

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
Bohman, George. "What Congregationalism Means to Me." July '77
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.
October, December 1989
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
Bradshaw, Marion. "Essentially Congregationist." January '61
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Conn, Howard. "Congregationalism's Contribution to Christian Unity." October '63
Conn, Howard. "Congregationalists and the Ecumenical Movement." September '65
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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

ASPECTS OF CHURCH LIFE

- Butman, Harry. "How It [*The Congregationalist*] Started." August '62
Butman, Harry. "The Vicinage Council." March '65
Steece, Arvel. "Deacons, Dodos, Dynamics." March '73
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

THE MINISTRY

The Growth *of the* Lay Ministry

*Alvan Barrus
Cornish, New Hampshire*

In 1961 there appeared in *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* two inspiring articles on the lay ministry by Dr. Harry R. Butman. Since that time interest in the lay ministry has increased, more articles and books have appeared, and now more laymen are becoming engaged in an ever-expanding ministry. One writer has expressed the belief that it would astonish most people to know just how many pulpits across our land on any Sunday morning are filled by laymen.

This activity, curiously enough, is in the face of the decline of the institutional church, and the attack upon it. Hendrik Kraemer has written: "In all our criticism and sometimes near despair of the institutional church, it should never be forgotten that many powers and possibilities really exist in it, but often in captivity; they exist as frozen credits and dead capital." Possibly it is this resurgence of the lay ministry that is thawing these credits and resurrecting this capital.

The revitalizing of the modern Church requires more than a new liturgy and new symbols. Only the Spirit of the living Christ in living men can restore for our time the mighty power of the apostolic Churches which was revived for a time in the Pilgrim Churches.

Laymen at Work

I have been asked to write a little about the activities of some of these dedicated, and usually unsung, men of our Churches, using material gathered from many sources, and from my own experience of more than ten years as a member of the

New Hampshire Lay Preachers Fellowship.

New members have constantly entered the fellowship, there being some twenty individuals who have served Churches this past year, mostly for interim periods of a few weeks. The number of calls is ever increasing, and a growing proportion of the men are active nearly every Sunday.

Elsewhere in our Congregational Fellowship growth of the lay ministry is evident. The movement should receive a further impetus from the publication of the *Manual for Lay Preachers*, by Walter James Vernon. This is a plain but thorough guide which should encourage even the most inexperienced layman to heed his call, and accept his responsibility, for Dr. Butman says that he has long felt the lay ministry is the only hope for the country Churches.

Other strong hands and minds are lending their time and influence to our work. At the First Congregational Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, the pastor, Rev. Norman S. Ream has organized a group of about twelve men and helped them train for service in Churches all over Wisconsin. They usually go as teams of three; one man preaches, one man conducts the service, and the third man acts as critic in the congregation.

The Seattle, Washington, Congregational Church, although new and small, has doubled its membership in the past year, and on Laymen's Sunday the entire service was conducted by laymen.

The Plymouth Congregational Church of Spokane, Washington, at a communion service on November 8, 1964, received new members bringing its total to over 500. This Church had been organized less than ten months, and it is reported that this entire growth has been the result of lay leadership!

The First Congregational Church of Burlington, Iowa has two laymen who do outstanding work in the preparation and delivery of sermons. They have preached several times in their own Church, and have supplied in other Churches in Iowa and Illinois.

Galesburg, Illinois has a new Church known as the Pilgrim Congregational Church of Knox County. Most of the organization and much of the preaching has been done by laymen. The first communion service was conducted by Mr. Carlisle Smith, a Congregational layman from Knoxville.

The Wachogue Congregational Church in Springfield, Massachusetts has two experienced lay preachers in the persons of Albert H. Spry and Carleton Cassidy. Widely read and well educated they have preached and served as interim pastors at a number of Massachusetts and Connecticut Churches. They have preached stirring sermons on the Congregational Way.

The McKeesport, Pennsylvania, Evangelical Congregational Church has an active men's fellowship, where, in addition to the usual men's work, they often take part in the morning worship service, and go out to other Churches as lay preachers. On Remembrance Sunday, November 29th, the closing prayer printed in the church calendar was by layman James Martineau.

Other laymen do more than preach. At Plymouth Congregational Church in Wichita, Kansas, parish visitors supplement the visitation done by the ministers.

The State Fellowships Also Active

The Pennsylvania Laymen's Fellowship has a growing membership with strong Congregational emphasis, and have been doing more than "talking" about lay ministry. When the First Congregational Church of Beaver Falls, Pa., needed help after the sudden death of their pastor, the Reverend John F. C. Green of McKeesport, Pa., issued a call to laymen of three Churches in the western area Laymen's Fellowship to conduct services for this congregation until the time they could obtain the services of a full-time minister. Through the efforts of Dr. Green, seven laymen from three Churches in the Southwestern area of Pennsylvania conducted worship services and preached Sunday mornings at Beaver Falls from February through October 1964. Not only did

these seven laymen give the Beaver Falls Church an interim security, but gave all the Churches in the Western area of that state the satisfaction of knowing that the lay ministry is available to them should they ever want or need this service.

Wisconsin is of course among the leaders, with several lay people serving as Wisconsin Council Camp leaders and counselors. The Illinois State Fellowship of Congregational Churches has a large representation of lay people among its officers and executive committee.

The Massachusetts Congregational Fellowship has a dynamic leader in Carleton D. Cassidy, elected moderator in October 1964. He had the distinction of being ordained into the lay ministry of the Congregational Christian Church in 1962. Although his formal education was limited to two years of high school, his desire to serve God and his fellowmen has caused him constantly to study and grow in knowledge and experience. A list of his activities include: 1. Nine months as interim minister of Wachogue Congregational Church in Springfield, Mass. 2. Nine months as interim minister of the United Presbyterian Church of Chicopee, Mass. During both these periods he made all sick calls, attended Church meetings, performed marriages, administered baptisms, and conducted funeral services. 3. The remaining Sundays have been filled with guest preaching all over Massachusetts and some in Connecticut. He has served for three years as Western Regional Representative of the Massachusetts Fellowship prior to becoming moderator. He is also Vice-Moderator of the Northeast Regional Fellowship of Congregational Christian Churches. Besides all this Mr. Cassidy works five days a week to make a living; and to any layman who feels inadequate or lacking formal education he says: "You can do it too!"

