

March 2004, *Equipping*

There's no life like it!



So said the ad recruiting young adults into military service. I used that line recently at a CMU chapel, lifting up the challenges and joys of a pastor's life, in order to spark an interest among the students.

It is an important time to consider how we are going to effectively engage the pastors that we will need within the next few years. As we pay attention to the pastoral scene in Mennonite Church Canada, we see that in the next five to ten years many of our pastors will be retiring, specifically the "boomer" generation. Will the supply of pastors keep up with demand? How will we find new pastors to step up and offer pastoral leadership to existing churches, as well as those who will plant new churches?

These are questions challenging us as leaders and educators. But denominational leaders and educators can not do their jobs of training, equipping, placing, and credentialing unless we find the men and women who will respond to the call of God to become our future pastors. This job, if it is to be done, will be done in your congregation, by you!...you who are pastors and leaders, discerners of gifts.

It was in my local church where I first sensed my call to ministry. It was not a Samuel-like calling of my name in the night, but a dawning awareness that my life would find its focus in Christian ministry. And that dawning came from opportunities to teach Sunday school, to lead Bible studies, and eventually to preach. But the biggest influence in my calling was the affirmation and mentoring of my pastor and youth sponsor.

In every church the Holy Spirit is calling young and old, gifting them for leadership and service, some to pastoral ministry. What is your part?

1. Pray that God will call some of your flock to be pastors. Pray this regularly, and pray it from the pulpit.
2. Do not miss any opportunity to affirm even the most fledgling step of ministry. It may be a step toward a life of ministry.
3. Make it a regular practice at your leadership councils to ask, "Who from this congregation is God calling into ministry?"
4. Do not hesitate to ask, "Have you considered being a pastor?"
5. Be prepared to spend much valuable time mentoring those women and men that God is in the process of calling.

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