

## ***“Ministers - Lay and Ordered ”***

February 2011

Hymn            “We have this ministry”        VU 510

Scripture        *Colossians 4: 7-13 (New International Version)*

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Prayer            Let us pray – O God, we thank you for those who throughout the years have shared their faith with family and with friends and neighbours. We thank you for those we know as ministers, whether ordained, diaconal, or lay. Especially we thank you for those whose service involves other forms of ministry: doctors, nurses, teachers, economists, farmers, homemakers, people in all walks of life, who have worked tirelessly, often unaware of the connection between their worship and work. Grant that together, lay and ordered ministers, we may ever seek to know and do your will. Amen.

Lesson            As recorded in Matthew 28, Jesus gave this great commission to his disciples – “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Although these words were directed to the eleven, many other people took up the challenge. People like Paul and his followers. In most of the very early Christian groups there was no distinction between ordained ministry and lay – Paul claimed “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”.

And although, as Christians, we understand we are all one in Christ, we recognize differences in those who have become professional ministers. The professionals, in many cases, have been set upon pedestals and have been revered by their congregations. They have been expected to adhere to almost impossible moral standards.

Lay people have their own valid ministry. But lay ministry cannot be effective without knowledge of the Bible and some understanding of theology. It is necessary to follow the great commandments as found in Matthew 22: 36-40 where Jesus said “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself.”

At this moment in the history of the United Church of Canada, we are invited to respond to the draft of the 'Revised Statement on Ministry' which has come out from GC40. It can be found on [www.aots.ca](http://www.aots.ca) and on [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca).

One statement in this document is reflective on our name and belief that each of us, as a follower of Christ, lives 'As One That Serves'. The actual statement included in the draft is "The ministry of all is representational in character. It reflects the character of Jesus who is among us as one who serves."

The draft also quotes from A Song of Faith: "God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry. In the church, some are called to specific ministries of leadership, both lay and ordered; some witness to the good news; some uphold the art of worship; some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering; some build up the community of wisdom; some stand with the oppressed and work for justice. To embody God's love in the world the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship of all believers."

If we believe in the priesthood of all believers, we all share in Christ's ministry. By our baptism we belong to the holy catholic church, an organization filled with people who have gone into the world, making disciples, baptizing and teaching, confident that their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is always with them.

Let us minister as we are called, and trained, and able.

**Discussion** What is included on your resume for the job of ministry? Have you taken part in Bible study? Have you been a leader in a church activity? Have you used your talents in the kitchen, or visiting the sick, or listening to your neighbour's problems, or inviting a friend to join you in worship or an AOTS meeting?

Will we take the time as individuals, or clubs, or congregations, or other small groups to respond to the 'Revised Statement on Ministry'?

**Prayer** Let us pray – O God, we pray for all who teach, for all who learn. We pray for those who teach and seek to learn knowledge of the Bible: for students in theological schools, for their professors and mentors, for lay people in Bible study groups and lay training courses, for all who seek to know your will and do it. In Jesus name. Amen.

George Bishop – Spiritual Life Chair