



IYM Quakers

Session Seven

What Makes a Friends Pastor Different?



Friends Pastors

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 - *A Different View of Decision Making*

A Different View of Ordination

Acts 13:1-3

Barnabas and Saul (Paul) did not make a decision to be missionaries. It was God who made the decision. He handpicked them for this task and somehow the whole church at Antioch recognized it. The only decision that was theirs was whether or not to respond to God's call.

The Antioch church was very supportive of these men who were singled out by God. In addition to fasting and praying for these men, the church placed their hands upon them (a form of commissioning) and sent them off. This calling into Christian service did not originate from the Antioch church. This local assembly of believers simply recognized a call that had come from God.

This is the concept embraced by Friends. We recognize that ministers of all kinds, including pastors, are ministers only because of God's call upon their lives. It is God who ordains; man can only recognize and affirm what God has already done. That is why Friends choose to "record" their ministers, leaving the ordaining to God.

In his journal George Fox recorded an insight that was given to him:

...the Lord opened unto me that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ...

Friends do value training, but know that it is no substitute for God's call to ministry.

A Different View of Ministry

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

God gives spiritual gifts to all Christians, not just a select few. Ministry, then, is the calling of all Christians, not just a few. While a pastor's role includes seeing that the flock of God is cared for, the pastor is not the only one possessing the gifts necessary to provide care.

Many Christian leaders are advocating a shift in the way we view pastoral responsibilities. For years many pastors have served as faithful shepherds, caring personally for every sheep in their flock. Some would suggest that rather than shepherds, pastors need to serve as ranchers. While a shepherd cares for the sheep, a rancher sees that the sheep are cared for.

The concept of pastors as ranchers seems to have a pleasantly Quaker flavor to it. A Quaker pastor is most effective when he or she is training and equipping others to exercise their own unique gifts and ministries to see that the whole flock is cared for.



A Different View of Decision Making

Acts 15:6-21

The decision making process of the Jerusalem Council found in Acts 15 has many similarities to the business procedures of Friends. In an open meeting every aspect of the issue before the group had an opportunity to be expressed. Silence (v. 12) was even part of this important meeting. After adequate time had been given, James summarized what the sense of this meeting appeared to be. No vote was taken. Apparently James correctly discerned the sense of the meeting, for his "minute" was approved. God had led them in reaching this conclusion.

In many denominations the pastor is required to be well versed in parliamentary procedure. Some groups expect their pastors to serve as chair of the church board. The Friends pastor has neither these requirements nor expectations. What is the role of the Friends pastor in the decision making process? Organizationally it appears the pastor has no greater role than that of any other member. He does not hold a tiebreaker vote nor any particular authority in the decision making process.

Friends seek God's decisions rather than majority decisions. It seems that the best way a Friends pastor can be involved in the business procedures of a Meeting is to help the congregation be spiritually equipped to hear God's voice.

What Makes a Friends Pastor Different?

Friends got along without employing pastors for over 200 years. This fact in itself points to the strength and stability of a movement that some would describe as a "lay" movement. Possibly reacting against the spiritually deficient pastoral system of the 17th century Church of England, Friends were able to grow in number and influence without the employment of "hireling priests".

In the latter half of the 19th century some Friends began to use a pastoral arrangement that has been adopted by a large segment of North American Quakers in our day. Quaker historian Elbert Russell has noted that the pastoral arrangement began chiefly in two ways:

(1) After a revival, members of the local meeting would ask the minister to stay for a year or so in order to conserve and organize the results of the work; or (2) a minister might be invited to come and live in a community having the official status of a resident minister only, so that the meeting would have the benefit of his ministry.

A few members who would take it upon themselves to secure such leadership often made these arrangements unofficially. As Meetings sought to avoid problems of having resident ministers that were unacceptable to some, it became necessary for Meetings to officially choose and extend calls to ministers.

Many Friends Meetings now have pastors. This session will deal with the question: what makes a Friends pastor different from those of other denominations?