Where Does the Lay Ministry Lead?

The experience of Carleton Cassidy causes us to examine further the paths into which the lay ministry may lead, and makes us realize that once a man has set his feet to fol-

low Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit there is no limit.

One beginning lay preacher in New Hampshire took a two-week interim assignment at a small Church back in 1953, and is still there, serving nearly full time. He has served six years on the local school board, and been moderator of both Baptist and Congregational Associations.

Another N.H. man has preached more than four hundred sermons in over one hundred different Churches in his state, and many in other places. His studies have led him to learn seven languages including Russian and Hebrew. Recently he was invited to preach in Salzburg and Vienna, Austria and in Germany, where he delivered sermons to large congregations in their own language.

Women Are Laymen

Let us not think for a minute that the lay ministry is confined to men. We have long known that some of the most effective ministering has been done by the women.

Some of our most effective lay preaching is done by women. The New Hampshire Lay Preachers Fellowship has had several women members over the years. One has gone on to seminary, and one courageous young woman, whose pastor-husband died suddenly, took over his ministry in the Church with great

effectiveness and increasing acceptance.

Another woman preached a well-ordered sermon with such vitality and oratorical command at the September 1964 meeting of the New Hampshire Fellowship as to cause one of the men to remark, that in his opinion, if St. Paul could have heard her preach he never would have written to the Corinthians that women should keep silent in Church!

The Dangers of the Lay Ministry

Every great work, even Christian service, has inherent in it certain dangers. Lay ministers should be especially aware of these.

First, they should remember that the lay ministry is one of the last careers to enter for personal glory. Many lay preachers rise early on what could be a leisurely Sunday, to travel long miles in the heat of the desert, and the below zero cold of snow storms, to bring a message to small Churches where the audience, week after week, may number from two to ten, at a remuneration which hardly covers travel expense.

Should the fortunate layman find himself in demand, he could well heed the words of Rev. Charles H. Hall of Machias, Maine, a strong supporter of lay ministry, who says that, "lay activity needs to be coached in love and respect for

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Pictured above, the laymen who are active in the lay ministry in Western Pennsylvania. L to r: William E. Miller, South Hills, Pittsburgh; Charles J. Dunlap, South Hills, Pittsburgh; Donald A. Kuhns, Evangelical Congregational, McKeesport; William Beckman, Evangelical Congregational, McKeesport; Calvin Weissert, Evangelical Congregational, McKeesport; William Craig, First Congregational, McKeesport; J. W. Donaldson, First Congregational, McKeesport.

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other members of the Church, rather than being an outlet for selfish influence and realness of individual power."

Then there is a danger that the layman may think of himself as a second quality or imitation minister, whereupon he should recall the opening words of Dr. Butman's article in the November 1961 CONGREGATIONALIST: "Strictly speaking, every Congregational minister is a layman." The layman must remember that he has an authentic witness, and that there is no place in his "other vocation" for role-playing or imitation ministry.

This brings up one other danger which the lay minister will keep in mind. Is the lay minister a threat to the regularly trained pastor? The writer well remembers attending the examination and ordination of a well educated candidate who had many years of Church and social service in his background, who had served successfully as a full time parish minister, and who had tutored intensively for his ordination. Yet, one ordained minister protested vehemently and voted against his ordination in the ecclesiastical council on the ground that he had not graduated from seminary and had no BD degree! Although this man proved his qualifications by continuing to serve with distinction, as have other laymen who have been ordained, it should be understood that lay ministers are not trying to use their opportunities merely as a "back-door" entrance into the ministry.

When we enter the "ministry" do we indeed achieve a character with the fragrance of divinity about it? Of course not. Our ministry is derivative of the ministry of Christ. We minister in His name. The word might better be expressed as a verb, "ministering". To enter the ministry is an act of humility. The only status is that of servanthood to God and man. Rights and privileges are as out of order today as they were the day James and John asked for the right- and left-hand places in the Kingdom.

With these words ringing in our ears, we laymen may consider ourselves free to "work out our own salvation in fear and trembling". ■

The National Program of Pastoral Supply

*Rev. A. Vaughan Abercrombie,
Executive Secretary*

One of the significant accomplishments of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches is its *national* program of pastoral relations.

The old denomination never did succeed in providing the Churches with a truly nation-wide, and Congregational program of pastoral supply. The excellent example of the old New England Board is an historic mile-stone in the development of the Congregational Way. It was conceived in the highest ideals of non-paternalistic service to Churches and ministers, and it sincerely tried to do whatever it could for those outside New England who sought its help. For a few years a pastoral relations office operated in the Middle-west, but by and large the Churches outside of New England were dependent upon Conference superintendents in their search for pastors. Some superintendents were able to maintain a commendable degree of objectivity as they tried to play the conflicting roles of counsellors in pastoral relations, and promoters of a quasi-diocesan program. Many others were not so successful, and, perhaps inadvertently, built an ecclesiastical machine to which both Churches and ministers became subservient.

The National Association department of Pastoral Relations has been patterned on the principles of the old New England Board of Pastoral Supply. Its compilation of dossiers on Churches and ministers is maintained on a strictly voluntary basis. It does not *recommend* ministers to Churches, but makes available information about ministers and



Churches. It is not a placement bureau, but a clearing-house of vital information for Churches seeking ministers and ministers seeking Churches.

Dr. John Claxton, Secretary of the Pastoral Relations Office, describes its function as being "one of assisting in the process by which Churches seeking ministers and ministers seeking Churches may be enabled to know of each other, thereby giving God's will for each the opportunity to find expression."

The procedures followed usually entail the reporting by Churches and ministers of up-to-date information about themselves, including recent references which can be followed up by all concerned. The Office has information blanks for this purpose. "Such information", says Dr. Claxton, "frequently enables the Pastoral Relations office to assist in bringing the 'right' minister to the attention of a pastoral committee, thereby resulting, without undue delay, in a happy and fruitful pastorate."

