at Corinth Paul is appalled with the contest for leadership authority that was occurring there as some openly announced they were followers of Apollos, some of Paul, and some of Jesus. Paul, to curtail this ungodly situation, asks "Is Christ divided?" in His devotion to God, (I Corinthians 1:12 - 16). Since He, as the Head of the Church is not, neither should His people be. Instead of this, they should remember that there is one Lord over His people, the Church, and honour and worship Him alone in word, thought and deed!

Application:

1) It is imperative that believers fully comprehend that Christ is Head of His Church, for in so doing it will be protected from the tension of interpersonal struggles for power, prestige and position within the Church. Christ, as Head of His Church, has called people of all colours, races, sects, and socioeconomic strata to be His dear children, not because of what they offered, but because He loved them. Since God's love, grace, mercy and forgiveness are the criteria for individuals being invited into the Church through Christ, it needs to humble itself under God, accept everyone who confesses Christ as Saviour and Lord as brothers and sisters, and worship the Lord together, as equals. This can only be realized as the Church adheres to Paul's passionate plea, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all

lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1 - 3).

In its fullest application the Church reveres Christ as Lord over the Church, and willingly submits to His teachings for guidance to live righteously as it reflects His character. Although pastors are called to public ministry, and are to be given special recognition by the local church, if his preaching/teaching is contrary to Christ’s, the church is called to follow Christ’s instruction rather than man. To ensure that the pastor’s message(s) align with scripture, parishioners should be encouraged to examine the message in light of scripture to see if the one concurs with the other even as did those in Berea when Paul preached, (Acts 17:10 & 11).

2) The church could foster a sense of equality through reverting back to calling members of the church ‘brothers and sisters’ as was done in the past. This would quickly engender a sense of family where everyone is fully accepted as significantly important and welcome in the body with equal acceptance, privileges and honour.

3) Churches, to foster a sense of welcome equality among the people, could hold a quarterly family Sunday service during which family members from the congregation sit together symbolically representing the Church as family. If there are singles within the congregation, they could be invited to join one of the family groups. After the service a family dinner with a showing of family video being shown. The more often family, connected under the Lordship of Christ, is represented in the services, banquets, festivals and the preaching, the stronger the unity in the body will become.

B) The Church Universal consists of the entire people of God around the world, - those who are redeemed by faith in Christ’s completed work on the cross.

Scriptural Support:

That all of the people of God are the redeemed of God in Christ is clear from Paul’s declaration, “He (God) has made of two one new man, that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Ephesians 2:15-17). It has always been God’s desire that there be one people, the Church, that would reflect His glory. This desire is demonstrated in Christ willfully coming to earth and dying on the cross as the One, Complete, All Sufficient Sacrifice for humanity. Jesus affirms that this is God’s desire stating, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me”, (John 17:20 - 25). And Peter, later, also affirms this

stating, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy," (I Peter 2:9 & 10).

Application:

1) Within the Church this destroys any sense of pride one might possess that he/she has a greater standing before God than others within the Church. Everyone, within the Church, has been redeemed from the condemnation of sin, translated into the Kingdom of God's Dear Son, and adopted as His dear children, (Ephesians 5:1), with equal standing before Him. Believers comprehending this humbly recognize the equality of all within the Church, and labour intensely to foster it as a welcoming part of the unit.

2) Equality of all believers before God should foster brotherly love, (Romans 12:10), and welcome hospitality one towards the other within the Church. This could be exemplified through members being reminded that they should hold their material gifts selflessly, remembering that they are called "To do good to all men, but especially to those of the household of faith" as they have opportunity (Galatians 6:10). When compassionate concern for others is promoted, the Church will become a sharing, caring, bearing fellowship where nobody lacks any genuine need should unwelcome 'hard times' befall him. Periodically pastors should remind the congregation of the biblical instructions related to providing relief to others when necessary, even as Lydia provided aid to Paul in his time of need after she had become a believer, (Acts 16:14 & 15). Providing for other's needs could be demonstrated by a member of the Church providing housing for a student attending Bible College, by a member providing a car for a missionary home on furlough, by a member paying air fare for a fellow believer to attend a funeral because of an unexpected death in the family, and/or by a member or a team of members providing cooked meals or baking for the 'shut-ins' from the Church.

