

crucial and urgent. The minister needs to bond with the members of the church and community. Immersion into relationships will help the minister deal with the effects of culture shock, establish evangelistic relationships, prove his competence, and ease the people's anxiety during the transition.

The Scripture offers help for this task. When describing Jesus as the Word, John writes, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). It does not say, "The Word became flesh and barricaded Himself in his study." Nor does it say, "The Word became flesh and returned to His former place of service every weekend." Jesus came into the world, dwelt with people, and did not return home for thirty-three years. In Acts 20, when speaking to the Ephesian pastors and staff, Paul repeated a term that underscores this point. He said to them "You know." That is, they knew his life (v.18) and his work ethic (v.34). In his first letter to the church at Thessalonica, he reminded them that they knew the effectiveness of his ministry (2:1). They knew his difficulties in Philippi (2:2). They knew his refusal to use flattering speech (2:5). They knew his labor and toil among them (2:9). They knew his fatherly exhortation (2:11). Paul worked to bond Himself with the people he sought to reach. As a result, the people knew him. He made himself known to them because he wanted to share not only the gospel with them, but his life as well, because they had become dear to him (2:8).

When seeking to bond with people in a new ministry, ministers should consider several pertinent issues. To begin with, they need to consider the economic condition of the people and the community. Often, the local economy can affect the life of a church. In my first pastorate, the quality of my church's fellowship suffered terribly when the federal

government raised taxes. My people were already the highest taxed people in the state, and additional taxes were more than what they could endure. When their paychecks showed an increased tax burden, they became upset and had little patience left for the ordinary challenges of a growing church. This did not produce an appealing atmosphere for lost people when they visited our church. As a result, I pushed them to do better, and they grew resentful. I failed to sympathize with their plight; I made it worse. I should have preached more on the God's promises during that time.

Additionally, ministers can consider the church's and community's beliefs about diverse people. My mother-in-law is the friendliest person in the world, and makes friends easily. Different people intrigue her. Because she has had the opportunity to travel, she has friends in many states and several countries. She learned Italian when living in Italy in the mid 1960s. She knows a little Dutch, too. She believes evangelism is a wonderful thing, reads whatever I write on it, and does her best to share God's love with others. Variety among people excites her, but not everyone is like my mother-in-law. Variety frightens some. Variety among people upsets some. They feel insecure when dealing with different people because variety is unpredictable. People who enjoy variety annoy these poor souls, too. For these people, overcoming these fears may be the first step in becoming a personal witness.

Further, a church's and community's geographic location can affect bonding and evangelism. My first pastorate resided in a town of about 4,000 people that impressed the visitors who came to it. Homes looked immaculate. Landscaping was perfect. This small town had seventeen restaurants, nine