Day in and day out the Pastoral Relations Office is also giving valuable assistance to pastoral committees by counselling with them at the beginning of their quest for a new minister as to those procedures which have been found helpful by many other Churches in like situations.

We can be proud that the National Association is able to provide the Churches and ministers of our fellowship with a truly national and Congregational office of pastoral supply. ■

Pastor, People and God

THE REV. RICHARD P. BUCHMAN

Minister, Cadman Memorial Church, Brooklyn, New York



Richard P. Buchman

Mr. Buchman is a native of Columbus, Ohio and is a graduate of Western Reserve Academy and Yale University. Before entering Union Theological Seminary, he served as a destroyer officer in the Navy and as a salesman with the Republic Steel Corporation. He was ordained by the Presbytery of New York in 1959 and was Minister of Youth at the Hitchcock Presbyterian Church in Scarsdale until 1962 when he joined the staff of the First Congregational Church in Wauwatosa. In September, 1963, he succeeded the Rev. Dr. Arthur Acy Rouner as Minister of the Cadman Memorial Church in Brooklyn, New York.

If a Congregational clergyman discusses the problem of "ministerial standing" at all, he does so only when there is absolutely nothing else to talk about. Or when he has agreed to perform a marriage for which he needs a permit and the Deputy Clerk in charge of Ministers at the City Hall tells him to bring a denominational yearbook or something with his name in it to prove that he is, indeed, a minister. The National Association has such a yearbook, which lists member Churches and their ministers, and although this often satisfies the Deputy Clerk, it does not officially grant standing to the ministers listed therein, because the National Association does not at this time grant such standing. There are those who insist that ministers continuing in the Congregational Way, having forfeited the standing once given them by Congregational Associations or, in the case of those who have left other denominations, by Presbyteries, Conferences and the like, are no longer ministers in the full sense of the word. They are saying, in effect, that neither ordination nor the possession of a pastoral charge makes a man a minister but that he must have the official recognition of some body outside the local Church competent to grant standing. Some Congregational ministers apparently agree that this is the case and have either maintained their memberships in Associations which are now acting as Associations of the United Church of Christ, or have formed new Associations.

In his book ironically titled *The Law of Congregational Usage*, William F. Barton wrote in 1915 that the view "formerly held, that membership in a Congregational Association had nothing to do with ministerial standing . . . became thoroughly obsolete under the ruling of the National Council in 1886." Barton's thesis is that the custom and practice of early New England Congregationalism, which gave to the local Church the power to ordain and install its minister and to declare to the community that this man was officially a minister, had given way through a process of necessary evolution to a system under which these powers were reserved to Associations of ministers who, in Barton's words, are responsible for "guarding the door of entrance to the Congregational ministry." Strange language, in the literature of the autonomous Churches.

Necessarily or not, Congregational polity certainly did evolve in these past two hundred years, and at the time of the merger controversy was hardly distinguishable from the polity of Presbyterian Churches. Those of us who have welcomed the rebirth of the free Church are, in a sense, without recent precedent as we seek to work out our understanding and practice in this area. Shall we accept the "necessity of evolution" and continue in the patterns drawn by the pre-merger Congregational Churches, or shall we seek a way that will best affirm and implement the freedom that we have won?

When I cast my lot with the National Association in 1962, I asked the Presbytery to which I belonged to dismiss me, not to the National Association, but to the local Church which I was to serve. It neither surprised nor disturbed me that the Presbytery refused to do this, for I felt then and still do that I am a minister because I have been ordained and because the gathered members of a Church have elected me to minister to them and with them. *This is all the standing that I require.* I am a minister because the people who share that ministry with me declare that I am. And the people who share my ministry most immediately are the members of my Church, not my fellow ministers. The free and autonomous Church can join in association with other Churches for fellowship and for any number of cooperative purposes, but it ought not to delegate to such an association its responsibilities concerning the ordained ministry. A Congregational minister is a member

of the Church he serves. More important, his ministry has meaning only in the context of that local Church where he is one of the people of God, where he meets needs, and where his needs are met.

When the Board of Deacons of the Cadman Memorial Church decided last fall to plan a Service of Installation for me, I spent a good deal of time considering my ministry in terms of my Church and I shared these concerns with the Board. Installation services have troubled me in the past because they tend to stress the role and the position of the ordained minister while generally ignoring or touching only superficially the relationship that exists between him and his people. American Protestantism has suffered and continues to suffer from this emphasis of the importance of the minister. It was my desire to stress the ministry of the whole Church—a ministry which involves the man in the pew as well as the man in the pulpit, each contributing to every area of the Church's work in accordance with his training and ability. *No group of ministers from other Churches, however friendly and sympathetic, could properly fulfill this commission.* The responsibility was obviously that of the gathered members of the Cadman Church, and it was one that could not be passed on to others.

Acting on these basic principles, the Board proceeded to arrange a Service of Rededication, to which neighboring ministers and laymen would be invited. But the service was to be led by the people of the Church. The purpose of the service was to challenge the congregation to understand and to accept the critical situation in which the Church finds itself in 1965 and the mission that will be ours in the years ahead. A young Deacon, Joseph H. Brown III, whose parents have been active members for 40 years and who was himself baptized in the Church, agreed to preach a sermon which would underline the responsibility of every Church member to pick up his share of the burden which God has placed upon us. After the sermon, I committed myself to the people to do those things which are primarily, if not uniquely, my responsibilities, and Mrs. E. A. Callaghan, speaking

for the congregation, committed her fellow members to work at this ministry with me. The service ended with a Litany of Rededication.

Those who were present at this service heard a realistic and totally unsentimental appraisal of the Church's condition and mission from the lips of a man whose interest in the Church is not professional. He said things that people expect the minister to say, but they could not dismiss them as easily as they might have had the minister said them. He told them that each one of them was like the rock on which Christ would build his Church and that none of them could evade this burden. He described the Church as that agency through which God works in this world and he set the minister in the midst of the people, leading them while at the same time seeking their leadership. The service generally had the effect of focussing the concern of the people not on the pulpit, nor on the traditions of the past, but on their common responsibility for the vital future of the Church itself.