3) Teaching about the equality of all God's people would protect the Church against certain individuals being shown 'favouritism of position' in ministry or leadership based on their charisma, finances, education or popularity. James strongly warns against this when he tells his brethren not to elevate the one who possess good apparel, and put down the other because he wears poor clothing, (James 2:1-3). God never shows respect for persons, (Romans 12:4), and neither

should His Church. Rather, it consistently should display a loving, accepting and caring hospitality towards everyone who is genuinely seeking help regardless of his/her present status in life, even as Christ would do if He were a member of the congregation. Pastors need to periodically evaluate member's gifts, make room for these to be used within the body, and regularly invite members to actively use their gift(s) for the edifications of the body. No one within the local church should be discriminated from using his/her gift based on personality or social position.

4) A mature grasp of equality among all believers should remind everyone within the Church that regardless where they travel, if a Christian group is gathering for worship in the area, they, too, would be welcome to join that group for worship. Paul and Barnabas were extended the right hand of fellowship in Jerusalem by Cephas, James and John (Galatians 2:1-10). John, the Evangelist, strongly suggests that brotherly fellowship of this nature should be expected by all believers when he writes, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin," (1 John 1:5 - 7). The most powerful witness to the world that Christians love God and love one another is their intense, welcome fellowship one with another in Christ.

5) Understanding that all believers are part of the same family connected together as fellow citizens and fellow heirs of God's Kingdom, pastors need to teach and encourage parishioners to respect and treat each other with the highest dignity possible. Paul emphasizes this in writing to the Church in Colosse saying, "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness", (Colossians 3:14). Pastors, like Paul, need to recognize that when love is 'put on' such things as anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, and/or lying one to another will not be found within it. Why? Paul answers this stating, "For we have not learned this of Christ," (Ephesians 4:20). In light of this, believers need to be reminded continuously that need to be "Renewed in the spirit of their mind; so that they will reflect the new creation they have become which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness," (Ephesians 4:21 & 22). This will become a reality as believers start thinking more highly of one another than they do of themselves, (Romans 12:3). As the Fruit of the Spirit is exemplified within the fellowship, those that are not yet part of God's family will see Christ's love emulated, and may be drawn to love God and know Him personally as Saviour and Lord.

C) God's 'Leadership Team' within the local church is comprised of Apostles,

Scriptural Support:

Paul, the Apostle, writes to the Church at Ephesus that God has given His leadership team to the Church, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:” (Ephesians 4:11 - 17). Paul recognizes that often many believers will be slack in reading scripture, in meditating on the things of the Lord, and in sharing their faith because of circumstances that arise. Therefore, here, and in other places, (Romans 12:8; I Timothy 3:2), Paul declares that leads should act as mentors for other believers so they will grow in Christ and become mature in their faith.

Application:

1) To the church, the leadership is significant in that it represents believers who are set aside to specific ministries so that others, within the church, will be mentored to maturity and stability in Christ. For believers, who should desire to “grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ”, (Ephesians 2), these leaders are a real assets, as they have time to “study the scripture as workmen that need not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, rightly dividing the word of truth”, (II Timothy 2:15).

2) Within local churches, gifted leaders should be encouraged to exercise their specific gift, and they should be given ministry opportunities as often as possible. As the excitement of their gift is demonstrated, others may be prompted to also seek out what leadership gift they possess. This could be realized by giving members opportunities to hold seminars, by which others would grow in a biblical knowledge, in areas of skill or special education. An accountant or bank manager, for example, could hold a seminar on money management or a carpenter could hold a seminar on teaching a boy’s club how to make small projects.

3) Believers need to submit to the church’s leadership team as it offers pastoral care, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness in love. According to Paul this is important because they “watch over the member’s souls, and they must give an account” to God regarding their spiritual growth, (Hebrews 13:17). Pastoral care may not always be welcome, but believers need to welcome it as a gift which will ensure them growth and maturity in their walk with the Lord.

