

Congregationalists on Churches and the Church

Articles from the Congregationalist, 1958-1996

Readings in the History and Polity of the National
Association of Congregational Christian Churches

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Rev. Dr. Arlin T. Larson, editor

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INTRODUCTION

THE "CHURCH"

Congregationalism is founded on the idea that Christ called his followers into churches, particular communities of believers gathering regularly for worship and service, not into a Church, a national or international organization superior to local congregations and mediating their relationship with their Lord. The very name of the movement, Congregationalism, derives from this conviction.

- Clinchy, Russell. "Why the Congregational Churches Should Live." November '58
Gray, Henry David. "The Constitutional Question." June '59
Stoudt, John. "Are We Still Protestants?" October '61
Commission on the Ministry. "What is a Congregational Church?" November '69
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Wilson, Robert. "Local Autonomy in a Time of Centralization." August, '78
Moe, Ronald. "Congregationalism in the March of History." August '88
Alexander, John, et al. "A Message to the Churches." April '85
Rouner Jr., Arthur. "The Congregational Way as a Call to Pilgrimage for the American Church," 2 parts.
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Larson, Arlin. "Portland as Seen from the Wilderness." August '93
Hall, Lloyd. "Denomination or Association? What Matter is How We Serve Society." June '94
Bailey, Steven. "To Be or not to Be? Religious Mainstream is Denominational." February '95

ECUMENISM

The NACCC was founded in 1955 just as the wider ecumenical movement gained full force. While "ecumenical" in the sense of openness to a wide variety of beliefs and practices, "Continuing Congregationalism" defined itself in opposition to all centralization and bureaucratization. How then can the NACCC be part of the wider Christian community?

- Gray, Henry David. "Congregational Catholicity and Ecumenical Exclusiveness." December '58
Bailey, Harold. "The World-wide Campaign Against Religious Freedom." January '60
Bachelder, Horace. "Whither the Ecumenical Movement?" April '60
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Couch, Walter. "Who Speaks for the Church?" June '66
Gwaltney, W. Malcomb. "Faith is the Source of Freedom." June '66
Conn, Howard. "Independency in an Ecumenical Age." February '67
Butman, Harry. "A Candle in COCU's Darkness." January '68
Steece, Arvel. Review of *The Ecumenical Mirage* by C. Stanley Lowell. October '68
Swanson Jr., Neil. "Report from Uppsala." October '68
World Christian Relations Commission. "A Statement of Ecumenical Intentions."
June '87

FREE CHURCHES

Churches of the NACCC are not the only "congregational" churches. Kindred spirits are found among Unitarians, Baptists, Disciples, the Community Churches, and others stressing the autonomy of local congregations.

- Pavy, Roy. "A Free Church Movement." April '65
Bellingham, Richard. "Creative Independency." February '69
Steece, Arvel. "What Do you Mean, 'Free Church'?" June '70

ASSOCIATIONS

A Congregational church is not merely independent. Active fellowship with other churches is fundamental. The small size and geographical dispersion of the churches of the NACCC rendered the traditional local and regional fellowships problematic. Tensions also arose between churches continuing to identify with a regional association and those identifying most closely with the National Association, which has no formal connection with the regionals.

- Bohman, George. "The Place of Associations in Modern Congregationalism." May '65
Steece, Arvel. "Polity Evolution and the Future of Congregationalism." March '75
Bellingham, Richard. "Regional Fellowship: A National Concern." February '89

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Early Congregational churches were distinctive in being made up of self-conscious believers, "visible saints," not merely residents of the parish or community, and furthermore, not only believers but believers who could demonstrate proof of their conversion. Membership requirements no longer set Congregationalists apart, but new concerns have arisen.

- Bohman, George. "Safe-guarding Individual Freedom With Congregationalism." November '74
Beinke, James. "Church Members: How One Church Has Dealt with the Problem of Removing Inactive Members from Their Roles." October '88
Vanek, Noel. "Resident Aliens: Find New Direction for Christian Witness." December '96

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- Butman, Harry. "How It [*The Congregationalist*] Started." August '62
Butman, Harry. "The Vicinage Council." March '65
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Gerhart, Louis. "The Executive Committee and its Chairmen." June '74
Gray, Henry. "Town Meeting, Church Meeting, National Meeting." November '74
Gray, Henry. "American Youth and the Christian Church: Including the Background and Development of Pilgrim Fellowship and Hope." January '76
Ream, Norman. "Ordination Services: Caricature or Holy Event?" April '86
McKendrick, Mary. "Ambassadors: Becoming a part of the CCC/NA's Effort to Serve Churches Proved a Challenge Many Were Proud to Assume." April '88

HISTORICAL ROOTS

Where do we come from? Contemporary Congregationalism finds its roots in three places. One is Jesus' promise to be present "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name." The second is symbolized by the ship Mayflower, which bridged English Separatism and colonial New England Congregationalism. Third are the struggles within the Congregational family resulting in the formation of the United Church of Christ on the one hand and the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches on the other.

- Gray, Henry David. "From Yesterday into Tomorrow." February '58
Howard, Irving. "Covenant Theology and American Thought." February '58
Gray, Henry. "The Savoy Declaration of 1658." September '58
Rouner, Arthur Jr. "A Message from Savoy." 3 part series, November 59 - January '60

Davis, Royal. "The Saybrook Platform: A Warning." October '58
 Shelly, Maynard. "The Undying Fire of the Reformation." October '67
 Stubbs, Harry. "On Recovering the Genius of Classical Congregational Church Order," 2 parts. October '68, June '69
 Abercrombie, A. Vaughn. "The People Behind the Founding of the NACCC." November '78
 Burton, Malcom. "Letter" in response to Abercrombie. Fall '79
 Bohman, George. "Four Centuries of Congregational Growth." April '85
 Bailey, Steven. "Most Important Document: American Congregationalism Based on Cambridge Platform of 1648." December '92
 Rouser, Arthur Jr. "I Saw Them in the Flesh: Hotel Fort Shelby Recollection." July '95
 Alexander, John. "Forward Through the Ages ... At the Call Divine." July '95
 Bailey, Steven. "Reclaiming the Puritans." July '95

THE MINISTRY

Congregationalism has a distinctive view of the clergy as ordinary believers delegated narrowly defined responsibilities for preaching and teaching, while sharing common concerns about such things as qualifications, training, placement, and the ordination of women.

Barrus, Alvan. "The Growth of the Lay Ministry." March '65
 Abercrombie, A. Vaughn. "The National Program of Pastoral Supply." March '65
 Buchman, Richard. "Pastor, People, and God." May, '65.
 Butman, Harry. "Moderator's Statement at the Ordination of John K. Tremaine." February '66
 Britton, Erwin. "A Congregationalist Ponders the Matter of Ordination and the Ministry," 2 parts. October, November '75
 Witzel, Tom. "Laity Arise." June '77
 Brown, George. "In Between Ministers," June, July '81
 Voss, B. Margaret. "Unfinished Business." October '81
 Woolsey, Mary. "A Shared Ministry--A Shared Life." October '83
 Jensen, Mark. "Looking at the Future of the Congregational Ministry." October '89

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The NACCC does not have its own theological seminary, nor, because of its small size, is it in a position to open one. Yet it maintains a commitment to "learned ministry." How can its clergy receive the proper education? How can they learn the peculiar traditions and practices of the Congregational movement?

"Pioneering in Theological Education." November '62
 Steece, Arvel. "Continuing the Tradition of an Educated Ministry." January '65
 Ream, Norman. "Do We Need a Theological Seminary?" June '70
 Currey, Cecil. "Congregational Theological Education: The Future." May '73
 "C.F.T.S. Story." October '74
 Clark, Harry. "CFTS is THE Source: The CFTS Story." February '90
 Shultz, Leslie. "Exciting Opportunity: Lay Ministry Training Program Announced." October '93

SOCIAL REFORM

Congregationalists have been in the forefront of social reform, from the establishment of democracy in the New World, to Abolition, to the Social Gospel. The NACCC, however, defined itself in opposition to the type of church-related reform which became prominent in the twentieth century. How can Congregationalists maintain their prophetic consciousness and yet avoid violating local autonomy and personal freedom of conscience?

Clinchy, Russell. "Comment and Reflection." October '65
 Ream, Norman. "A Relevant Religion." June '66
 Conn, Howard. "How Express Our Social Concern?" January '67
 Butman, Harry. "Classical Congregationalism and Social Action." March '68

Tennies, Arthur. "Church Leaders as Activists: Good or Bad?" October '71

Conn, Howard. "Christian Conscience: A Plea from Some Members Within a Congregation." October '71

Lange, William. "Washington Gladden Society: A Response to the Social Justice Debate." Summer '79

INTRODUCTION

How do the churches of the National Association of Congregational Christian churches understand themselves? In many ways they are typical of other mainline Protestant churches. A person comfortable with the worship at a Presbyterian, Methodist, Christian or United church would most likely be comfortable worshipping with Congregationalists. Congregational clergy receive their training in seminaries sponsored by many denominations. When, however, it comes to polity, church organization at the national as well as local level, Congregationalists have distinctive ideas.

It began with English observers of the Protestant Reformation, such as Robert Browne and Henry Barrows, who believed there was another step to be taken. This was a return to the type of organization envisioned by Jesus Christ and reflected in the earliest New Testament writings, especially the book of Acts and Paul's letters. These early churches were diverse, autonomous, lacking central authority, and required a high degree of commitment. To these English Reformers the shape taken by the Roman Catholic Church was more that of Caesar's empire than of Christ's kingdom. The newly formed Church of England, while independent of Rome, seemed compromised by its retention of a similar structure.