Free Churches, using their freedom, may from time to time disgrace the ministry by calling incompetent or immoral men to their pulpits and granting them standing. That is our inherent weakness. But we can prevent the debasement of Congregational principles by *taking the risks of freedom* and by guarding it zealously. That is our greatest strength, and it is worth preserving.



Dr. Butman with the Rev. and Mrs.
John Tremaine

MODERATOR'S STATEMENT

at the ORDINATION OF JOHN K. TREMAINE

KILOLANI CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Kihei, Maui, Hawaii

December 5, 1965

by The Rev. Harry R. Butman, D.D.

What has taken place today is a rare thing in modern Congregationalism—an ordination by a local Church without a vicinage council. This ordination, which is valid within the bounds of this Church, and as long as the pastoral relation shall last, has deep historical roots. The first ordinations on American soil were those of Pastors Skelton and Higginson of the Church in Salem, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1628. These men were already ordained Church of England clergymen, but being persuaded that ordination by the hands of a bishop was scripturally invalid, they submitted to reordination by the local Church, with hands laid on their heads by laymen, chief of whom was John Endicott, governor of the Colony.

While early Congregationalism, in such basic documents as the Cambridge Platform published in 1649, and the account of the constituting of Second Church, Hartford, in 1669—particularly in the second and third articles—defended the position that Church power was resident only in the local Church, it was soon seen that the exercise of the power of ordination was most wisely done when sister Churches were called together to aid the local Church with affectionate counsel. Thus *the vicinage council*—a gathering of the Churches of the neighborhood—came into being. But whenever in the course of the centuries, the vicinage council, or the local association sitting as a council, attempted to exercise ecclesiastical authority over the Churches, the Churches resisted these encroachments on their rights. Famous cases resulted from these attempted impositions of external control. When Horace Bushnell was virtually excommunicated by the Hartford North Association for writing his revolutionary book, *Christian Nurture*, his Church was a strong tower of defense to him; when the Brooklyn Association attempted to unfrock Henry Ward Beecher, Plymouth Church stood by its preacher; when the Suffolk West Association refused to install George A. Gordon because of his liberal theological views, Old South Church in Boston went ahead in its own right. Statements like the one in the 1947 Congregational manual, which declared in effect that the Churches delegated the powers of ordination and installation to the larger bodies of the fellowship, rest upon the flimsiest of historical foundations. I would like to see a single record of a Church which actually called a meeting for the express purpose of giving away power, and proceeded to do so by formal vote. What actually happened was that pastors and associations picked up and kept a treasure the Churches had ceased to value.

During the first half of the twentieth century, and particularly after 1913, the local associations and the state conferences began to develop great ecclesiastical authority. This was seldom reflected in the formal instruments—the charters and constitutions. It was not in the documents, but in the usages, that the gradual accretions of centralized power began to be manifested. We make no effort to explicate the process in detail save to say that whereas originally the neighboring Churches simply *assisted* the local Church in ordaining, it came to pass that the power of ordination became vested solely in the association, to the hurt of true Congregationalism. In practice, and in the thinking of many pastors, Congregationalism became semi-Presbyterianism. In the great merger struggle, control of the associations became essential to the promotion of the union, and every effort was made to turn the association into a presbytery, which could exert powerful leverage on stubborn Churches and pastors, and carry large Churches into the merger by majority vote of the association. By the time of the gathering of the National Association in 1955, it was clearly recognized that any power in the hands of a regional or national body was a violation of classical Congregationalism, in which the seat of power is in the local Church and in the local Church alone. In 1956 the Commission on the Ministry proposed to the Annual Meeting in Los Angeles that the historic right of a local Church to ordain be voted as National Association policy. This was done, and so remains. It must be granted that a local Church can make an unwise use of this power, but this is an inherent risk of freedom and must be faced.



Left to right: Old Mission Home 1821, Printing House 1823,
Chamberlain House 1828. Honolulu, Hawaii.

It must ever be remembered that Congregationalism has two basic principles: the independence and autonomy of the local Church, and the fellowship of the Churches. The local Church has the power to do as it pleases under its own roof; it does not have the power to impose its will on other Free Churches. With the power of self-government, it has also the duty of fellowship with other Churches; it must live and work with them, and have a proper regard for their good opinions. This is an exceedingly complex and delicate relationship, and enough problems concerning ministerial training, ordination, and standing have arisen in the first decade of National Association existence to necessitate the formation of a Revision Committee to study the Articles of Association and Bylaws with a view to the easing of these problems. This committee, consisting of two laymen and a pastor—a professor, a lawyer, and the present speaker—is already at work. Congregational freedom forbids the writing of hard and fast rules which limit the power and completeness of the local Church under the Headship of Christ. On the other hand, Congregationalism is not anomic, lawless, anarchistic. Essential things must be done decently and in an order, which is subject, not to the legalisms of a book of discipline, but to the Spirit. One possible key to our problem is the concept of acceptance. A local Church may be and do what it will, but the sister Churches have the right to decide whether or not they will accept that Church and approve its actions. Full and essential Congregationalism is more than local autonomy: Congregationalism is not separatism or independency, with each Church starkly isolated. As simple as this truth is, many pastors, scholars, and officials have forgotten it, or ignore it. Therefore, it must be incessantly said that our way is a way of fellowship in which Churches and pastors walk together in a free relation of affection. In a day of en-massment and conformity and ever-increasing rules, we must tirelessly proclaim our unique witness of freedom and fellowship.

In this infant Church in Kihei we have revived a great tradition. Because Christ said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," we are bold to declare that where there is a covenanted gathering of the faithful, however small, assembled in Christ's name, there is a true, essential, and complete Church. This is the spiritual core, the very lifeblood of Congregationalism. By its power men and women of long ago braved the anger of kings and bishops and proud prelates. This power lives today. John Kaena Tremaine has been ordained a local minister by an ancient and valid Congregational usage. The Church power exercised here this afternoon is the same which was displayed in far-off yesterdays in the white-steeped meetinghouses on the granite hills of old New England. God grant that all which has been done today in this little Church by the palm-fringed sea may be to His glory, to the advancement of the Congregational cause, and to the hastening of the dawn of the blessed tomorrow of Christ's kingdom. ●



"Laying on of Hands"

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

Ordination Service of John K. Tremaine

The meeting convened immediately following a short opening worship service, called to order by Mrs. Carol Szakacs, Church clerk. All members of this Church were present, the company of fellow worshippers of Maui Churches was about 127. A brother Deacon of Mr. Tremaine's from Kawaihau Church, Honolulu offered the constituting prayer in Hawaiian.