D) Within the local church, caring for the ‘tables’, or management of the daily

routines is given over to elders or deacons, chosen from among the people, so that the pastor may give himself to prayer and preparation to preach the Word

Scriptural Support:

As mentioned earlier, leadership gifts are important within the church so that God's people will mature spiritually. But, people also need to have their immediate human needs attended to! So within the Church there is a need for others, who are gifted with 'servant gifts' such as waiting on tables, caring for the orphans and widows, visiting those who are in prison, and the like (Acts 6). James calls these ministries "pure and undefiled religion" (James 1:7).

Application:

- 1) For the church this is a great opportunity to extend God's love beyond the walls of the sanctuary by touching the poor, the marginalized, the lonely and those that are hesitant to come to the Church in time of need because of embarrassment. As the Church extends its love through tangible deeds, believers will see that their acts of love are readily accepted, and do change people's circumstances. As the excitement grows, because of changes seen, the Church will 'explode' with a desire to be Christ's hands extended to the needy, instead of imploding by the Church holding on to Christ as its private, prized possession.
- 2) When caring for the needs of others is entrusted to the parishioners, rather than being done by the leadership team, the congregation will be reminded that the Church is all the people of God working together with one another, and with God to see His Kingdom announced on earth. Often, unintentionally, pastor's mistakenly misread their "call to ministry" to infer that they are "in charge of every ministry conducted in the church". As this happens, parishioners may start conjecturing that if anything needs to be done, the pastor will look after it. Often, therefore, unfortunately, caring for the general needs of the congregation is left unattended. God's plan for the Church is that it would be a caring community of faithful workers who exercise its individual gifts jointly so that others may see their "good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Pastors who desire to see their people become motivated to practically live out their faith need to release them from their control, thereby giving them authority to work out their salvation as God works in and with them as they 'wait on tables'. This delegating of authority to others may be the pastor's most powerful demonstration that he loves and trusts his people to be mature in the Lord as they give a glass of water in His name.

3) The pastor, entrusting the 'waiting on of tables' to others, releases himself to study the Word, to meditation, and to prayer (Acts 6:1 - 7), which are the principle elements of his 'call' so he will be prepared to edify the congregation to good works in the Lord. If believers are to be "equipped to be mature in the Lord so they won't be tossed about by every wind of doctrine", (Ephesians 4:14), the pastor/teacher cannot have his time to prepare his messages interrupted by those things that are secondary to ensuring the believer's spiritual growth. Paul recognized this when he told Timothy to "stir up the gift of *preaching* which is put in thee by the laying on of my hands", (II Timothy 1:6). To remind Timothy's of the primacy of preaching, over the caring for the people's physical needs, Paul writes to him stating, "Preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season . . ." (II Timothy 4:1 - 6). No where in the Pastoral Epistles does Paul advocate the pastor taking charge over the day to day management issues of the Church; instead of this, he gives this over to deacons appointed by the congregation, to do this work.

4) Practically, entrusting 'waiting on tables' to the deacons is most appropriate in that the deacons, and not the pastor, are long time members of the Church community and, therefore, would know the genuine needs of the members. Pastors often do not remain in the local church for more than five to eight years, and, therefore, often may not fully informed of the day to day needs of the people. Such being the case, it would be best to delegate this responsibility to those in the church that know the physical needs of the congregation the best!

E) God has given the Church gifts of ministry as He pleases to those He chooses.

Scriptural Support:

These gifts consist of service gifts (Romans 12) and ministry gifts (II Corinthians 12 & 14) and are to be used by the church for the edification and building up of the saints.