At great risk to position, property, and life, the English reformers set about to "purify" the Church of England. The more radical reformers formed unauthorized "Independent" or "Separatist" congregations. Many fled first to Holland and then to the British colonies in North America. As founders of a new society in America the Pilgrims and Puritans entered a new phase with the authority of government behind rather than against them. This new position as the established church of the New England colonies posed new challenges regarding questions of church membership, tolerance of religious diversity, and the relationship between religious and civil authority.

With the passage of an American Constitution embodying a "separation of church and state," the expansion of the frontier, and the waning of evangelical fervor, Congregationalists gradually lost the dominance they enjoyed in colonial New England. Losses were exacerbated when one wing, the Unitarians, split off to form their own denomination. Questions of denominational identity and cooperation across regions came to the fore. By the end of the nineteenth century Congregational churches had moved away from Calvinism, embraced modern ideas about science, and, while local autonomy was still affirmed, put a national structure into place.

The founders of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (1955) reacted against what they perceived as an un-Congregational centralizing trend which would deny basic Congregational convictions about the church. A proposed merger of the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church into a "United Church of Christ" would result in a more centralized "presbyterian" system. Proponents saw it simply as a more efficient form of organization which would retain essential principles.

When the great majority went with the new United Church, the “Continuing Congregationalists” were left with redefining themselves and Congregationalism (a name which the majority, tellingly, did not retain). Many of their reflections on Congregationalism in the twentieth century are recorded in the NACCC’s *Congregationalist* magazine. This book contains a selection of those writings. They are arranged by topic, and within topics chronologically.

Congregationalists on Churches and the Church

ASPECTS OF CHURCH LIFE

CONGREGATIONAL PERIODICALS

In the 125th Anniversary issue of *ADVANCE* (December, 1941) of which Dr. William E. Gilroy was then Editor, it is stated that the first Congregational periodical to appear in the United States was *THE BOSTON RECORDER*, founded by Nathaniel Willis in 1816. This began a stream with many branches and contributing rivulets, which has gone on through the years. It was in 1849 that a paper was first published under the present name, *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*.

It is not the purpose of this article to trace the many changes which have taken place. Suffice it to say that some years after Dr. Gilroy's retirement it became evident that *ADVANCE* had ceased to represent the various shades of opinion among Congregationalists regarding the proposed merger with the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

This issue of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* being something of a turning-point in the history of the paper, it

seemed to the retiring Editor that the story of the publications which have carried on the tradition of the older Congregational papers during the past eleven years would be of interest to the readers. He has therefore asked Dr. Butman, one of the four who started the stream flowing afresh, and who was the first Chairman of the Publications Commission of the National Association, and the one largely responsible for resuming the time-honored name, to write the following account.

Actually, prior to the meeting in 1951 with which Dr. Butman's story begins, a three-day meeting of Congregationalists had been held at Camp Cowasset, North Falmouth, Massachusetts. The building shown in our cover picture is the Camp Cowasset dining hall, overlooking Buzzards Bay, where most of the discussions were held. The idea of a regular publication stemmed from the Camp Cowasset Conference.

HOW IT STARTED Harry R. Butman, D.D.

One day in the Fall of 1951 four men sat in the study of the parsonage in Holbrook, Massachusetts, and discussed the subject of a voice for continuing Congregationalism. These men—Rev. Malcolm K. Burton, Prof. Norman S. McKendrick, Rev. Joseph J. Russell, host, and the present writer—were under no illusions about the long struggle that lay ahead for free Congregationalists. All were convinced that pamphleteering and occasional group-sponsored mailings on merger matters were insufficient. A journal of news and opinion was needed.

These four men were busy and lacked the time necessary to do the task as it should be done. Three lacked a call, but Mr. Russell, upon whose heart the problem weighed heavily, agreed to undertake the work, although he had no journalistic training. He not only accepted the responsibility of getting out the paper, but of raising the money. Thus the voice of ecclesiastical freedom began to cry in the wilderness of conformity and organization.

THE FREE LANCE was chosen as the name. It was, incidentally, an occasion for self-mocking mirth when the editor and this writer later agreed that while the name *THE FREE LANCE* had a brave swing and evoked bright images of fearless Don Quixotes tilting with the windmills of ecumenicity, in point of historical fact, a free lance was a masterless man, owing allegiance to no feudal lord. Bluntly, he was a mercenary: his services could be bought. Rejoicing that no promoter had the knowledge, wit, or inclination to point out this pejorative implication, the name was eventually changed to *THE FREE CHURCHES*.

By this time the financial load was very burdensome to Mr. Russell. The cause of *THE FREE LANCE* was laid before the Continuation Committee in 1954 and it was voted that support be given. There is no record, however, that this offer of aid was ever utilized. With the formation of the National Association in 1955, Mr. Russell was made editor, and regular budgeted assistance began. Individual subscriptions, one in particular, made the load lighter. The circulation has increasingly mounted from the 1000 of the first mailing of *THE FREE LANCE* to the present figure of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*, 26,000.

How the Old Name Was Resumed

Since this article, although factual, does not purport to be a formal history of the rebirth of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*, an anecdote may prove of interest.

One night, while I was dining in Los Angeles with Mr. James C. Ingebreetsen, Jr., he reported that, in accordance with my request, he had consulted with one of the top patent firms on the West Coast concerning the possibility of our use of the old and honored name *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* which at that time was stored in the deep freeze of desuetude. Their opinion was that if no public use of the name had been made for five years there was a "presumption of abandonment" and the name was then in the public domain. The way to claim it was simply to issue a paper of that name. The courts would not ordinarily forbid this unless the former holders declared that they intended to resume publication.

As we talked I said, "I think we ought to take the chance and print the next issue under the title of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*. What have we got to lose? At the worst, the courts will only tell us to knock it off." Mr. Ingebreetsen said, with typical California speed of decision, "Call him up. I'll foot the bill." So the sleepy and confused editor of *THE FREE CHURCHES* was hauled out of bed by the midnight alarm of his first transcontinental phone call and peremptorily ordered to use the new name.

With commendable Yankee caution he demurred, rightly reasoning, as the fogs of sleep cleared from his mind, that this was a wild-eyed way of doing things.

But I said, "Joe, I'm both the Chairman of the Executive Committee and of the Commission on Publications." (We were desperately shorthanded in those days.) "Don't give the boss any back talk, or I'll fire you." I then turned the phone over to Mr. Ingebreetsen, who soothingly convinced Mr. Russell of the legality of the move. Consultation with the printer revealed that the issue was too far advanced for change, but it was decided to go ahead the next month under the new title. So we marked time for a month, saying nothing,

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CONGREGATIONAL PERIODICALS *Continued*

for the Board of Home Missions needed only to have run off and circulated a single mimeographed sheet headed THE CONGREGATIONALIST and they would have been safe for another five years.

So the March issue in 1958 came out with the fine old name shining forth to gladden the gaze of the faithful. Rev. Horace Bachelder of Oregon City sent in a heading of the original magazine, so that the present type is an exact facsimile of the denominational paper of a quieter day.

In this last issue under Mr. Russell's editorship, a word should be said concerning his distinctive contri-

bution to the free Church cause. He was reluctant to have anything said at all, and it was only by the flat statement that I would not write this article unless he promised to keep his blue pencil off it, that I am free to speak.

But not wholly free, for he has charged me with the burden of restraint. So I will say only this: in years to come THE CONGREGATIONALIST will be a greater paper: technically trained men will put out issues of improved readability and better layouts. But these men will build on another's foundation, they will enter into the labors of another. Joseph Jones Russell was the first, the pioneer. Let his memorial be that it was he who set the trumpet to his mouth when Zion was in danger.

The Vicinage Council

A vicinage council is a neighborhood gathering of Churches and concerned Christians assembled in a spirit of fellowship to offer wisdom and the support of love to those who have called it. A vicinage council is a means of expressing fellowship; it has no ecclesiastical authority.

Of recent years the old Congregational custom of the vicinage council has been revived. This revival has taken place in part because of the practical necessity for ordination and installation in these times when the local associations have largely gone into the United Church of Christ and so lost their characteristic Congregational nature. At the time of the merger, the old local associations had virtually become presbyteries, exercising ecclesiastical control over pastors and local Churches. A second reason for the rebirth of the vicinage council is the resurgence of the Congregational idea of the complete and autonomous local Church under the Headship of Christ, linked in a free relation of affection with like Churches.

The fear of "standing councils"—that is, bodies exterior to the local Church, with organizational continuity—is very old in Congregationalism. John Wise protested it as long ago as 1705. The wisdom of the protest is seen in history. Whenever men meet as a continuing group, small accretions of power will gradually constellate about the organization. But since Congregationalism is not isolationism and anarchy, some means for the practical implementation of the fellowship of the Churches had to be devised: this means was the vicinage council. In the simplest language, when a Church had a problem or wanted advice, it called a number of nearby Churches into session as a vicinage council, talked the matter over, sought the mind of Christ, came to a conclusion, and then dissolved. In

this brief paper I do not attempt to deal with the detailed mechanics of the vicinage council. These may be found in the manuals of Barton, Burton, Ross, Bacon, Quint, Punchard, and others. Persons who wish to call a vicinage council may find proper forms of procedure in these volumes.

Vicinage councils fall into two major divisions: those which involve controversy, and those which do not. The second class is much more common, as it deals with such matters as advice and assistance in the ordination, installation, and dismissal of a pastor, and the gathering of a Church. The rarer first class—that which deals with a controversial matter—is again subdivided into two parts: mutual councils, and *ex parte* councils. A mutual council is called by both parties to the dispute: an *ex parte* council is called by one party only. An *ex parte* council ought not to be called until all efforts to call a mutual council have been exhausted. When an *ex parte* council has assembled, the first effort of the moderator should be to attempt to make it a mutual council.