A presentation of the records of this Church was made, showing Mr. Tremaine had been called by a full and unanimous membership vote to become their ordained pastor with service limited to this Church, on August 8, 1965. Mr. Tremaine was next asked for his credentials, and these containing proof of membership, and other facts pertaining to his service in this Church, were accepted. A vote was carried acclaiming both the records and the credentials.

Mr. Tremaine then gave a full statement of his life, his background in the Church, his education, his historic and Church affiliated ancestors, his service in the Churches and this present Church, his aims and hopes for the future, and his dedication to our Congregational standards and fellowship in this Church and others of the islands and the mainland.

Examination of Mr. Tremaine was brief, with only two questions. Being satisfactorily answered, a vote was unanimously accepted upon this examination.

Members then proceeded to the act of ordination. Prayerful responses were made to the solemn charges read to Mr. Tremaine and the members by Dr. Butman. Then as members gathered for the "laying on of hands" upon their pastor, John Tremaine, Dr. Butman gave the beautiful Ordination Prayer.

After Dr. Butman extended the right hand of fellowship, Mr. Tremaine was presented his ministerial robe, a gift from his Church. A Bible, gift of a dear friend, now deceased, was dedicated to Mr. Tremaine's use in his service as minister of this Church.

Dr. Butman gave a clear statement regarding the centuries old polity of Congregationalism, as it has originated from the times of the first New England and Virginia Churches. Faced with circumstances of obtaining a minister, when none were available, they chose from their ranks—and this has been decreed by the Congregational fellowship as still a rightful and legal method today, and entirely plausible for the position of Kilolani Church which stands free, alone and isolated from services by any other Congregational Pastor. Dr. Butman's statement on practice and policy of Congregationalism in its rightful usage was a source of enlightenment and inspiration to both Kilolani Church and the many island Churches of Congregational faith represented there that day.

A vote was carried to close this meeting. Rev. Tremaine then proceeded to administer the sacrament of Holy Communion to those present. The closing hymn for the day was "Nu- Oli!" Sung in Hawaiian, the words mean "Glad Tidings" and it is a favorite song of great joy in all Hawaiian Gatherings.

Submitted in faith to our members and our fellowship

Carol A. Szakacs, Church Clerk, Scribe.

A CONGREGATIONALIST PONDERES THE MATTER of ORDINATION AND THE MINISTRY

The Reverend Erwin A. Britton, D.D.
First Congregational Church
of Detroit

Thirty-six years ago I was ordained to the Christian ministry. I was the first candidate to be ordained by the Medina Association (Ohio) sitting as an Ecclesiastical Council. In the light of subsequent events, I should be prouder to claim that I had been the last person to be ordained by the First Congregational Church of Avon Lake, Ohio, which I was then serving as student minister, in concurrence with the Association or a Council of the Vicinage. The strong pressures brought to bear on me to be ordained by the Association were generated from those same sources and ideologies which sought in later years to make over the nature of Congregationalism into something quite different from and foreign to its historic polity.

Interest in the whole subject of ordination, by whom, under what authority, bestowing what privileges, how terminated and related issues, has been rekindled by my serving on our Association's Credentials Committee, by discussion with colleagues considering ordination and by the recent controversy surrounding the ordination of women in the Episcopal Church. While I shall make further reference to that controversy — because it raises some interesting questions — my chief concern is to discuss the subject of ordination from the point of view of Congregationalists, to examine some of our positions and procedures in our past and to present some conclusions which I believe are valid in our current situation.

Webster thus defines the verb *to ordain*; "to invest officially (as by the laying on of hands) with ministerial or sacerdotal authority." The word *ordain* itself suggests or-

der. It refers to the orderly transfer of ministerial or priestly authority. Ordination rites are supported by venerable Old Testament tradition, New Testament sanction and through many generations, carefully spelled-out procedures in canon law and custom. It is, then, basically a procedure. Historically in the Christian community it has been a procedure for assuring that the churches will be led by persons of competence, character, godliness; that the ministers thus chosen will be truly shepherds who will feed and defend the flock rather than wolves who will devour it.

After dealing with a host of nettlesome problems in the Corinthian congregation, including the place of women and speaking in tongues, the Apostle Paul declares, "but all things should be done decently and in order." (I Cor. 15:40) The process of ordination grows out of that kind of concern.

Let me begin by pointing to a couple of Old Testament references. The transfer of authority from Moses to Joshua is recorded in Numbers 27:18ff. "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hands upon him; cause him to stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. You shall invest him with some of your authority that all the congregation of the people of Israel shall obey' . . . And Moses did as the Lord commanded him . . . And laid his hands upon him, and commissioned him as the Lord directed through Moses." Ordination as here described is commissioning or investing with certain authority and *in the presence of the congregation* a person in whom the spirit is already manifest. Temporal authority, then, is transmitted by the act of laying on of hands. But spiritual authority or divine sanction had preceded that act.

The investiture of Elisha by Elijah seems not to have been even that formal. Elisha was in his field plowing with twelve yoke of oxen when Elijah passed by and cast his mantle upon him. (I Kings 19:19ff.) As described the act seemed very casual. Apparently Elisha's authority was initially only that of a deputy, and he did not come into full command until Elijah's transfer to heaven via the fiery chariot. What is distressing about the story is that the newly-acquired responsibility and authority of the prophet did not seem to improve either his self-image or his disposition. When taunted by some small boys on the subject of his baldness, "He cursed them in the name of the Lord, and two she bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys." (II Kings 2:23ff.)

In what may be a fifth Servant Song (Isaiah 61:1-6, there is the suggestion that Zion's mission, when fulfilled, designates "that [her people] shall be called the priests of the Lord, and men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God." (Was the prophet anticipating those of our contemporary churches which list as "ministers" all members of the congregation, with special assignments to the staff?)