The Church recognizes that everyone who names Christ as Saviour and Lord has received the gift of salvation, (Acts 10:26), whereby they are sealed unto eternal life, (Ephesians 1:12 - 14). Along with this, however, so that the Church may be edified and encouraged to do the work of ministry within the body, God has chosen to give specific gifts for specific ministries to specific people of His choice, (I Corinthians 12:1 - 7). These gifts include "the gift of knowledge, the gift of wisdom, the gift of healing, the gift of working miracles, the gift of tongues, the gift of interpretation of tongues . . ." (I Corinthians 12). Regardless of the gift one has received, Paul reminds the Church that it is for the benefit of the whole body, and no one gift should be emphasized over any other gift, and no gift is to be dispensed with from within the

Church for all gifts come from God at His discretion, (I Corinthians 12:11)

Application:

- 1) Within the Church understanding the importance of the gifts is imperative if it is to be the welcoming community of faith expressing the love of God. As the individuals gifts are accepted and implemented in the body for the benefit of the whole body, the church will recognize that everyone is significant, not only because of who they are, but also because of what God has empowered them to contribute to the body through the gift(s) they possess.
- 2) Understanding that it is God who gives the gifts for the benefit of the whole Church releases the pastor from autocratically controlling manifestations of spiritual gifts within the church. The pastor may be upright in guarding against disorderly use of the gifts as he understands scripture, but he must be careful not to discourage or restrict the usage of the gifts because of personal prejudices; after all, it is God out of His Sovereign Will, and not the pastor, who has given the gift. Utilizing the gifts empowers the church to remember that it is God, not man, that has full sway over spiritual ministry within the church. Man may have ideas, but God, through the gifts, will bring a word of knowledge, a working of miracle, a message in tongues and interpretation whereby the people of God are edified to trust Him and serve Him in the liberty of the Spirit all to the praise of His glory.
- 3) The Church must continuously be reminded that no one person possesses all the Gifts of the Spirit for, "To one is given by the Spirit the gift of a word of wisdom, while to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit . . . (I Corinthians 12:8 - 10). In light of this, the church needs to remember that no member, regardless of the gift he/she possesses, is more significant or of greater value within the church than another who may not possess any one gift at the moment. Paul emphasizes this when writing to the Church at Corinth reminding the people that their physical body, which has many members, cannot discriminate between the significance or insignificance of its members based on what it does or does not do, (I Corinthians 12:12 -14). Similarly, one in the Church, who possesses the gift of the word of knowledge, cannot say to the one who possesses the gift of tongues, you're not needed in the Church. In the spirit realm, like in the physical realm, every part of the body is essential for the healthy good end of the Church. Pastors need to teach a healthy, biblical understanding of the gifts found within the Church, along with a healthy, biblical understanding of the use of the gifts that edify the entire body as they are

used “decently and in order”, (I Corinthians 14:40).

G) The people of God are expected to “lay aside on the first day of the week that of which the Lord has prospered them”

Scriptural Support:

In order for the church to effectively announce the gospel, a stable economic support is required. In light of this Paul instructs the people that, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him”, (I Corinthians 16:1 & 2). Whenever Paul asked for collections, he had three goals in mind. First, to cover the costs of his personal travel and care, to provide an offering for other works that were in need (Jerusalem gave to help Philippi when there was a need there, and Philippi returned the gift when the Church at Jerusalem needed help), and to aid other pastors to visit Paul as he traveled throughout Asia.

Application:

1) Churches need to understand the significance of continuous, adequate, and willful financial support of the church. Firstly, the pastor is worthy of his hire; Paul emphasis this when he writes “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (I Corinthians 9:1 - 12). The support offered should be a joyful, abundant gift provided by the body consistently on the first day of the week. In receiving the gift, the pastor is now released from the anxiety of possible lack of income, and the church is able to adequately meet its financial obligations. To guarantee this security, parishioners need to understand that the joy of giving back to the Lord comes not in seeing the need met, but in understanding that God has already given them resources by which they can enjoy all things, even giving to the Church. This confident, buoyant trust and thankfulness empowers believers to donate their finances to the Church cheerfully, excitedly, and extravagantly, instead of grudgingly and out of necessity. Paul wants the church to be liberated in giving so they do not get side tracked by the love of money may quickly draw them into investing their gifts for personal, immediate gain, rather than investing them for Kingdom eternal gain. For Paul, Kingdom investment pulsates within every facet of his being, and his desire for the church Kingdom is that this will happen to it too. Thirdly, Paul recognizes the importance of one local church helping another local church in its time of financial need as was demonstrated by the Church at Antioch sending money to the Church in Judea (Acts 11:27 - 30).