It is the custom for parties to the council to agree in advance that they sometimes will be bound by the findings (technically "the result") of the council, but this is not necessary. A Church or an individual is not bound by the findings of a council unless there has been the previous agreement to accept the result. *The basic principle to remember is the completeness and autonomy of the local Church under Christ; the local Church, and no other place or person, is the focus of power.* If a Church or an individual refuses to accept the findings of a vicinage council, no ecclesiastical penalty or forfeiture may be imposed upon them. A vicinage council is without power; its influence is moral, spiritual, suasive.

It is not generally realized, even by Congregational ministers, that in the important matter of ordination, the function of the vicinage council is merely to advise and assist. The power to ordain lies with the local Church. This is not only historic Congregationalism, but it has been formally stated by the Annual Meet-



Rev. Harry R. Butman, D.D.

ings in Los Angeles and Cheyenne. A pastor is ordained by an inner act of God which is socially ratified by the local Church, with sister Churches offering affectionate assistance. A pastor has "standing" because a local Church accepts him as its pastor; his name on the rolls of the National Association is a mere record of the fact, and has no ecclesiastical force.

It should also be borne in mind that a vicinage council is *pro re nata*, which simply means "for the thing as it is born", "for the occasion as it arises." A vicinage council keeps no permanent records; it is forever dissolved at the conclusion of its business. The result can be kept in the records of the local Churches involved, or with the secretary of pastoral relations for the National Association. Here a strong word of warning should be spoken. It was from the apparently harmless wish for orderly procedure and continuity of records that the power of the association over pastors and Churches was developed prior to the merger. It should be clearly understood that the findings of a vicinage council, even though transmitted to a national office, have no touch of ecclesiastical authority.

The purposes of this brief statement are to offer a definition of the vicinage council, and to hail its value as a means of fellowship without loss of local autonomy. It is a wise, flexible, ancient yet contemporary means of implementing the great Congregational principles of autonomy and fellowship. ■

DEACONS, Dodos, DYNAMOS

Arvel M. Steece

With temerity do I address myself to this subject, I am an s.o.d. (son of a deaconess), son-in-law of a deacon, son-in-law of a deaconess, brother-in-law of a deacon, brother-in-law of a deaconess, uncle of a junior deacon, and time has yet to disclose whether I shall ever be the father of a deacon. Be that as it may, let us turn to some definitions.

In Greek "diakonos" is a servant, a minister. Thus deacon may be defined, "In Christian churches, a cleric or layman who assists a priest or minister, his duties varying in different communions; also a cleric in orders next below a priest." Deaconess is defined as "a woman chosen or assigned to church work."

A dodo is a "large, heavy flightless bird (didus ineptus) now extinct, related to the pigeons but larger than a turkey, formerly found in Mauritius."

A dynamo is "a machine for converting mechanical energy into electrical energy especially into direct current by magneto-electric induction. A dynamo may be used as a motor."

What about the diaconate (deacons and deaconesses) in the free churches? Are our deacons and deaconesses dodos or dynamos? Among us deacons and deaconesses are lay officers, not minor orders of the

clergy. They are the spiritual advisors to the ministry, the coaching staff for the covenanted community.

In English Congregationalism no distinction between men and women was made in the diaconate. Women were chosen deacons. In the interest of women's liberation and equality and for ease of discussion when we speak of deacons let us be understood as having in mind deaconesses also. In another contemporary denomination there are now committees of lay life and work. From the literature it appears that their sphere of action is that in which deacons are concerned. Sometimes deacons are spiritually dead. Where there are dead deacons there are lethargic disciples. In many churches facing such a situation the solution seems to be to appoint another committee. Perhaps the better course would be to revive the diaconate. Let us look at the characteristics of deacons and deaconesses who would be dynamos rather than dodos. In acrostic form we find:

D—Devotional spirit should be a factor in their lives. To be effective they are to be dedicated men and women of prayer.

E—Evangelical enthusiasm characterizes their desire to serve the Church. Here we understand evangelical to mean concern for the Good News of the Gospel and the sharing of that Good News within the covenant community and within the geographical community.

A—Authentic persons are wanted in the diaconate, those who know

who they are as people and disciples. Out of their knowledge and experience in the faith, their authority is earned, not pre-empted. They are not autocrats.

C—Commitment to Christ is essential to their effectiveness. They are charged by Christ with care for the covenant community. Through Christ are they strengthened to do His work in church and community.

O—Open and Opportune souls are needed for service in the diaconate. Opinionated opportunists really have no place in these tasks. Deacons should be open to opportunities for spiritual growth and service.

N—"Nucleus of Renewal" should describe an effective board of deacons and deaconesses. The members will be men and women nourished on Scripture. Just as an unconverted ministry can hardly be expected to effect spiritual renewal in a church, neither is it to be expected among deacons who are biblically illiterate. If we take seriously the Protestant doctrine of the Priesthood of all believers deacons and deaconesses have the privilege and responsibility to articulate the theological biblical stance of the church in which they serve.

Sometimes churches choose people to the diaconate too soon. Deacons and deaconesses should have experience and spiritual maturity. People should not be made deacons merely to remove them from another office where they have not functioned effectively. Discussing the list of qualities which deacons ought to possess, some fellow Congregationalists observed to me that it didn't apply to the deacons in their church. Be that as it may, churches will not solve many of their current problems until they do find suitable deacons and deaconesses. Men and women of devotional spirit, evangelical enthusiasm, personal authenticity, committed to Christ, open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and nourished on Scripture who are chosen to the diaconate can indeed be dynamos, channels of spiritual power lighting the way of discipleship and our churches will be the better for their presence, example and service.

Arvel M. Steece is minister of First Congregational Church, Bennington, Vermont. These remarks are from his presentation at the workshop for deacons and deaconesses sponsored by the Spiritual Resources Commission, 1972 Annual Meeting, NACCC, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

The Executive Committee And Its Chairmen

Louis B. Gerhardt

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches was born in the historic Fort Shelby Hotel, Detroit, Michigan in 1955. The Articles of Association, so necessary to the NA's permanent development, were adopted at Wauwatosa, Wisconsin in October of 1956. It was at that time that the idea of an Executive Committee was recommended by the by-laws committee to the assembled delegates. This by-laws committee felt that a twelve member board, with limited terms of service, elected directly by the churches in Annual Meeting assembled, was the best way of giving our world-wide fellowship the stability and strength to deal effectively with the necessary day by day decision-making that is vital to the growth and development of any viable organization. This by-laws committee recommendation was unanimously adopted by the churches gathered at Wauwatosa.

The decision has proved to be a good one. From the very beginning the Executive Committee has been sensitive, strong, imaginative, patient and always faithful to the wishes of the member churches.

Ernest Crosby, now of Carmel, California, was the first Executive Committee chairman. He reflected on the 1956-57 year as follows:

"We were, of course, much concerned with organizational matters and a few growing pains: budget, committee appointments, necessary church visitations both nationally and world-wide and a host of other things.

"However, we were able to set up some excellent commissions which worked well in the first year and produced some excellent reports.

"Perhaps my happiest recollection is that of the line spirit which prevailed. Everyone seemed happy and optimistic with the big decision taken and the opportunity before us to build a permanent Congregational structure. The numerous meetings held during the period were well attended and it seemed easy to get things done. There was some very inspirational oratory by Raymond Waser and several others and amusing interludes provided by that wittiest of raconteurs, Joe Fackenthal.

"It all seemed a bit haphazard and experimental at the time, but with the record of intervening history, it looks as if the job was pretty well done."

Since that good beginning, the Executive Commit-

tee has always conducted itself in an orderly, restrained and efficient manner.

Some of the milestones in their years of work are as follows:

In February, 1958, with the leadership of Dr. Harr Bulman, we began issuing our national publication under the ancient and honorable name, THE CONGREGATIONALIST.

In 1960, with Dr. George Bohman's leadership, the Executive Committee implemented The Special Education Effort (SEE), sponsored by the National Association, to properly study the proposed Constitution of the UCC and the Executive Committee appointed the first Associate Executive Secretary for our growing fellowship.

In 1961, with Dr. John Alexander as chairman, the Executive Committee sponsored the development and adoption of the Articles of Incorporation which completed the legal structure of the National Association. By this action it was determined that such activities as the Missionary Society, the Foundation for Theological Studies, and the Building and Loan Fund, instead of being independent entities, would be divisions of the National Association, responsible to the Churches of the National Association. This was a basic, philosophical determination by the National Association in order that we would not develop competing agencies, but rather arms of one Association reaching out into the world for Christian service. The Divisions were given considerable autonomy over their own programs, but incorporated as parts of one Corporation for the National Association.

In 1962, under Rev. Leonard Maunder's fine leadership, the Pastoral Relations office was located in the national office in Milwaukee and Dr. John Claxton was called as the first Pastoral Relations secretary.

Dr. Leslie Deinstadt, chairman in 1963, remembered the incorporation of the NACCC during his term. "It was something of an historic moment when I signed the papers," writes Les. "I remember being seated at Neil Swanson's desk for the event surrounded by staff and committee members."

The years 1964-68 were times of careful planning and the continued development of a sound structural organization under the efficient leadership of William Stouffer, Dr. Erwin Britton, Robert Black, Paul Miller

and Edward W. Adams.

It was during Rev. Howard Bull's term in 1969 that the comprehensive use of liaison persons (Executive Committee members) working closely with each Board and Commission of the NA was developed, and the institution of a Central Fund Investment program on behalf of each Division of the Corporation was accomplished.

The hard working Long Range Planning Committee was initiated by Alexander Irvine during his term as chairman in 1970.

Dr. Louis Gerhardt's term in 1971 featured the appointment of the Executive Finance Committee which has become a vital part of our growing National Association.

The year 1972, with the dedicated leadership of Robert Morris, culminated in the delegates at Green Bay, Wisconsin, expressing their faith in the future of the NA by adopting the challenging "Forward in Freedom" campaign. And since that exciting moment, with the leadership of the Executive Committee chairmen Leland Johnson and Dr. Harry Butman, the NA has accomplished its greatest financial growth to this date.

