

model, taken by itself, can adequately describe an effective role for a pastor in a twenty-first-century church. However the good Samaritan metaphor is, in my opinion, equally limited in its adequacy as a descriptor for the pastoral role.

Rather than take a single metaphor as model, pastors should consider all of Christ's instructional images: to be like children, to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, to be fishers of people, and to be workers in a plentiful harvest. A pastor must constantly reassess the needs of his or her congregation; to

delegate when appropriate, to listen and advise, to give and receive care, to serve and be served, and constantly to remind the flock that it depends on the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

*Willie Israel has been a Moravian, and a member of Morning Star Moravian Church in Asheville, N.C. since 1996. She is now a candidate for ordained ministry from the Southern Province, and a first-year student at Moravian Theological Seminary.*

## **Gordon Sommer**

Readers of *The Hinge*, and the entire Church, are most privileged to receive a stimulating and creative treatment of the office of ministry in this paper. The authority claimed by Sisters Margaret Leinbach and Maggie Wellert from both personal experience and theological reflection is compelling. The dialogue on models for ministry they propose is timely and should be pursued not only in this journal but at all levels in the Church.

The call to MUTUALITY and ACCOUNTABILITY is particularly noteworthy. The recovery of the priesthood of all believers is a salient and enduring feature of the Protestant Reformation. However, the mutuality hereby implied is threatened in every generation by the continuing lay/clergy bifurcation and the consequent hierarchy amongst the people of God. The evidence is as diverse as who will offer public prayer (the clergy) to the inability of the Church to utilize fully the gifts of the whole people of God. The Church is always stronger and its witness more widely evident

when the distinctions between lay and clergy are minimized.

Similarly, the call to accountability is necessary if we rightly understand the nature and mission of the Church. Clergy will not abuse the privilege of their office when they humbly accept their accountability before God and the whole Church. The witness of the laity is strengthened when they feel accountable to the Body in their homes, their community and their daily work. Faithfulness to God is the first vocation of every believer, and a second follows: love for others. These commandments imply accountability.

However, the weakness of the Samaritan model proposed by the writers is inherent in that it is not parallel to the models they critique. "Servant" is a style of leadership transferable to other vocations/occupations (for example, it is often claimed by elected political leaders). "Pastor" is an identification of a career or office. "Samaritan," meanwhile, is

an individual who appears in a parable given by the Master Teacher in a moment of time. Certainly the Good Samaritan offers a wonderful example for behavior in the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus, and for all time. The latter cannot be compared on the same plane with the former two. Apples and oranges don't mix.

A second observation is that the critique of the metaphors "servant" and "pastor" is based largely on weak or fraudulent or destructive expressions of the models. I would not second guess the experiences of the writers and others in the Church. The whole Church must grieve when its ordained ministers have abused the privilege of their office and have hurt others. What is required of us is to purify the exercise of the office and constantly hold up the ideal of the Savior in "serving" and "pastoring." The Moravian Church, like all Christian bodies, is now more explicit in its expectations of clergy and in holding them accountable to those standards.

The day when inappropriate or abusive behavior is minimized by moving a pastor to another charge is ended. Pastors have also become more accountable to their families, the most immediate "church" they serve. The extended length of time in filling pastoral vacancies is an example of this shift. The model for pastoral ministry provided by women pastors has humanized what was formerly a male domain. I submit that we should not judge the metaphors of "pastor" and "servant" by their worst examples. Rather, let us work to reinterpret them so that all ordained persons fulfill them more excellently. Let us expose their "dark side," yes, but empower clergy to understand the essence of the metaphors more clearly both in light of their scriptural bases

and in their contemporary context for ministry.

It is essential that in any consideration of the ordained office of clergy we recall the issue of LEADERSHIP and its VALIDATION. The church is an organization, and organizations require leadership. Moses was chosen by God to lead the people of Israel. Specific tasks of leadership were delegated to Aaron and others as the demands of the organization became more complex. Similarly, the leadership of the Apostles in the early Church, authorized by Jesus and acknowledged following Pentecost in Jerusalem, was dispersed among other offices as the Church grew. We may thus conclude that the Church today identifies clergy as the basic leaders of the Church.

A second issue follows and has to do with the AUTHORITY by which leaders lead. In a response to an article for *The Hinge* (Summer 1997) I wrote about the authority for leadership of religious organization as "charismatic" authority. Such authority, according to the typology of German sociologist Max Weber, is distinguished from "rational or legal" authority (as for a head of state) and "hierarchical" authority (as found in the corporate and business world). Charismatic authority is accorded by the people being led, quite in contrast to the two other types of leaders. The followers recognize their leader "to be connected with the central feature of human existence and the cosmos in which we live" (p. 21). Those being led must perceive in their leader the marks of transcendence to which all humans aspire and the presence of God in such a one. Thus led, religious people will give heart and soul to their organization and its essential beliefs.

All models for the ordained ministry—pastor, servant, Good Samaritan—must be judged by the capacity of the leader to elicit such a response from the people being led. This is the nature of charismatic organizations and the manner in which they validate leadership. To fulfill such a high office without fault must be the goal of clergy and requires the support of the whole Church. Thus will we truly BE the Church in unity and in mission for the Savior.

*The Rev. Dr. Gordon Sommers has served the Moravian Church in Guyana and North America. In addition to pastorates, he was Eastern District President, President of the Northern Province PEC, and President of the National Council of Churches of Christ. Currently he is interim pastor of Nazareth Moravian Church in Pennsylvania.*

## The Authors Respond

We are grateful to the diverse group of respondents for their insights and thoughtful contributions on clergy / lay ministry relationships and the Good Samaritan metaphor. Each has long been deeply engaged in church life. Their critiques and comments help to expand and clarify our ideas about healthful and unhealthful ministry relationships within the church. Many thanks.

It is a sobering fact that, in many respects, the experiences of the three ordained respondents, and Sister Fischler, a long time clergy spouse, match what we have observed and experienced in ministry relationships between laity and ordained. Indeed, the Alban Institute study, cited by Brother Hunter, quoted a research project of the Fuller Institute for Church Growth. Their research found that of the pastors surveyed:

80% believe their pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families;  
75% reported a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry;

50% felt unable to meet the demands of the job; and

50% had considered leaving the ministry within the last three months.

Furthermore, in North America our Moravian denomination, like many others, continues to report annual decreases in membership. Not only is there a clergy shortage but also new laity are not replacing those who leave. Clearly, the current relationship between clergy and their congregations is not working, and as the Alban study concludes: “major changes in our assumptions, behaviors and the system” is needed.

After carefully reading and rereading the responses we are more convinced than ever that a significant part of the problem lies with our root metaphors of shepherd and servant. These metaphors are by their very nature hierarchical and imply, as Brother Eichman observed, the ordained minister’s primary job is “taking care of the Church” rather than assisting “lay people for ministry as they are em-