2) Pastors need to teach parishioners how to biblically and godly handle their finances. Paul, writing to Timothy, instructs him to warn his people “not to be high-minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but to trust in God and to learn to be rich in good works as they willingly distribute their resources to those who are need”, (I Timothy 6:17 - 19). To Paul, this conduct is a clear witness to others that believers understand what it means to “lay hold of eternal life” because they have set their affections on exactly what God, the Father, has set His affections on - the good of others, instead of that of self! Special quarterly offerings could be collected to be sent to smaller churches facing economic testing. The gift received would not only bless the church, it would also remind it that there are others still working with them and God in announcing the Kingdom to the world.

3) Congregations need to be encouraged to give “as the Lord has prospered him”, (I Corinthians 16:2). Whereas tithing is often taught within the local church, “laying aside of that which the Lord has prospered” His people extends the liberty of giving financially to the church. The boundary of giving the tithe often causes people to discriminate how much they should give to God’s work, and often the church lacks resources to do its ministry. However, when giving is extended to include the blessing(s) one has received of the Lord, which may be greater than the tithe, the people become liberated to give of their blessing(s) joyfully, and the needs of the church, both locally and around the world, are adequately met. Teaching in this area is needed continuously; however, when it is provided, pastors need to guard against giving the impression that they are begging for financial resource. In everything that is said, the church must be encouraged to give of their blessing to the church so that God’s kingdom ministry can be fulfilled.

H) The church accepts and preaches scripture as God’s inerrant, complete revelation regarding His eternal will for mankind.

Scriptural Support:

Scripture is the inspired Word of God fully declaring God’s plan of redemption for mankind. Jesus describes His Word as Truth, (John 15). Paul, from his testimony in I Timothy 1:11 - 16, understands that his ‘call to ministry”, first and for most, was to preach the gospel. When addressing the Church at Corinth, he emphasizes this stating that preaching is a “necessity that is laid on him”, and that unwanted, difficult circumstances would face him if he neglected fulfilling this call, (I Corinthians 9:16). Preaching the gospel is Paul’s primary focus, desire and drive because he understands that it is the “power of God unto salvation

to everyone who believes . . . for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” (Romans 1:16 - 17). It is through this, Paul reminds the Church at Rome later on, that ‘faith towards salvation’, through Jesus Christ, is instilled within the hearers, (Romans 10:10). Fully understanding the power of the gospel, and the need for it to be preached Paul reminds the Church at Corinth that his “preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: so that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God”, (I Corinthians 2:4 & 5).

Application:

1) In light of this, the Church today must passionately affirm that preaching the gospel is one of its primary reasons for existing. Realizing this, it must be on guard to ensure that preaching never becomes secondary to concerts, films, musicals or other such programs that may also be used from time to time to influence others to attend church. These may draw the crowds and provide temporary entertainment; preaching, however, is the primary scriptural ‘tool’ by which the ‘good seed of the gospel’ may be planted so that it may fall into good soil and bring individuals to faith in Christ.

2) The church needs to remember that Jesus, from the very beginning of His ministry, understood the primacy of preaching as He traveled, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand”, (Matthew 4:3-17). His understanding of the importance of preaching is accentuated as He commissioned His disciples to public ministry stating, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel” (Mark 16:15).

3) The foundational elements of the message that the Church preaches is, “Christ died for our sins according to the scripture, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the scripture” (I Corinthians 1:3 & 4). The central focus in the Church’s message is Christ, the Mediator between God and man “For there is salvation in none other name given under heaven among men whereby they must be saved”, (Acts 12:4). Jesus affirms this saying, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”, (John 12:32). Understanding the significance of the gospel, pastors need to continuously fervently and passionately, preach the good news whenever a public gathering is held.