In no small way, our success as a national fellowship has been due to the countless sacrificial hours spent by Executive Committee members who have wrestled mightily and successfully with both large and small matters that have had an important effect in developing the image of our free fellowship throughout the world.



Ernest S. Crosby



Harry R. Butman



George V. Bohman



John H. Alexander



Leonard H. Maunder



Leslie G. Deinstadt



William K. Stoufer



Erwin A. Britton



Robert B. Black



Paul A. Miller



Edward W. Adams



Howard E. Bull



A. S. Irvine



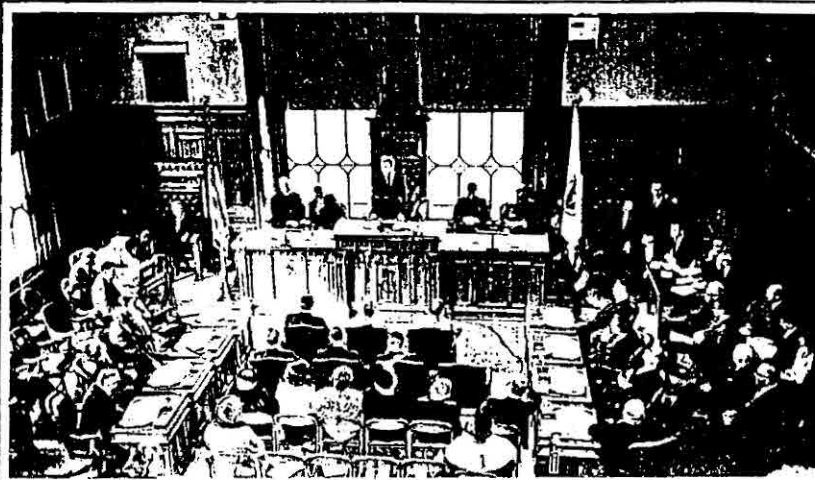
Louis B. Gerhardt



Robert G. Morris



Leland C. Johnson



Town Meeting, Church Meeting, National Meeting

by Henry David Gray

"Peyton Place" dramatizes the importance of the New England Town Meeting.

And rightly so; for the alert, and concerned citizenry of The New England Town bequeathed to America a type of democracy with great stability and unusual responsiveness to the needs of persons.

The Town Meeting is the application to civil affairs of the Congregational Church Meeting. The early record books of Windsor, Wethersfield and Hartford contain the minutes of the body politic and the records of the Ecclesiastical Society, sometimes on facing pages! This does not imply union of church and state, but rather a deliberate separation of civil and ecclesiastical concerns. There was one Church in each town and assessments were made for the support of the Churches as essential to the public weal. The Ecclesiastical Society which levied taxes and owned the properties used for religious purposes was not a

Church, nor were all its voters Church members. Most public gatherings customarily took place in the Meeting Houses of New England.

The key fact of civil life was government by consent of the governed. Hartford's Rev. Thomas Hooker enunciated these principles and is often called the father of The United States Constitution. His words are in The Declaration of Independence, probably through the influence of John Adams on Thomas Jefferson, and they ring true in The Constitution.

CHURCH MEETING

How then does a Church Meeting differ from a Town Meeting? A central conviction of Congregational Churches is the independence of each Church in a fellowship of Churches each equal to the other, none subject to any exterior ecclesiastical authority. The distinguishing characteristic of the Church Meeting is the solemn obligation of all covenanted members to seek and to

follow the leading of God. Even the most detailed concerns, such as, how ushers may best greet worshippers, become matters to be laid before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The objective is *not* an agreement so minimal as to be voted unanimously, but rather an insight born from "waiting on the Lord" which leads to the highest possible agreement and action.

About 1951 The Oneonta Congregational Church Meeting was presented with a balanced budget achieved by radical reduction of benevolent giving. The chairman of the trustees reviewed the financial statement, and then reminded the people of the debt-free dedication of the new Meeting House, offices, chapel, small hall and remodelled Sunday School facilities. "With the increased costs of upkeep, and the large contributions made to the building program, we think the budget before you represents all the money we can reasonably expect to receive in this coming year." Other trustees supported him. Adoption was moved and seconded immediately. The moderator asked, "Are you ready to vote?" A business man stood up near the rear of the crowded hall. "I'm not ready to vote," he said. But I'd like a minute or two for prayer before say anything. I want to know how this budget looks in the eyes of God."

A spirited, high-minded discussion followed the quiet. Then, by an almost unanimous vote, the Church Meeting approved a budget which *increased* the benevolence giving by \$10,000.

Church Meetings are an awesome experience in the Congregational fellowship. There is no 'higher authority' to which the Meeting's decision may be appealed, such as a presbytery synod, bishop, patriarch

council or pope. The Word of the Scripture is, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." WHEN that Word is taken seriously, the Head of the Church is present in the Church Meeting, and an appeal from that kind of meeting is unthinkable.

MEETINGS OF WIDER CHURCH-BODIES

What about wider Church-bodies? Gatherings of Congregationalists in state, national or world assemblies are time-and-space-limited bodies composed of individual delegates from the Churches, "Messengers of the Churches," in New England language. All wider bodies are agents of the Churches to the extent, and only to the extent, that the Churches individually choose to utilize them as organs of co-operative action or service. Wider bodies are controlled by the Churches; the Churches are under the solemn but glorious Headship of Christ. Our only 'headquarters' is heaven! Our sole 'authority,' The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

How does God make His way known? The Holy Spirit is God's spokesman in the hearts of Christ-committed individuals. God speaks through witnessing persons and through His spiritual presence which may be real in a Church Meeting.

THERE ARE DIFFERENCES

What is the difference between the Spirit of God speaking to individual persons and Churches, and, the Spirit of God speaking in a wider church-body? There are at least three differences. *First*, and most important, is the confusion lurking behind the words 'Church Universal.' The outcrop of solid stone anywhere on earth is part of the elemental planet. The presence of the

Spirit of God in Christ anywhere in the world, is part of the elemental Body of Christ: This is the Church Universal, the unseen company of all those who in all generations and in all places have been joined to the elemental Rock which is Christ.

Second, the world fellowship is mistaken for an organized power-structure, in short a governing body. A prominent national fund-raiser once said to me, "you will break the fellowship if you give directly to the Arcadia Church. You must keep the fellowship by giving to the national fund. The equation 'fellowship' equals 'centralized organization' is a gross misconstruction of the New Testament. Congregationalists speak of the 'fellowship' in several ways.

The 'fellowship' may mean the inclusive body of those who share the Christian faith and recognize the Congregational Way as the manner in which that faith best expresses itself. The 'fellowship' may mean the totality of all the organized bodies of the Congregational Christian Churches. The 'fellowship' means, above all else, the radiant personal relationships which characterize the lives of those who recognize Jesus as Lord, who reverently seek to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, who join in common worship, whose kinship in Christian service bears fruit in mutual trust and deep friendship, and who have chosen, voluntarily, to share together in the work and worship of the Congregational Christian Churches and of wider bodies created by them. The 'fellowship' is far beyond the limits of time, place, or human organization. Its true unity is born of God; where the Spirit of Christ is, there is the 'fellowship.'

Third, the word 'unity' is distorted when equated with a

specific 'action program,' as when someone says, "this is what you must do to keep the unity of the churches." According to the Congregational Way unity breathes the free air of the *willing mind*, Congregational unity, just because it is guided of God, is open-ended, ever seeking "yet more truth and light . . . from God's Holy Word," as John Robinson put the matter to the Layden Pilgrims. When we Congregationalists say 'unity' there springs to mind the Mayflower Pilgrims giving aid and comfort to each other. Among present day followers of Christ overarching faith in God is central. Congregationalists are adventurous bands of believers bound only by their common conviction that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Their 'unity' is oneness in the Lord.

AUTHORITY FOR CONGREGATIONALISTS

What 'authority' has an elected officer in a Congregational Church, or in a wider-body of Congregationalists, or of Congregational Churches? Like our ministers, all our elected servants have "all the authority which anyone will give them" —no less and no more. No less, because we recognize that *our* election is a prayerful recognition of God's will so far as we understand it. No more, because any followership given unwillingly is something less than Christian commitment. When the Spirit of God speaks through men and women freely and faithfully chosen, they will be accorded all the 'authority' they need to do His will in His way. Congregational Churches accept the will of God made known in Christ as their sole authority. The gathered company of Christ followers rejoices when God's Spirit truly

speaks to them in persons whom they have elected to office because they believe those chosen are "God's men and women for them." Greater authority than that no human being should ever have, or even want!

THE DISTINCTION IN BRIEF

A Town Meeting is the application to civil life of the Congregational Church Meeting. As such, it combines respect for each individual with prudential concern for the common good. Therefore, a Town Meeting ideally decides issues in such a way as to balance individual freedom and community responsibility. In practice, this means compromises in civil affairs.

A Church Meeting seeks the mind of Christ, rather than compromise. The Congregational Church Meeting is spiritually responsible to God; and the laws of the land (incorporation, holding property, etc.) are, in the United States, a recognition of freedom for the work and witness of the Churches.

