

REGENT'S PARK COLLEGE**Establishing Patterns of Lifelong Learning**

Part of life for Newly Accredited Ministers, including for those supported by Home Mission, is an on-going relationship with one of our Baptist colleges, normally for three years. This may be the college they attended for their initial ministerial formation or the closest geographically, but the relationship helps encourage lifelong learning for those who are newly ordained. In all the demands of what may be a new context, or perhaps now full-time ministry, without the support of a college, establishing good patterns of on-going reading and reflection is an important foundation. For some, this is through completing an academic course started at college or beginning a new course, such as a Masters' qualification. For others, it is about learning without the structure and pressure of a formal course.

Here at Regent's Park College we normally have 30 to 35 such Newly Accredited Ministers working with us at any one time. There are a number of different aspects involved. In common with all the colleges, one of the key tasks of the first year is to



engage in some kind of mission audit of the congregation or the local community, which is often conducted together with members of the church. Helping a local congregation think carefully about mission involves gathering relevant and important information, reflecting on it both theologically and practically so that any strategy for mission that develops is well thought through and appropriate to the very particular context of the church.



Through all three years of these Learning Contracts ministers choose, with their tutor, a selection of books to read and review, which may help them to think further about issues that might only have been touched on briefly in college or to begin to pursue their own particular interests and specialties, which may well be of benefit to the wider church in the future.

Thirdly, there are aspects which are shared by all new ministers together, with one book each year which we all read, a morning to think further about the book, normally with the author of the book present to engage with the group, and then other moments of shared reflection. In recent years we have read books together on biblical studies, or developing patterns of personal spirituality or understanding and engaging better with our own culture.

In the hope that those whom God has gifted and called to ministry might exercise that ministry over many years, indeed over a

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lifetime, and that ministry would not remain the same but grow and deepen with time, these first years of ministry are vital for setting positive patterns. As Home Mission supports ministers to help churches engage in mission so it needs ministers who are always learning and growing, able to respond well to changing times and changing demands.

Anthony Clarke
Tutor in Pastoral Studies
and Community Learning

Please pray:

- » Giving thanks for the ongoing support which our colleges are able to offer to Newly Accredited Ministers
- » For the staff in our colleges teaching and nurturing students and providing training and support for these changing times
- » For our ministers juggling the needs of their churches with the need for continued personal spiritual reflection and development
- » For a clear sense of God's call for ministers to help their churches engage in mission and respond to the needs of their communities and changing cultures