4) Preaching, also, is essential in that it is this that the people of God receive “doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness”, (II Timothy 3:16), so that they may be firmly rooted in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul, desires this growth, and therefore he instructs

fellow believers in Hebrews to leave the basic teachings of scripture, (repentance from dead works), and move into a deeper understanding of it, (Hebrews 6:1-3). Churches that are deeply rooted in the Word, through expository preaching and Bible studies, not only grow spiritually, but they also grow numerically. Those that are sincere in their faith desire to know their God and be known of Him. Therefore, pastors need fulfill their calling, which includes being “apt to teach”.

5) Preaching the Word is essential in the Church in that it protects the elect of God from false teachers who subtly creep into fellowships teaching false doctrine which deny “the *teachings and works of the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*”, (Jude 1:3 & 4). Pastors need to remember that their ‘calling’ includes contending for sound doctrine, (Titus 1:9), because there will come a time when many, unwisely, will turn to false teachings, (II Timothy 4:3). If the mouths of those who teach unruly, vain and subverting teachings are to be stopped, leaders must continuously “hold fast the faithful Word that he/she has been taught, that they may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers”, (Titus 1:9). Paul is so convinced of this that later in Titus he pleads with Titus to be an example in “sound doctrine” to his people so that they, because of the fidelity to the gospel they see in him, will also desire to adorn themselves in the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:4-10).

1) The church is missional proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and in so doing it calls individuals to repent and be saved

Scriptural Support

The Church is the called out people of God, commissioned and sent out as ambassadors by God and Christ to announce the Kingdom of God as it disciples others to know and love God with all their heart, soul and mind as Saviour and Lord. Paul best states this when he states “for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:20 & 21). Fully understanding this, he implores those at Philippi to grip the same understanding and fervency of being ambassadors of Christ by writing, “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ”, (Philippians 1:27a). In everything the Church does, its end purpose is to see God’s “Kingdom come in earth as it is already in heaven”, (Matthew 6:10).

Application:

1) The Church needs to recognize that its prime purpose is to be Christ’s witness as it declares to others all “that Christ both did and taught”, (Acts 1:1-5). Jesus’ last command to His disciples before His ascending to the Father was, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is

come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth", (Acts 1:8).

Understanding the full implication of this command, the Church needs to be on guard against inaugurating programs that entertain, that build congregations numerically, or that accommodate people's whims and desires, but do nothing to encourage them to be Christ's Ambassadors as they share His love to the lost. Every function that occurs within the Church, must draw God's people into a deeper understanding of His desire for others to know and love Him and also instill within them a yearning desire to be His witness as they are empowered by the Holy Spirit, instead of by necessity.

2) To encourage evangelism within the local church, pastors need to regularly preach on passages that encourage personal and corporate evangelism witness, (Matthew 28:16; Luke 10:1 & 2; Acts 1:8). As part of this plan might encourage the local church to pay for some of the members to attend evangelism training sessions such as the Billy Graham School of Evangelism. Enthusiasm for evangelism could also be encouraged by the pastor seeking out those who possess the gift of evangelism and allowing them to mentor others who sincerely desire to do the work of evangelism. Most important, the church needs to regularly equip the congregation with tools for evangelism by making available to them, through the library, gospel tracts, outreach DVD's, (The Flywheel), testimonial booklets and CD's.

3) Churches that are missional not only do local evangelistic outreaches; they see the need of copartnering with and the value of supporting overseas missionary ventures through prayer and finances. In so doing, the congregation is instilled with an appreciation that God's love is cross-cultural as it welcomes peoples of all races, cultures, and cultures into the family of God as the gospel is preached. But, this also generates within the Church the affirmation that whole body is called for the same purpose - discipling others to Christ - as coworkers with God and with one another. To encourage this, congregations regularly need to hold missionary conferences through which they invite missionaries they support to give reports of the work being carried on in their region of ministry. Along with this, pastors should encourage members of their church to attend Missions Fest conferences annually if these are held in their area.