A state, regional, national or world meeting of Congregationalists seeks the mind of Christ rather than compromise. Wider bodies are responsible to God and to the Churches. Their decisions, in an ancient and honored phrase, "have as much weight as they have worth." Wider bodies are not, and cannot be, "Churches." Their members are not gathered by voluntary covenant, do not meet regularly for worship, and are limited to a matter of hours or days in duration. Wider church-bodies are composed of persons selected by the Churches. Discussion, inspiration and prayer may lead to spirit-commanded decisions, which decisions are therefore the mind of Christ *for that meeting*. No words in "Articles of Association" or "resolutions" can

change the ultimate responsibility to God of each Christian in each gathered Church. Decisions of conscience can not be delegated! The truth must commend itself to Christians in conscience and Church Meetings. Responsibility for action in Christian witness or work is achieved when wider bodies are sensitive to God, and to the needs of His Churches. Fundamentally, every Congregational Church member is responsible to God for his creed and conduct. Likewise, every Congregational Church is accountable to God as He reveals Himself to its members in Church Meeting. Every wider church-body is equally accountable to God and to the Churches; for it is made up of Christians sent from the Churches and would cease to exist apart from the Churches.

The Congregational Way places all authority in Christ as the Head of God's Churches. Sometimes we speak of our Churches as autonomous; it would be even better to say, *Christonomous*, Christ-ruled rather than self-ruled. Sometimes we speak of our Churches as independent; it would be even better to say *interdependent*; we voluntarily, led by the Spirit, "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."

No church-order is more concerned, more tender-hearted toward the needs of others, more desirous of answering calls for help than the Congregational Way. We are commanded by God in conscience. This is our holy responsibility.

RESPONSIBLE FREEDOM

When I wrote the "Congregational Polity" section for the "Committee on Free Church Polity and Unity," I described the relationship between the wider bodies and the Churches as "responsible freedom."

"Responsible" implies that

the Church-wider-body-relation is not frivolous. Two or three gathered together for a few days may be moved by the Spirit of God. Whenever this happens the decisions of the gathering have spiritual value for all who are in attendance. This lays upon them a responsibility to report what has been decided to the Churches. However, the national or state or regional meeting is not a covenanted contiguous continuing Church fellowship. It is not a Church. It is an assembly of Christians who *come from* and who *return to* Congregational Christian Churches.

Responsible freedom describes the practical relation of the Congregational Christian Churches to one another, and to their wider agencies. The local Church voluntarily elects delegates to meetings of wider bodies, and takes responsibility for the work undertaken by those delegates, with the usual Congregational reservation, namely, that what is undertaken must *win* the support of the Churches, and that the Churches must *win* the support of their members.

Responsible freedom means voluntary participation in wider bodies. In practice, whatever is proposed by any wider body or by any committee or board of the Church must ultimately commend itself to the Church Meeting; for the Church Meeting is the locus of all church-power in Congregationalism. Waiting-before-God under the Headship of Christ, the gathered fellowship of covenanted Christians in a local community seeks nothing less than divine guidance! No wonder many writers have called the Congregational Way, "a high view" of the Church!

What a joy to walk that high way together!

Dr. Gray is Dean of the Hollywood Congregational Center for Study and Service, Hollywood, California.

AMERICAN YOUTH AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

INCLUDING THE BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP AND HOPE

by Henry David Gray

It was August 1875. Congregationalist Dwight L. Moody, returning from a successful preaching tour of Britain, met newsmen at the New York docks. Then, bone-weary, emotionally exhausted and spiritually drained he returned to his Northfield home where the broad Connecticut sweeps beside fertile valleys and among rolling hills. Northfield was a haven for body, mind and soul; a place to dream God's dreams. Famous visitors found him at work on the farm. Among those who recorded their visits in late August was Dr. Cuyler of Brooklyn. His diary reads, "Moody told me the next morning he was thinking of starting a school . . . Christian character for boys and girls in Northfield." He started planning immediately and the school opened in 1879.

From Major D. W. Whittle's visit in September 1875 came the publication of "Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs." Royalties from successive editions, managed by a non-profit body, paid for East Hall and Stone Hall at Northfield. In 1880 the spacious campus was the launching pad for the summer conference movement.

In autumn 1875, in the wake of the Chicago fire, the first Y.M.C.A. building in the world, Farwell Hall, Chicago was re-dedicated by Moody, its last debts paid for by contributions he secured.

In autumn 1875, a younger Congregationalist was a senior at Andover Seminary. His name? Francis E. Clark. Called to Williston Congregational Church in Portland, Maine; when 30 years old, Pastor Clark began "The Christian Endeavor Society."

The Christian Endeavor

Just as Moody's "Y" Inspiration had leaped across denominational and geographical lines, so "CE" called Francis E. Clark to Boston in 1883, and to full time service from 1887 onward. Neither of these two Congregational youth leaders had a salary. They depended on royalties from their writings, gifts from fellow Christians, and the power of Christian faith to win young people "For Christ and the Church." As President of the World's Christian Endeavor Union from 1895 to 1925 "Father Clark", as we affectionately called him, made numerous journeys at home and



Dwight L. Moody

abroad. He died in 1926 in London where he was attending a CE meeting. Francis E. Clark authored over thirty books including his autobiography.

CE district rallies were held annually or semi-annually, attracting thousands of young people. Once a year a state gathering packed the largest auditorium in the host city. Rallies began on Thursday or Friday and adjourned Sunday afternoon. Colorful bunting, flags, posters, bands, choirs, mass singing, testimonies and powerful speeches were the staples of these joyous occasions.

Typical of state activities were the Brown Brothers, active leaders of the movement in California. They travelled constantly, stirring interest in Churches, organizing Societies, rallies, providing literature on "How to Organize", "Topics for Prayer Meetings", "How to Preside", "How to Read the Bible", and distributing CE lapel pins, rings and tie clips. As a Dis'

The Congregationalist, January

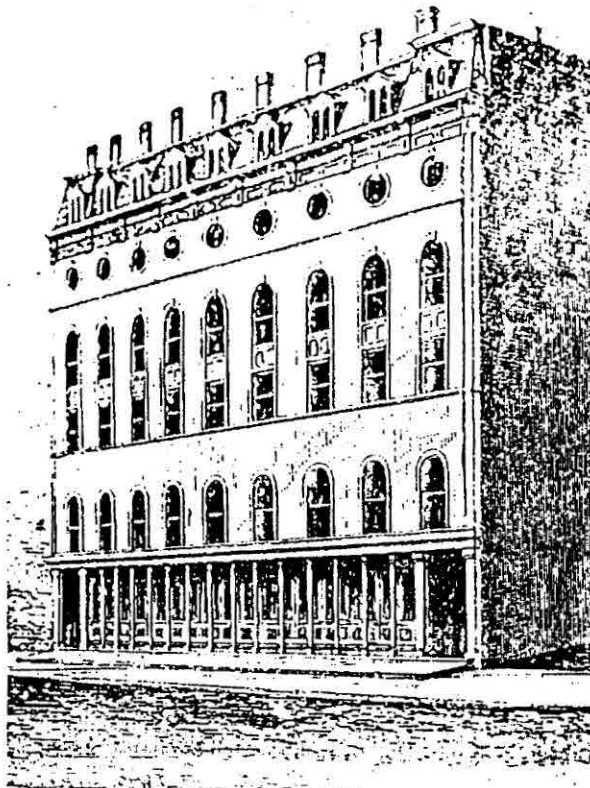
President in 1929, I led the mass singing at the Annual Meeting in the huge San Bernardino Orange Auditorium, with two thousand voices at full power, on "Since Jesus Came Into My Heart."

It would be difficult to overestimate the contribution of CE to Churches and persons. The Societies were a leadership school. Many a future missionary, minister, or lay Church person first stood up to speak before others in a CE meeting. The committee system worked because everyone was pledged to participate. Christian faith was *fun* interspersed with serious discussions. Musicians became a bit jingo in the late twenties, *but* old and new hymns — even parodies — had a lilt which made their message easy to remember. Many CE choirs, soloists, and instrumentalists doubled in the service of the Church. In the CE of which I was president (1925-'26) all sixty members trooped from the Society meeting to the choir loft of the Church for the evening service. Song leaders were born in Society and Church. If the Society, by spontaneous voice, asked you to lead the singing — you just got up and tried, sure that everyone would help you.

CE is currently active round the world. The movement's strength rests on members pledged to Christian living, daily Bible reading and prayer, participation in meetings and committee work, and strong adult leadership.

Co-operation in Conferences and the U.C.Y.M.

The summer camp or conference, begun at Northfield, Mass., by Congregationalist Dwight L. Moody in 1880 had grown into the college-age Student Volunteer Movement, whose motto soon became, "The World for Christ in this generation"; with John R. Mott, its leader. The summer conference for students slowly grew into summer conferences for families, young people, ministers, and Christian Education teachers.