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible states that, "the Jews did not make a doctrine out of succession, or stress the need of an uninterrupted series of ordinations." Nor did the Early Christians appear to have such an interest either, being more concerned with the eschatological hope of the early return of their Lord from heaven. It was the threat of schism and the rise of heretical teaching which created the concern for an identifiable succession of leaders with authority to speak for and preserve the faith, "delivered once and for all to the saints." This felt need for specially appointed leaders to define and defend the

faith of the community represents an abrogation by the congregations of their responsibility in these matters. Whether the congregations were encouraged in this tendency or simply were indifferent is of not great consequence. The result was the rise of a clerical caste.

Every church body which has given consideration to this matter claims, in one way or another, to be in succession to or representative of the Apostolic faith, imparted to the Apostles by Christ himself. On that, I feel sure, all orders of Christendom are in agreement. Where we disagree, and historically we have done that with zeal sometimes bordering on violence, is in the nature of that authority and the means by which it is transmitted.

To make an exhaustive study of the New Testament references relating to our subject is not only beyond the scope of this article, and the competence of the writer, but also could tax the patience and interest of the reader. However, in directing attention briefly to a few passages, I have sought those which seem to reveal intent more than to define a specific process.

Mark and Luke both record an incident when John came to Jesus stating that he and the disciples saw a man casting out demons and forbade him, "because he was not following us." Jesus' reply was quite direct. "Do not forbid him . . . for he that is not against us is for us." (Mark 9:38ff.) Is it pressing Scripture too far to suggest an indifference on Jesus' part as to whether a person possessed proper credentials before engaging upon the Lord's work?

I recall that Jesus also reserved one of his sharpest rebukes for the occasion when he found his disciples disputing among themselves over the question of priority of position in the Kingdom, saying, "You know that those who rule over the Gentiles, lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42ff.)

Reflect, also, for a moment on the challenge to Jesus' authority by the chief priests, scribes and elders in the temple. "By what authority are you doing these things [teaching, healing, preaching] or who gave you this authority to do them?" Jesus' reply, you recall, was in the form of another question, the answer to which would determine whether he would reply to their first question. "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men? Answer me." Sensing a trap, the scribes replied, "We do not know." So Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." (Mark 11:27ff.) The skillful parrying of the initial question leaves the reader with but one conclusion: Jesus' authority came (as did John's) not from men but from God.

There is an awesome ultimateness about his invitation to discipleship. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34.) This acceptance of the cross, the Christian's "Robe of Honor," is a commitment to be Christ's presence in the world of men and to do, within the limit of

one's strength in any situation, what he would do. This investiture of authority (and responsibility) is not confined to an ordained priesthood, but really derives its character from the willing obedience of the follower of Christ.

A literal reading of Matthew 16, Peter's confession and subsequent designation as the rock on which the church is to be built, does narrow the line of responsibility for the governance of the church, including the authority of the keys of the Kingdom. In the hands of the medieval papacy it also provided a potent weapon for the assertion of authority by the Bishop of Rome as the successor of Peter over both Church and State.

Without totally rejecting the passage as a later addition by the Early Church, a broader interpretation of these words points to the confession ("Thou art the Christ!") rather than to Peter as the rock. The church is not an organization with carefully defined limits, but a fellowship, in Paul's words, where men are "no longer strangers and sojourners, but . . . fellow citizens with the saints and

The ordination of Orvin E. Titus to the Christian ministry, September 21, 1975, First Congregational Church, Beloit, Wisconsin.



Photo by James T. Quillen

members of the household of God built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:19ff.)

A look at the choosing of the seven deacons for the church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:3ff.) suggests that these men were selected because they were not only persons of good repute and wise, but were full of the Spirit. The laying on of hands was simply a way of designating them for their specific tasks. In this situation, laying on of hands followed reception of the Holy Spirit. Acts also records instances of the gift of the Spirit being given through the laying on of the Apostles' hands. Thus Simon Magus, seeing the marvelous power he perceived as emanating from those thus ordained, sought to purchase this gift from the Apostles and aroused Peter's anger by his presumption that the gifts of the Spirit were for sale. (Acts 8:14ff.) Would that such scrupulous care had always been exercised throughout the history of Christendom.

Paul, in his letters to the churches, almost invariably insists that his apostleship is from God and not from men, sounding especially belligerent and defensive as he addresses the churches of Galatia. "Paul an Apostle — not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father..." (Galatians 1:1)

This Protestantism was on sound scriptural ground in developing the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers, insisting that man needed no other mediator between himself and God than that which was his possession by faith in Jesus Christ. An order of ministers, pastors, elders, sometimes deacons, bishops — yes — but none with the authority claimed by the priesthood of the Church of Rome. Except that no Roman prelate ever exercised greater temporal or spiritual authority over a community than did John Calvin in Geneva or Increase and Cotton Mather in Massachusetts.

It could be argued that the Roman church, by making Holy Orders one of the seven sacraments, has created a more logically consistent

pattern for the ministry than the Protestants who mainly eschewed such a course philosophically but, with a kind of schizophrenia, have sought to appropriate special sacerdotal authority for their ministry.

It is stated that, for the Roman Catholic, ordination to the priesthood is irrevocable. ("A priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.") That act "bestows an unrepeatable, indelible character on the person ordained." (Encyclopedia Britannica) Only a bishop in the proper line of succession may ordain. Special among priestly prerogatives is the power to administer the sacraments. A priest may renounce his office; he may petition ecclesiastical authorities to be released from his canonical vows; he may be suspended. However, he never loses his priestly powers, although he can perform his office only by the authority of his bishop. He may lose his authority to exercise those powers. There is a lively debate taking place in the Roman Catholic community today on many of these points relating to ordination. I am reluctant, therefore, to say more.