4) Pastors could encourage members of their church to see the significance of their witness by asking them to write their story out following this outline. Firstly, tell of what they were like before

becoming born again; secondly, tell what person or circumstance ignited their desire to know the Lord; thirdly, tell of the process by which they became a Christian; and, fourthly, explain what they are doing for the Lord since they have been changed. Writing out one's story is important in that it gives them a simplified guide by which they can share their witness with others in a simplified, yet meaningful way. Many evangelistic outreach endeavours, such as The Net, Youth With A Mission, and Operation Mobilization use this idea.

5) To encourage evangelistic endeavours both at home and abroad, pastors could invite members to volunteer as visitors in local hospitals, prisons, drug treatment centres, and/or to do short term overseas missions trips to help build homes, schools, and/or hospitals or to work as nurses, teachers, or mechanics as required. Those that volunteer in these areas will see the work first hand, and, most likely, will return excitedly reporting what they have seen and encouraging others to do similar short term missionary ventures as witnesses of God's goodness to them over the years.

J) Everyone in the church is regarded a priest unto God

Scriptural Support:

Throughout scripture, (I Peter 2:5 - 9, Revelation 2:6), the Church is clearly taught that all believers, regenerated by faith in Christ's redemptive work, can render worship and pastoral care to others in and beyond the walls of the sanctuary. Although it has become commonly accepted, within the local church, to differentiate between pastor/laity roles, except in Ephesians 4:11 - 17,. no direct distinction is made regarding these roles within scripture. From a number of passages, however, it is clear that youth and the elderly, alike, have been used by God to declare His Word and to copartner with Him in bringing about His will. Youthful David, (II Samuel 17), was chosen by Samuel to be King over Israel; young Daniel, (Daniel 3 & 7), was used by God to interpret Nebucadnezzar's dreams; Simeon, an aged servant in the Synagogue, (Luke 2:25 - 34), blessed Christ and affirmed Him to be Israel's Salvation before all who were in attendance.

But scripture also demonstrates that women are ministering priests unto God and often are skillfully used by Him to bring about His divine purposes. Mary was chosen as a priest unto God as she gave birth to Christ, (Luke 2); Timothy's mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, were priests unto God as they taught Timothy scripture, (II Timothy 1:5). Phoebe, at Cenchrea, (Romans 16:2), was a priest unto God as she carried Paul's writings from jail to the Church at Rome. Paul appreciates her godly service and

invites the fellowship in Rome to accept her as one of the saints.

Application:

1) The Church needs to avoid sexist isolation from Church ministry by rightly dividing the Word of Truth and recalling that from God's perspective "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus", (Galatians 3:28) because we are all one in Christ. This oneness makes the community of faith a welcome place of love where God's gifts, given to whomsoever He wills, whether it be male or female, young or old, educated or uneducated, are recognized and used by all.

2) The Church needs to recognize God's calling upon all believers as priests and saints unto the Lord, and should enlarge this ministry by giving authority, permission, and opportunity for the use of everyone's gifts within the body as they may be needed. When a Sunday School teacher is required, the position should be filled by those that are gifted and desirous of this role, regardless whether the person be male or female; prayers, within the public worship services, should be made by both male and females; sharing of personal testimonies should be done by both male and females; and preaching/pastoral care should be done by both male and female.

3) Advancement of priestly ministry within the local church could also be encouraged by members being encouraged to attend training sessions on prayer, evangelism, home visitation, hospitality, etc. if and when these should be held in the area. It needs to remember, that as the people of God exercise their gifts in priestly ministry unto God, the Church becomes strong in the power of His might so that having done all to stand, they will be able to stand because of both the encouragement and edification received one from the other.