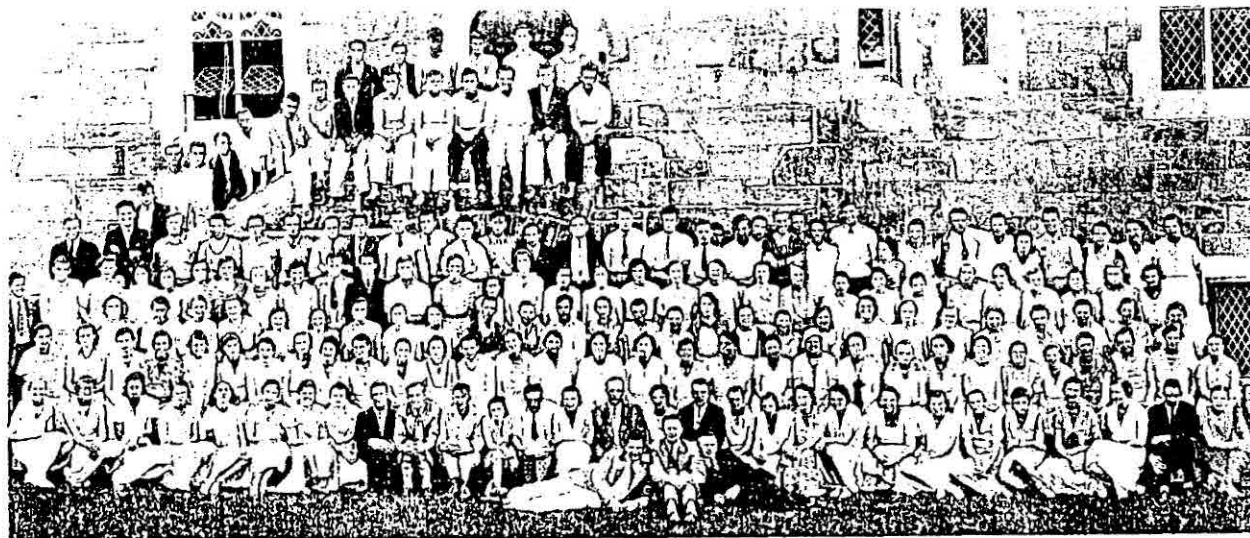


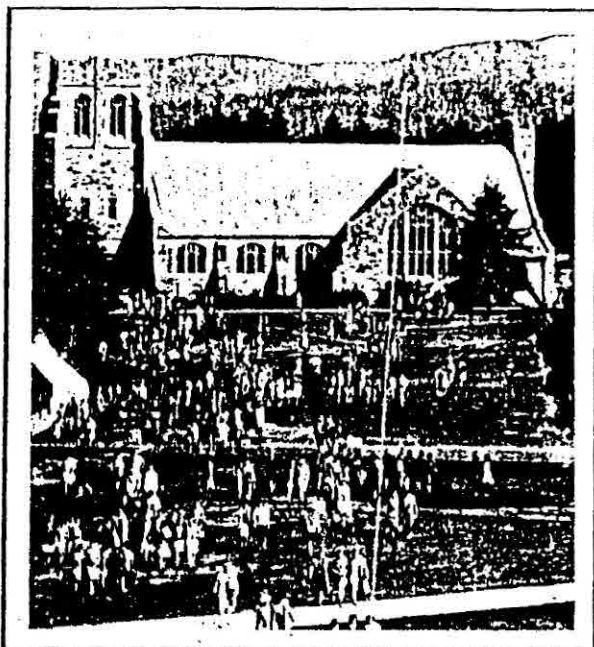
The Original Farwell Hall

These conferences were usually identified with denominational youth bodies like the Methodist "Epworth League", the Baptist "Young People's Union", and the Lutheran "Walther League." CE retained its place as the dominant Protestant youth group until the 1920's.

In 1922 the Interdenominational Council of Religious Education was organized. Its annual meetings, divided into many sections, attracted thousands of leaders of youth. Working closely

The Northfield Conferences began in 1880. Below is the 1932 Conference photo.





Leaving Stone Chapel at 1932 summer conference.

together in the publication of magazines, pamphlets, standards of leadership training, and faced with the social impact and financial restraints of the 1930's, the United Christian Youth Movement emerged in 1934.

Young people and adult leaders representing 40 denominations, 31 state Councils of Religious Education, and fourteen other agencies (like the Y, Boy Scouts, etc.) met at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, and constituted the Youth Council of North America. This expressed an idea which had been tentatively put forward in Toronto in 1930 in connection with the Quadrennial Meeting of The International Council of Religious Education.

The combination of vigorous denominational bodies, summer conferences and the UCYM inevitably led to a four way conflict. Independent bodies like the Y and the Boy Scouts, were glad to have a clearing house for information but did not wish their programs to be "integrated" as an appendage of the UCYM. Conciliar bodies included many more denominations and related youth-centered groups, and saw loss rather than gain in the submergence of their programs in the UCYM.

The denominations reacted variously to the proposed all-embracing organization; most with some skepticism. Christian Endeavor leaders said forthrightly that C.E. was *already* interdenominational and international.

In 1936 at Lakeside Methodist Conference Camp Grounds on Lake Erie, the UCYM brought together a body of which Harry Thomas Stock said, "Never in American history has such an official and representative body of Christian youth been assembled." The Congregational quota was eighty; they met during a rainstorm and the

National Council of The Pilgrim Fellowship was launched; then in 1938 a constitutional assembly was held at Rockford College, fortunately close to the General Council's Meeting where I was The Secretary of the Christian Education Seminar, and could keep in touch. In 1931-'33 I served at Northfield Conferences, shared in the reorganization of the Connecticut State Youth Conference; and in '37-'38 was co-founder and co-dean of Massachusetts' first Pilgrim Fellowship Summer Conference.

What happened to C.E.?

The president of the International Society of Christian Endeavor, under the direction of a special commission of that body, called a conference at Atlantic City, December 4 and 5, 1939. They needed only a day and a half to arrive at a unanimous vote on the report which I had been instructed to write overnight. It is self-explanatory:

"Present and participating in the discussion were eleven members of the (CE) commission, officially appointed directors of young people's work in twelve denominations, eight field secretaries of Christian Endeavor, and nine others, including ministers, editors, and presidents of State Christian Endeavor Unions."

"The purpose of the conference was . . . to discover possible and practical ways of working together with increased unity and harmony."



*Sidney
Berry
(1945)*

A sense of discovery pervaded the meetings. Norman Vincent Peale gave expression to the common mind in an eloquent statement of dedication to reaching young people in the name of Christ and guiding them into the fullness of Christian living with "The local Church always retaining the power of decision and choice."

It was the conviction of the leaders present . . . that we heartily enter into a cooperative and aggressive program for Christian youth."

Diverse "demands, abilities and interests" were recognized and applauded.

"A continuation committee of seven" was appointed, of which I was a member. This committee fostered co-operative efforts, so that CE Societies in Congregational (or other) Churches were recognized as full partners in *both* denominational programs and summer conferences, *and* as members of the interdenominational Society of Christian Endeavor. The conference adjourned with the singing of the Doxology.

I hastened to New York to celebrate with Shakespeare's "Hamlet" in the afternoon, and Wagner's "Die Valkerie" in the evening!

takes five young people to keep one adult thinking straight." *He believed in young people.* Again, seeing a situation in which a wrong decision by a youth committee appeared inevitable, I asked, "What do we do now?" The reply? "Do nothing. Haven't they a right to learn by their mistakes as well as by their right choices?"

Harry Thomas Stock was not essentially either an organizer or a theologian, *but* as a catalyst who could inspire young people to live greatly he has had few equals. "You are the coach, not the basketball center", he told ministers. "Your work is to help each young person to learn, to choose and to follow the way to full and complete life. Isn't there a verse about Jesus coming *that you may have life to the full?*"



Dr. Gray (pointing) pauses with 1952 Oneonta Odyssey before notice of his appearance at Sherwell Church, Plymouth, England.

An Unassuming Genius

The new denominational youth work was inspired by the most advanced concept since the years of Dwight L. Moody and Francis E. Clark. A camera-shy unassuming man with a genius for encouraging young people "to be the best God wants you to be", was at the heart of it. Harry Thomas Stock brought an entirely fresh vision to young people. First, he worked with them in the traditional CE way, as adult leader at Northfield, as author of "Topics" (made into more extended and more searching inquiries), as philosopher and leader in The United Christian Youth Movement, and as a counsellor to generations of young people and ministers.

Harry Stock is probably the least known important American Congregationalist in the twentieth century. It was Stock's philosophy and methodology which gathered the first national Congregational Youth Meeting at Lakewood, in 1936. What was proposed was a *fellowship*. When I asked Harry why all his committees had one adult for every five young people he answered, "It

Persistently, quietly, thoroughly Harry Thomas Stock exemplified the truth he taught. "There is one place where young people can put their high purposes into practice," he wrote, "that is in their Church societies and fellowships . . . Thousands of our most reliable adults received their training in responsibility in young people's Societies. Other thousands are receiving such training now.

In some states, notably Iowa and Michigan, youth leadership of youth was quickly accepted. At the 1938 Rockford College Constitutional Assembly, each conference was entitled to four youth and one adult delegate. The name, "Pilgrim Fellowship" was made official. It emerged, partly, Harry told me, "While I was talking with some Missouri young people at a railroad station," partly, it grew out of our Congregational heritage, and partly it expressed the ideal of deep-down *fellowship*.

National Pilgrim Fellowship

"The National Pilgrim Fellowship" became the inclusive name used for all the young people



King Hussan of Jordan (left) answers questions of 1960 Odyssey.

of our Churches. The National Council of the PF elected its own officers and included regional representatives. In April 1939 I accepted the invitation to be the first Executive Secretary.

Miss Lucy Eldredge, who had already been working closely with Dr. Stock, and I were the national secretaries for Youth work in the Congregational Christian Churches. Harry Thomas Stock had become the General Secretary for Education. Lucy specialized in Junior High — and helped everywhere. I was titled, "Secretary for Young People's Work and Student Life." Our Chief was Dr. Stock, who gave unstintingly of himself to his junior colleagues.

My charge was to write a theology for Christian youth, to incorporate Harry's genius into a working Fellowship, to stimulate young people to think new thoughts and dare to put them into action, to traverse the nation visiting Churches and Ministers, to write monthly for "The Pilgrim Highroad" as contributing editor, to gather Congregational student groups and to organize the National Pilgrim Fellowship in relation to the conferences, associations and Churches.

At Mills College (Oakland, California) in summer of 1940, over 200 young people assembled, representing forty conferences, including The District of Columbia, and Hawaii, which was not yet a state. In three years more than 100 student groups were gathered, a string of Work Camps was inaugurated with the help of the Quakers, more than 120 summer conferences were being held annually, and a wide-ranging service program was initiated. The leadership of youth by youth was contagious. In four summers I had participated in 78 summer or student conferences.

