

## Into action together

Imagine there is no church at all in the neighbouring community of Someplace. The members of your group are sent out by your church to plant a church in that area.

You have 15 minutes to work out how you would begin; decide what your priorities as a church are and, especially, what gifts you have in your group for ministry in the new situation.

- What are the essential tasks that need to be done?
- Who will exercise which ministry?
- Everyone must play a part in the new church.
- You have no premises and a grant of just \$2000.00

## Covenant – a commission to serve

Members of God's covenant are called to serve each other and the world. Each of us needs to reflect on how we put this calling to serve into action.

In many people's minds, the Church is like a big double-decker bus. The pastor is the driver. The treasurer is the conductor. Everyone sits back and enjoys the ride to heaven. This is a very wrong picture.

A much better picture is that of a sports team. Every member of the team has a part to play. If team members don't turn up for training, the whole team suffers. If one team member switches off or doesn't bother, then the whole team is affected.

- Every member of the team has a vital contribution to make.
- God has given you gifts that need to be discovered.
- God will call you into different ministries outside and within the Church.

## Five areas of Christian ministry or service

The concept of Christian ministry or service can easily shrink to become simply what we do in church. In fact, our Christian service is the whole of our lives offered to God in the service of the kingdom (Romans 12.1).

Five areas of Christian service are:

- to proclaim the good news of the kingdom;
- to teach, nurture and baptize new believers;
- to respond to human need by loving service;
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society;
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the earth.

## Discovering your gifts

In small groups, study Romans 12 together. List the different gifts that are mentioned.

Then go round your small group and attempt to say which person in your group may have which gifts in your list.

## Ministry now

In small groups, or one large group, think through the different ways in which you can exercise a ministry and get involved in a ministry now.

List the number of ways in which we can be involved in service outside the church first (through work, home or voluntary work).

Then list the ministries within the church that we are all called upon to exercise.

Finally, list the ministries some are called to be involved in. Put an asterisk beside any you are involved in already or would like to be active in.

What principles should we have for balancing our time between home, work, church and community?

## Some pitfalls to avoid

- Your ministry is not confined to churchy things or Christian activities.
- Ministry is not the sole responsibility of the clergy.
- Upfront ministry is not more important than behind the scenes ministry.
- 'Spiritual' ministries are not more important than practical ones.
- Your ministry is unique to you. Don't model yourself on anyone else.
- Every form of ministry is to be undertaken as a servant.
- Take time to let your ministry develop – and persevere in what you do.
- A balance between prayer, rest and work is important in every Christian's life. It is easy to take on too much.

## For reflection

Think and pray during the week about your own ministry. If you are able to, use Isaiah's prayer: 'Lord, here am I; send me' (Isaiah 6.8).