K) There are two biblical, regularly practiced ordinances of the church as taught or as practiced by Christ - water baptism, and communion

Scriptural Support:

Jesus demonstrated the importance of these two ordinances by actively participating in them firstly by being baptized in Jordan by John, the Baptist (Matthew 3:13), and then by celebrating the Last Supper with His disciples in Jerusalem just prior to His crucifixion (Luke 22:14 - 20). Paul, in writing to the Church at Rome recognizes the importance the importance of water baptism as a regular practice of the Church insinuating that it acts as a public witness that the person is determined to follow Christ as Saviour and Lord. In writing to the Church at Corinth, Paul affirms that the Communion is important within the Church

because it acts as a constant reminder to the completed work Christ has done in redeeming His Church unto Himself.

Application:

The Church needs to regularly remind the people of these two ordinances and call people to be baptized as a public witness to their faith in Christ. In participating in Communion the people are reminded of the need to remember Christ's death, burial and resurrection until He returns, the need to examine their present walk in the Lord, the need for kind, considerate fellowship one with the other, and the need to tarry one for the other as the unified people of God.

By celebrating these two ordinances, the Church is reminded of God's intended unity that is established through the teaching of sound doctrine, the breaking of bread together, brotherly fellowship, and collective prayers among the saints (Acts 2:)

2) Those that are publicly baptized often are accepted into membership within the local church.

Membership is practical in that it authenticates one's directed, determined, devotional discipleship in Christ, and gives the church authority to reprove, correct, and discipline individuals, when necessary, as well providing instruction in doctrine and in righteousness. Those that are not members of the church, if they should err in the faith, often leave the church unchallenged for their conduct. Public witness to one's faith through baptism, which endows church membership on the person, however, lessens the probability of an individual ignoring pastoral care, although this still may occur by believers who are not mature in the Lord.

l) Providing humanitarian care, wherever possible, is an essential element of Church ministry

Scriptural Support:

The Church needs to continuously demonstrate brotherly love one towards the other as it "does good to all men, but especially to those of the household of faith", (Galatians 6:9 & 10). Jesus reminds His disciples that whenever they took in a stranger, fed the hungry, clothed the naked or gave another a cup of water in His name, they were doing it as if they were providing Him His need, (Matthew 25). James reminds his fellow brethren that "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world", (James 1:27).

Application:

1) Practically, local church ministries may host a weekly food bank, a bi-weekly clothing store,

and/or a bimonthly banquet for the poor. During the cold, winter months, hospitality could be demonstrated by local churches opening the basement as a shelter. If the latter can not be done because of municipal or city bylaws, the church could collect socks, gloves, boots and/or heavy over coats and blankets to be given to the poor.

2) Parishioners should be encouraged to invite the stranger into their home or take them to a restaurant during difficult times, thereby demonstrating the love of Christ as he provides for the person's immediate, daily physical needs. If individuals feel uncomfortable in doing this, perhaps the pastor could join the couple as it hosts the stranger. This, unquestionably, would instill the desire to be hospitable to others.

3) Pastors could set the stage for this ministry by quarterly teaching on hospitality, by showing films on hospitality, by having guest speakers from the Union Gospel Mission or other treatment centres speak to the congregation. In all that is done, the church needs to be reminded that God has a special love for the poor, (Psalms 140:2), and God's people, likewise, should have a special love towards them which is demonstrated by them meeting their physical need(s) wherever possible.

4) Whatever is done by the church in this area of ministry must include an invitation to those receiving aid to attend the local fellowship so that they may have opportunity to hear the Word and be disciplined to a living, lasting and loving faith through Jesus Christ. Although offering physical aid to others is a commendable role of the church, and should be done as often as possible, the local church must always remember that in everything it does it is called, first and foremost, to be Christ's Witness by presenting Christ as Saviour and Lord to all it provides help!

Conclusion:

Every ministry conducted by the church should emulate the love of Christ, should cause believers to grow in the knowledge, love, grace and tenderheartedness of the Lord, and should motivate them to be God's hand extended to others as they walk as His dear children in love, light and wisdom. If this occurs, the people of God will grow both in stature before God and man as God's kingdom is announced in earth as it already is in heaven. The church is called to this; now, as faithful stewards of God's love, it must move forward fulfilling His call standing "in the power of His might", (Ephesians 6:10), and empowered to boldness by His Holy Spirit, (Ephesians 6:20).