There has developed, then, in the course of Christian history this doctrine of Apostolic Succession and the claim that only through that succession is a valid ministry to the church maintained. The priest must be ordained by a bishop who was himself ordained by a bishop back to Peter and the apostles themselves, and this chain or circuit must not be broken. If at any point it has been broken, then all subsequent ordinations are held to be invalid. A professor of mine (himself an Anglican layman) somewhat irreverently described this process as "the electric wiring theory of the church." In any case a significant group within the Anglican church has made it, in the Lambeth Quadrilateral, one of the non-negotiable conditions for church union (or re-union) and COCU agreed and attempted to meet this condition, without, I believe, much success.

Protestantism, as we are aware, has rejected five of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, including Holy Orders, although in varying degrees and often exhibiting the kind of schizophrenia to which I have previously alluded. It has sought to

include sacerdotal rites: administration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion and Baptism along with preaching and pastoral functions as the primary, if not the exclusive, prerogatives of an ordained clergy. We have often been guilty of devolving an overbearing kind of clericalism, even as we deplored that trait among some of our non-Protestant brethren.

Emile Brunner has written, "Not the hostility of the unbelieving world but clerical, parsonic ecclesiasticism, has ever been the greatest enemy of the Christian message and the brotherhood rooted in Christ."

The effect has been, as Edwin McNeil Poteat once wrote, "Not only has the act [of worship] become an end in itself, but the priestly caste that has a vested interest in the sacerdotal scheme is subject to the temptations to exploit the worship impulse or to contain it within the deadly routines of stereotyped practice. The result is the venal priest of the stupid one, and the superstitious worshipper of the sleepy one."

The tragedy of Protestantism has not been its rejection of the five sacraments, but its failure to keep vital and meaningful its own basic sacramental position. Schillebeeckx, a Roman Catholic theologian, has written, "Every sacrament is a personal presence of Christ." Because our Separatist forbears insisted, correctly, that Christ was fully present in the gathered company of His followers ("where two or three..."), they felt no need for a special sacrament of confession, penance, holy orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, and above all they felt they had no need of a priest to administer these rites.

In the second part of this article, I shall deal more specifically with Congregational ideology and practice, some of the implications of the struggle in the Episcopal Church over the issue of the ordination of women, and take one last (?) fleeting glance at the *reductio ad absurdum* of the ordination process as proposed by COCU.

End — Part I

(To be concluded next issue. Dr. Britton is the newly selected Executive Secretary of the NACCC.)

A CONGREGATIONALIST PONDERES THE MATTER of ORDINATION AND THE MINISTRY

by

The Reverend Erwin A. Britton, D.D.

Part II

In the first part of the article, I dealt in a general way with the subject of ordination from a biblical and historical perspective, making a concluding point that (following Schillebeeckx) "Every sacrament is a personal presence of Christ." Therefore, Christ being fully present in the gathered company of His followers, a specially ordained clergy are not absolutely necessary to assure the validity of any sacramental rite, including apostolic continuity.

In light of what I have developed thus far, let us examine Congregationalism. Is it, as Charles Clayton Morison once declared, "the unambiguous disclosure of the essential Protestant heresy," or is it as those men and women of the sixteenth century and following — many of whom suffered hardship, even martyrdom, for this way of church life — believed a living, visible manifestation of the Church Universal?

Congregationalism was founded upon and still is grounded in the principle that the church exists solely and wholly in a gathered body in a particular place. Even the term "local church" is a redundancy, for the church can only be local. As the church, it has full competence to order its own affairs, including the calling, ordaining and dismissing of its own ministers, subject solely to what it believes to be the leading of Christ.

As Arthur A. Rouner, Jr., expressed it, "The freedom of the Congregational way is freedom from the rule of men only so that we can be more completely obedient to the rule of Christ." We have a doctrine of Apostolic Succession, but this succession is in the body of believers, not in a hierarchical structure. Thus the *Real Presence* in the Sacrament of Holy Communion is manifest in the inner, sin-

cere dedication of the worshipper, not in elements whose substance has been transformed from bread and wine into the body of Christ by the repetition of a particular formula spoken by a properly ordained priest or minister.

The Pilgrims came to America without their pastor, John Robinson. Their Spiritual leader was Elder Brewster. It is significant that the Salem community (Puritans but not Independents) organized its own church upon arrival, and even though its two chosen leaders, Higginson and Skelton, had been Anglican clergymen, they were examined and ordained by the Congregation, the act of laying on of hands being performed by three of four of the "gravest members."

In an account of the ordination of one Israel Chauncy in Stratford the recorder recalls that "by forgetfulness — I rather think in contempt of habits and ceremonies) the elder imposed his hands with a leather mitten upon it." (If leather is a non-conductor, does this somehow mean that the transmission of the Holy Spirit's power was blocked?)

Two things clearly emerge from this colonial period. (1) A jealous guarding of the right and prerogative of the congregation to ordain, using its elders, not visiting ministers, in the ceremony of laying on of hands; and (2) the demand for an educated ministry. This latter concern, important as it is, lies beyond the scope of this article. However one reference is too precious to pass over.

Atkins and Fagley cite the scholarly competency of one Thomas Parker (1643-1677) who, though quite blind towards the end of his life, was able to teach Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. "Certain ministers dissatisfied with his opinions came to reason with him. They addressed him in English; he replied in Latin. They took to Latin; he retired to Greek. They pursued him in Greek; he consolidated his

position in Hebrew; they counter-attacked in Hebrew; he entrenched himself in Arabic and held the terrain." (Atkins & Fagley, *History of American Congregationalism*, p. 375.)

There is little doubt that these early New England churches held to the position that ordination was no more than the designation of a man to a specific office.

The Cambridge Platform (1648) declared, "This ordination we account as nothing else but the soleman putting a man into his place and office in the church, whereunto he had right before by election, being like the installing of a magistrate in the commonwealth.

"Ordination therefore is not to go before, but to follow election. The essence and substance of the outward calling of an ordinary officer in the Church, doth not consist in his ordination, but in his voluntary and free election by the Church and in his accepting of that election, whereupon is founded the relation between pastor and flock, between such a minister and such a people.

"Ordination doth not constitute an officer not give him the essentials of his office." (Chapter IX, Sec. 2)

And even though the act of ordination includes the laying on of hands, it is the hands of the elders of the particular church or of other churches, not of other ordained clergymen.

Thomas Hooker, in his "Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline," (1648), declared, "Ordination is only a solemn installing of an officer into the office unto which he was formerly called."

