

A MINISTRY FOR OUR TIME

It has been a busy summer! I have been to five Ordinations (the last one being my own) as far apart as Aberdeen and Ayr, Glasgow, Fort William and Perth. I suppose you could call 1984 the year of the Auxiliary Minister, because there are now about seven of us Ordained to 'word and sacrament' and already working at the tasks set us by our various Presbyteries.

As I travel around I am constantly surprised, and a bit troubled, by the number of ministers who know nothing of the Auxiliary Ministry. It seems such a waste of time for Assembly to take such a momentous decision only to have the whole thing stagger on through lack of interest on the part of ministers and presbyteries. I hope, by recounting my own experience, I may be able to blow away some of the mist shrouding this important and very worth while scheme.

On the day the Assembly agreed to have Auxiliary Ministers in the Church of Scotland I wrote to my minister and asked him, and the Kirk Session, to put my name forward to presbytery as a candidate. After a few months I was called to interview with the presbytery education committee, and for an hour they questioned me on my motives for taking this step. Although it didn't feel like it at the time, I must have satisfied them because, a few months later, I was requested to attend a selection school at St Colm's College, Edinburgh. I understand consideration was given to having a separate selection school for Auxiliary Ministers, but this was abandoned on the grounds that, as we were to be fully ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament, we should undergo the same selection process.

On 1st April, 1981, I reported to St Colm's and found myself one of eighteen candidates, three of whom were for the auxiliary ministry. The least said about the next three days the better - although it wasn't as bad as waiting for the result to arrive. Having successfully overcome this major hurdle I found myself back at St Colm's in September for the start of the course. It was a long weekend, and it was the first time I met my colleagues - 7 of us in all - from Glasgow, Ayr, Aberdeen, Fort William, Edinburgh and Perth. There were professors there from the 4 major universities, and they were as anxious as we were to see how things were going to work out.

The ensuing winter was not easy. The professors, acting as central tutors, set the pace and appointed regional tutors in our own areas whom we could contact for assistance and discussion. The four subjects to be studied were

Practical theology, systematic theology, church history and the Bible. The year was split into 3 terms of 13 weeks each, and each subject had a term when it got the 'lion's' share of the work - except practical theology which ran like a thread through the whole course, drawing things together. At the beginning of each term we received from the central tutors a list of books to be read, the titles and length of the essays we had to write, and the dates they had to be in by (although there was some flexibility here). It all worked out at about 10 essays per term, and it was a hard job trying to keep up. The essays were marked by the central tutors and sent back to us with appropriate comments which I found extremely helpful.

July 1982 saw us all back at St Colm's for another weekend. This time we were joined by another 7 who were just starting the course. Then it was back home for another winter of reading and writing. At St Colm's in July 1983 there were three streams of traffic - we, who were finishing, some who had completed their first year, and even more who were just starting. I think it was at this point that the importance and magnitude of the whole scheme came forcibly home to me. It was an encouraging time, meeting all those people who were so interested in the future of the Church and prepared to make a major contribution in terms of time and commitment for the rest of their lives.

During my two years of study I had to undertake two 6 month attachments in local churches; both entirely different, but both extremely rewarding. At the end of each year reports from my attachment minister, regional tutors and central tutors were all considered by the sub-committee at 121, and they decided whether or not to sustain the year's work. After getting over the shock of success I was licenced by the presbytery and placed by them in care of the pastor at Kinnoull Church, Perth, for my probationary year.

Perhaps I should point out that it is really up to presbyteries to recognise a need within their bounds which could be met by an Auxiliary Minister, and to find a person willing and able to undertake this training. It is not meant that an Auxiliary should undertake constant pulpit supply, nor be an assistant minister who will merely read the lessons every Sunday, but rather be placed by presbytery in an area which might be proving too much for the minister of the parish, i.e. in a rural situation where there are 3 or 4 linkages to be serviced; or in an urban situation where the parish has grown to difficult proportions. The minimum amount of time asked of an Auxiliary Minister is 10 hours per week, and in return for this he will be paid his expenses. I do wish they would change the name though - the word 'Auxiliary' is confusing and misleading and involved long explanations. It is also unnecessarily restrictive by implication - the job calls for a minimum of 10 hours per week, but there is no upper limit. Perhaps the Church of England's title of Non-Stipendiary Ministry would be more explicit and less troublesome.

Looking back over the past three years I sometimes wonder if I would ever have started it if I had known what was ahead of me. It was evident right from the start that we were pioneers (or may be guinea pigs) because we kept encountering problems and obstacles which had to be resolved; problems like the availability of books; I don't think there is a minister in Perth who didn't cross the road when he saw me coming in case I invaded his library again. And I also have to say that it wasn't easy trying to service an attachment (with all that involves) while trying to hold down a job, read books, write essays, and sometimes prepare a sermon to preach next Sunday. But I wouldn't have it any other way. I have just been Ordained and it is all behind me - on second thoughts.....Oh well!!!

J A Campbell
Perth

A DIP INTO THE ARCHIVES

Annual Meeting (St. Giles' 29th May 1873)

Mr. James Grahame (elder, Auldhouse, Glasgow)

"In the Assembly Hall the other day Colonel Mure asked with some surprise and great indignation why it is that the wealthy and the educated classes in Scotland have left the Church of their fathers. My opinion is that the slovenly and the uneducated way of conducting the worship in the Church of Scotland has a good deal to do with the departure of the educated classes. There was at one time what I might call an affected barbarity of language used in the pulpits of Scotland

I once went into a church and there heard a young Free Church Minister imitating (and imitating well) the deep rich roll with which Dr. Candlish pours forth his orations; and I think this Society is doing good in supplying models for our young ministers because if we do not do so they will choose from the older respected diviners someone to imitate and they may not be very happy in their choice".