Spread of Fellowship Idea

The newly-united METHODIST CHURCH took the Pilgrim Fellowship concept, books and pamphlets and created a stunning series for the new Methodist Youth Fellowship. Representatives of many denominations, with the adult coaches, met at Estes Park in 1941 as The Christian Youth Coun-

cil of North America, along with CE, YMCA, YWCA, and student groups. (Hindsight enables me to see *that* meeting as the crest of UCYM.) Baptists, Disciples and other denominations brought forth their own youth fellowships, all of them deeply influenced by the philosophy and methodology of Harry Thomas Stock.

The report from Estes emphasizes Dr. Stock's concept from the first paragraph:

"As Christian young people, we wish to see this world a better place in which to live, but we find ourselves inadequate to meet the tremendous tasks involved in carrying out that desire. We need more consecration and training. We need to gird ourselves so that divine resources may flow through us. To this end we must find a vital and creative approach to the Bible. We must discipline ourselves mentally, spiritually, and physically . . . We must experience the depth of human fellowship . . . as we give ourselves, and ask others to join us . . . to BUILD TODAY for a Christian World."

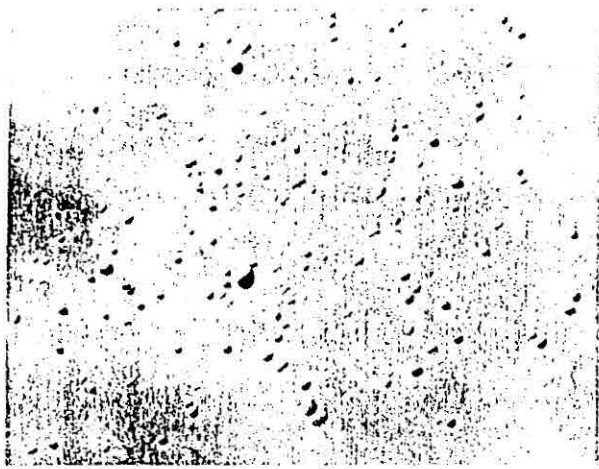
The impact of conferences and Christian oriented youth groups and gatherings may be caught, (like God's sunshine, in a single ray) in the following words which came across my desk, breathing the spirit of PF fellowship in a single summer conference from a 16 year old in Aberdeen, Washington.

"When I went to summer conference at Seabeck (1941) I had one thought in mind and that was fun . . . I did have lots of fun but more important than that, I found a spirit that gave me a Christian outlook on life. I learned the meaning of thoughtfulness, fellowship and unity. I met leaders who told us the real meaning of prayer and how to pray, who inspired us with what the gospel is ac-

The 1964 Odyssey included this visit with Dr. Zakir Husain, vice president of India.



The Congregationalist, January 1976



suggested details. And there was inspired singing by the whole PF. The adult delegates were not stunned. Not a bit. They were thrilled — *this was how it should be!* There and then the epic which had begun at a 1952 meeting of Pfers with Pastor Zikas in Athens became the only completely new missionary effort of our Churches in this century.

The dedication and rich church-life in the free Churches of Greece inspired PF co-workers Holly Mach, Lila Jeanne Giles, Mary Speare, and early summer work-project leaders, Ellen and Betsey Gray, George Weekly and Homer Altenes. A picturesque bluff at Makri on the Aegean near the Greece-Turkey border with a sweep of turquoise water at its feet, became the site of *Camp Charis* (Greek word for 'Grace') now filled to overflowing each summer with Greek Evangelical Church families & pastors. The charisma of the Rev. Philotheos Zikas of Alexandroupolis has been an apostolic mission to Churches in The United



States as well as in Greece. Only God Himself knows the remarkable Christian influence of what was dreamed about in 1952, established in 1961 and serves as a center for renewal and inspiration, training and fellowship which blesses even as it grows.

From its organizational beginning in 1959 The National Association Pilgrim Fellowship has developed through area and national assemblies. Cross-country caravans have multiplied, as have overseas contacts. In every Annual Meeting of the NACCC, since 1961 at Cheyenne, the presence of two hundred or more young people has been a radiant influence. Many active members of the Congregational Churches have grown in Christian stature in Pilgrim Fellowships and the young adult group "H.O.P.E." (Heritage of Pilgrim Endeavor), and the junior high "Crusaders."



Pfers have crossed the seas and circled the globe. In 1960, eight young people from Iowa, Illinois, the northeast, Helen L. Gray, leader, participated in two international Christian Conferences in Italian Alps — *Camp Agape* (Greek word for godlike 'Love') inspired, built and led by Waldensian Pastor Tullio Vinay, another great soul. Other Pfers ranged from Scotland through Northern Europe & Russia to the lands of the Bible, where they were impressed by the N.A.'s "Operation Sparkplug" — the Rural Resources Development Project in Jordan. In 1961 two more Pilgrimages — a work party to Greece and a study mission to Britain. In 1962 more Pfers attended the Third International Congregational Youth gathering in Rotterdam, stayed in West Berlin with leaders of the Eckenforde Project, and journeyed south through eastern Europe to Greece where they introduced the first PF co-worker; 1963 another work project in Greece! 1964 and 1967

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brought N.A. Mission Visitations round the world — the first western youth who lived in a South Indian village, near Cape Comorin. And *every year* camps, conferences, rallies, caravans and Pilgrimages to Greece, and often the other lands of the Bible. Among the group leaders have been Harry Clark, Lloyd Hall, Larry Todd, Joe and Holly Cimborra, Bob Scanland, David and Eldyne Gray, 'Bert' Walker, Peter Brenner and a host of others who continue to increase the outstretch and deepen the experiences of members of the Pilgrim Fellowship.

Dwight L. Moody, Francis E. Clark and Harry Thomas Stock would be overjoyed with the zest, imagination and religious insight of the 1961 PFers who wrote these words:

The OBJECTIVES OF THE PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP ARE:

1. *To unite* all Congregational young people in worship, fellowship and service.
2. *To develop* the spiritual qualities and leadership of youth.
3. *To promote* a free Christian way of life among the youth of our country, and,
4. *To convey* our ideas to the world in Christian action.



Ordination Services: Caricature or Holy Event

by Dr. Norman S. Ream

Having spent over 40 years in the ministry, I have attended a great number and a large variety of ordination services. Some were beautifully planned and executed, highly inspirational. Others seemed something of a farce, thrown together as a kind of caricature of the sacred and holy event they ought, in every event, to have been.

The last two such events I participated in were two of the finest and most inspirational of my experience. They were held in a large church, well-filled with worshippers, accompanied with a great organ and an outstanding choir, everything done in proper and decent order.

A rich and meaningful service does not have to be held in a large cathedral, nor does it require outstanding music. It does require, however, that things be done orderly and properly if the service is to be meaningful and fulfill its proper purpose. This is where a large number of ordination services abysmally fail. The very

tion, the service takes place immediately following the Vicinage Council. I submit that this is no proper way to insure that none but the finest men and women become the spiritual leaders of our churches.

It would be far better if the ordination service were scheduled a week, or even a month, following the Vicinage Council. True, in Congregational practice the ordaining congregation has the authority to ordain according to its own wishes, but it would be much more sensible, and certainly more considerate toward the neighboring churches, if there were some semblance of respect and appreciation for the efforts of those churches to be present and share their counsel, and who, after deliberation, recommend ordination. Otherwise the Council is merely rubber-stamping a decision already made.

Our Congregational tradition also suggests that at the Vicinage Council the discussion, the questions and the final vote be on an understanding by the candidate of the Congregational Way, its history and polity, his or

❧ 'The word ordain comes from
a Latin root meaning order.' ❧

word "ordain" comes from a Latin root meaning order.

But let us start with that which precedes the act of ordination and the service of worship in which that act is incorporated. Let us begin with the Vicinage or Ecclesiastical Council. That traditional usage of Congregationalism might also be referred to as a Vicinage Counsel, for it is an occasion when neighboring churches join in council to counsel the congregation which has initiated the whole matter.

In our present practice, the result of a Vicinage Council is usually a foregone conclusion. I, for one, have never attended such a meeting where the candidate was seriously challenged on any matter which was a proper subject for the Council to consider. That such is the case is indicated by the fact that nearly every Council is immediately followed by the ordination service itself. The ordaining church just assumes that the Vicinage Council is a mere form, a routine, which must be gone through before the act of ordination can take place. The members of the ordaining church never consider the possibility that the Council may recommend the candidate not be ordained. The ladies are busy in the kitchen, the organist and choir have duly scheduled their appearance, the congregation has been invited to attend at the appointed hour and, almost without excep-

her educational qualifications and his or her genuine call to the ministry. The delegates should not focus on fine points of theology or Biblical interpretation. As a matter of interest this may be acceptable, but as a matter of qualification for ordination it is entirely unacceptable. A basic historical and traditional principle of Congregationalism is the right of private judgment on such matters and an acceptance of diversity of opinion concerning Scripture and doctrine. Ours is a fellowship of churches with mutual tolerance and respect for all others.

A church could do no better, when it plans for an ordination, than to consult Henry David Gray's *Congregational Worship Book*, for as Dr. Gray points out (page 670),

"There is an awesome wonder in ordination, wherein a church sets apart one of its own to be a lifelong minister of Christ. In truth it is not even the church which ordains any person; it is God Himself whose call has been answered, and whose will is being done."

If we are engaged in doing God's will, as I believe we are, then certainly what we do must be done carefully, thoughtfully, prayerfully and in a way designed to give glory to God and not man. The ordinand is called by God, not by an Ecclesiastical Council. Nothing less than our human best is adequate to the occasion. □

Dr. Norman S. Ream is a retired Congregational minister, now residing in Estes Park, Colo. He remains active with the NACCC and filling interim pastorates.

Ambassadors

*Becoming a part of the CCC/NA's
effort to serve churches
proved a challenge
many were proud to assume.*

by Mary Dunham McKendrick

In March 1985, when Harold Frentz, field representative of the Congregational Christian Churches/NA, asked me if I would accept the nomination from my Regional Association and be part of a new program to be inaugurated soon with the purpose of keeping the lines of communication open between the individual churches, our Regions and the executive staff at Oak Creek, I was not long in deciding that I should very much like to accept.

In fact, I soon realized that it would be only a case of continuing part of what I had been doing as executive secretary of the New Hampshire Congregational Fellowship for the past few years. The planning of their programs (spring and fall) and the editing of the newsletter were the only parts I should have to transfer

to other hands. I would keep the personal contact and the building of good rapport with the church members. I would be a good listener. I would answer questions. I would give encouragement to lagging spirits. I would give friendly advice to unwise enthusiasms. Most of all, I would provide the support of someone who cared enough to see and understand the individual church's aspirations, its particular circumstances, and most of all its potential.

The first meeting of our Ambassadors group of twenty or so occurred early in May 1985 at the Oak Creek office. Our leader called us together for dinner and an evening meeting where we were joined by the executive secretary at that time, Dr. A. Ray Appelquist, and by the chairman of the Executive Committee, Barbara Janikowsky.

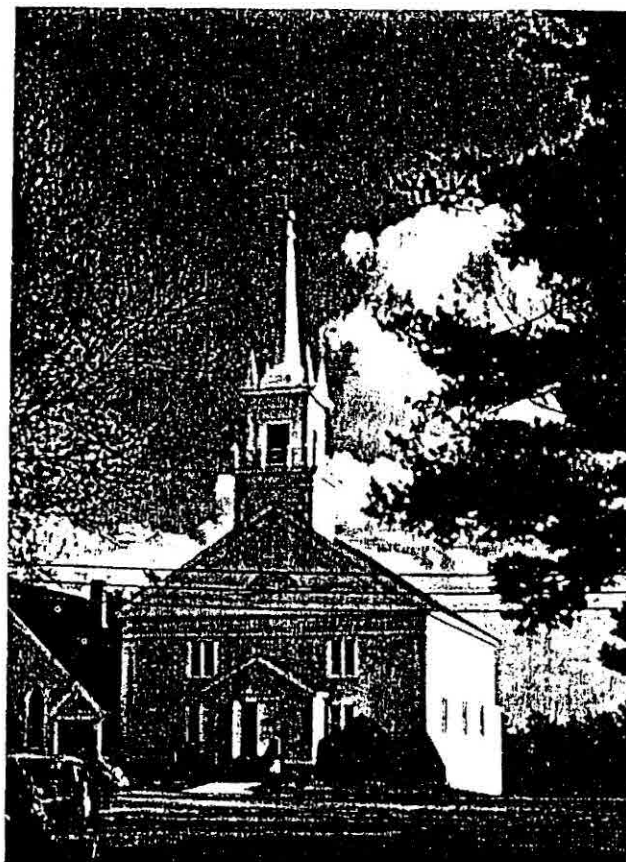
The following day we met through the morning, then had a working lunch and continued until two o'clock. We were supplied with a wealth of information and were given the opportunity to ask as many questions as we

wished. The inspiration felt by all of us in becoming a part of the CCC/NA's effort to serve churches proved to be a challenge we were proud to assume. In the late afternoon we left for home, many of us flying out of Milwaukee airport east and west to our destinations. The future was up to us. Would we measure up to this new opportunity for service? We were determined to be pioneers of whom our fellow Congregationalists would not be ashamed.

One of the discussions just before adjourning had been, "By what name do we wish to be called?" The final decision was "Ambassador." When that name was chosen, my mind immediately recalled Sir Henry Wotton's famous description of an ambassador. In 1604 Sir Henry, on his way to Italy, was asked by a merchant to write his name in the merchant's book. He wrote (of course in Latin), "An ambassador is an honest man sent abroad to lie for the good of his country." His wit nearly ruined his career and he had to apologize to King James. His friend, Izaak Walton,

Mary Dunham McKendrick serves as Ambassador for New Hampshire Congregational Fellowship.

One of the churches served by Ambassador Mary McKendrick is First Congregational Church, Hampton, N.H. The church was gathered in 1638 and is celebrating its 350th anniversary this year. The Rev. Steven R. Bowden is pastor of the church.



wrote later that Wotten would have been content if the translation had read, "An ambassador is an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country."

I have taken pleasure in traveling abroad in the area assigned to me and I trust I have been truthful and have kept the good of both the National Association and its individual member churches (as well as my Region) uppermost in mind.

The supervision of our activities has been excellent from the beginning, thanks to the fine leadership of Harold Frentz. From the "Outline of Duties" at the beginning of our service, through the intervening months, he has sent us, from time to time, detailed information about the services offered by each of the divisions and commissions, including the general ledger and income statement for each, new plans for our ministers' retirement pensions and our group life and health insurance program, plus other guides to meet our needs as interpreters. We have received help from the Division for Ministry

regarding church search committees and individual ministers seeking new pastorates. These are only examples of ways in which we have been made to feel that if we cannot answer quickly a church's question, we certainly know where to go to find out, and that the answer will be forthcoming.

Worshipping with the people in a local church is extremely important and one of my joys. For an hour on Sunday morning, I am an intimate part of their weekly prayer and meditation, their singing of the hymns so dear to us all, a part of their minister's message for the day. At his invitation, an Ambassador has the opportunity to be introduced to the entire congregation and to speak to them from the pulpit, bringing greetings from all the other Congregational churches spread across this land. It is one more means of helping them to feel an integral part of a wonderful family.

I am sure that some people think all an Ambassador does is visit each church at least once a year, and more often if possible. However impor-

tant this is, it is far from being the complete picture. I can truthfully say that there have been very few weeks in the past three years, summer as well as winter, when a portion of each day has not been given over to some phase of the work. Some inquiries for help can be taken care of fairly quickly; others require several days in which to assemble information. This means much correspondence and many telephone calls.

How do we achieve good public relations and build confidences so that a church, particularly the small congregation, feels comfortable in contacting its Ambassador when it has a problem or is puzzled about a matter which is very important to its members? Sometimes they are hesitant in asking. If I haven't heard from a church's leaders recently, I call them or write them just to keep in touch. Almost all my churches send me their monthly bulletins and I study them to spot special events that I may attend myself or inquire about. Our state newspaper keeps me informed about local happenings, too, and I

don't let an opportunity pass by when a friendly inquiry or a sympathetic word can let people know that I care. This is a good place to tell that I always send a postcard to each of the member churches, as well as to any prospective member churches, when I attend the Annual Meeting of the CCC/NA. They all receive word that they are remembered.

To summarize the various types of requests for help I receive, I give the following examples. They are only that, examples covering a wide variety.

A fair number of inquiries for help have come from churches asking about pension plans or health insurance for their ministers. These requests have been answered from the national office and Division for the Ministry personnel. Other specific questions concerning areas of Christian education or youth groups have been referred to the commission or division responsible.

Some churches are combinations of two groups, such as Congregational combined with Baptist, Methodist, or Quaker. Others are two churches which have divided into CCC and UCC, each meeting not far from the other. In New Hampshire there are also three summer churches, two meetings two months each, but at different times, and a third church worshipping on two Sundays only. The only Canadian church in the NA is a member of our Regional Association (Fellowship) and there is another in the process of being gathered. To complete the variety, there is one church in northern New York State. This means that on more than one occasion I have been introduced to a congregation as representing the Congregational Conference of North America! Before I concluded my greeting to them, I diplomatically explained who I was. However, out of all of this variety of loyalties come questions about transfers of church membership to our Association to be considered and resolved accurately.

If a minister's claim of having been ordained is questioned, it is often brought to light when a marriage is to be performed and the state law must be followed. States differ. This is not pleasant work but help is given as needed.

The matter of a church revising its By-Laws brings forth questions from the committee responsible for presenting the new form to be considered. This question is usually asked by a

church which is a combination of two groups, and ours is not the predominant one.

It is a thrilling experience when word comes that a group is asking about membership in the CCC/NA. They want more information and a visit from a representative of the National Association. It is a delicate matter which has to be handled carefully. Spirits rise and hope is alive that success will be achieved. But, we must keep in mind that the group asking the questions sometimes is a small minority. These people often have a long and discouraging way to go to inspire the others to agree to read, and listen, and learn. But it is worth keeping the lines open and active, let-



The author, Mary McKendrick

ting these eager people know they are not forgotten and that we do care about them.

Special services such as Vicinage Councils, Installation and Ordinations bring forth questions about who attends, who takes part and the order of the service. At some installations, the Ambassador is included among those who take part, bringing greetings of all the other Congregational churches in our Association or regional fellowship.

At the time of special events and anniversaries, aid is requested in locating a speaker and in deciding what financial arrangements are proper to offer. In the months leading up to the Annual Meeting of the CCC/NA, encouragement and guidance is needed to make sure that each church is represented by a delegate. When possible, it is hoped that a church will offer financial assistance to these delegates; but that does not always happen.

Part of the duties include reporting at our Regional Fellowship meetings so that all churches may be kept up to date on services, happenings and communications, both from our churches and from the Association.

There are occasions when churches in other states ask about candidates for their pulpits and what the background story has been when they were serving in another state. Sometimes it takes several days and telephone calls to track down the answers; but we are always glad to comply. Who knows when we may have to do the same, in reverse.

There are large envelopes and sometimes packages of publications to mail, fulfilling requests for information about Congregational heritage or services. This is good because our Congregational churches today are composed of people from several other backgrounds, and education is important.

In conclusion: The challenge of fulfilling one's responsibility and commitment as an Ambassador is worth undertaking. That challenge has grown over the past three years. Each one of us, I am sure, has met that increase willingly and prayerfully. God has heard our pleas for insight and compassion and wisdom. Without His ever-present support and guidance, we should have failed long ago. If you are ever asked to serve as an Ambassador, I hope you will accept. It will be a rewarding experience for you. □