Hooker also stated, "Ordination presupposes an office constituted; does not constitute. Therefore it is not an act of power but of order." A minister is set apart from, not above, the laity by ordination, for he is still a layman, (Or all laymen are ministers.)

The early New Englanders were

suspicious of ministers who were not settled in a church and therefore gave them no ecclesiastical standing unless they were so settled. It was not until Associations and Associations of Ministers became more involved in the process of ordination that ministerial standing came to be held by an Association, as it is in many instances today.

The churches did come to recognize that in a matter as important as ordination of a person to the ministry, they had a responsibility to their sister churches and ministers and ought to include them in the process. The vicinage council, called by the ordaining church for the purpose of examining the candidate and making recommendations (though non-binding) to the church and then joining with that church, if so voted, in the service of ordination, provided a way. Congregationalism went astray when it turned over this function completely to the Association. I said that to my ordination council thirty-six years ago, and I have not seen any reason to change my mind since — on that subject at least. A church may invite the Association to sit as a council for advice; it should never be compelled to do so.

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, formed to provide an organization for those Congregational Churches not wishing to be a part of the United Church of Christ, has emphatically, in its by-laws, emphasized the Congregational position. "Ordination is the right and business of the local Church..."

How far Congregationalism departed from the spirit and practices of its early days is well illustrated by this statement of Rev. William E. Barton, published in 1916. "The local church can create its own ministry, can license one of its members to preach and administer the ordinances, but for admission to the general ministry of the Congregational Churches there must be ordination by the laying of hands by the presbytery." With that spirit abroad in 1916, it is not hard to see why, by 1961, many Congregational churches bowed the knee to the Presbyterian Baal and accepted in the constitution of the United Church of Christ full

authority by the Associations over ordination and ministerial standing.

Concerned for the direction in which they sensed Congregationalism was moving by the mid nineteen thirties, Atkins and Fagley issued this word of caution, "For a long generation the handicaps of the loose organization of Congregationalism have been stressed. The denomination has been asked to take lessons from Communion with highly centralized organization and tighten up its own machinery. It may sometime learn again the really enormous value of its own finest historic inheritances."

One might argue with some persuasiveness that in the interest of order in the church such matters as ordination ought not to be left to the congregation; that a council might better reflect, in its corporate search for illumination and wisdom,

God and Father of us all, we thank Thee for the day begun and ended in Thee. Now as the shadows fall, and evening settles down upon these Pennsylvania hills, we praise Thee, our Creator, for the grandeur of the mountains, the fertile valley, the music of babbling brook and rambling creek. In this pleasant place, one of Thy children was reared and responded to the Call of Christ to follow Him.

We are especially thankful for all those who have touched Larry's life: the family, the friends, the church pastors and teachers revealing the love of God in Christ.

Blessed Lord and only Saviour, be a living presence in our minds this night. It is our common prayer that what we do here will be in accord with the most blessed and perfect will of God.

Spirit of God, fall fresh on Larry this hour. Daily baptise him with all grace and power that he may continue faithful in Christ's ministry.

It is our prayer, Lord, that Larry and Jill may enjoy a rich and full life together as husband and wife and be Thy faithful witnesses in the Church Universal.

God, receive our prayer and praise and grant us our petition in the Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

AMEN

An invocation offered by Dean George Brown at the Ordination Service for Larry Rieck in the Brokenstraw Parish, Pennsylvania on July 12, 1975.

the leading of the Holy Spirit, if he had not read the book of Acts and especially the account of the Jerusalem Council in 51 A.D. when the apostles and elders in dealing with the problem of Gentile-Christians, prefaced their findings with these words: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." (Acts 15:28). This can be variously translated: "The Holy Spirit and we have decided..." or "It is our best judgment (the Holy Spirit and us)..." One cannot but wonder whose opinion weighed the more heavily — their's or the Holy Spirit's?

Indeed, in conciliar deliberation, can a council confer what the Spirit withholds, or can the council withhold what the Spirit would confer? The questions as I here raise them are obviously rhetorical, yet none the less important.

(Please turn to page 17)

A council may judge, and correctly, that the young farm boy before it, who insists that the cloud pattern "P.C." in the sky was a direct call to "Preach Christ" is confused, and may determine his call was rather to "Plow Corn." On the other hand, it may be sorely mistaken.

To be sure the church has often been scandalized by the abuse of the power of ordination; cf. a six-year-old boy who, because he was "ordained", was performing weddings in a metropolitan area and legally, for the state has little choice but to accept as valid what a church declares to be its ordination or licensing procedures.

The various responses to the recent ordination of women in the Episcopal Church bring several of these matters to a head. The bishops who performed the rite by the laying on of hands were themselves validly ordained. No question. Then why, if the electric wiring theory is correct, were not the eleven women validly ordained? Some have claimed they are. But the House of Bishops has ruled otherwise on the basis that, "the necessary conditions for the priesthood in the Episcopal Church were not fulfilled on the occasion in question." "We are convinced," the Bishops said, "that a bishop's authority to ordain can be effectively exercised only in and for a community which has authorized him to act and as a member of the Episcopal college."

If prior approval of the community (congregation) must be obtained before an ordination can be declared valid, then it would seem that such sanction is of a higher order than the method by which Apostolic authority is subsequently transmitted; i.e., it then does not matter whether there is laying on of hands by four bishops, three bishops, two bishops, one bishop or no bishop — with or without leather mittens.

It is of more than passing interest to note that authority to ordain, as here stated is based on consent of a community which must give its approval. Is this not a basic statement of Congregational principle? Except that a congregation in full command of its wits would not delegate this authority to a presbytery or an episcopate or an association. A

modern congregation ought to be as jealous of its prerogatives to ordain as was the congregation of Woburn, Massachusetts, in 1642, where, as Atkins reports, "A number of ministers were present . . . but 'the people were tenacious of their right to ordain, supposing that yielding it might lead to dependency and so to presbytery.'"

To return to the Episcopalian controversy over the ordination of women. Ten of the women ordained responded with some vehemence by saying, "We are shocked and saddened that the House of Bishops has seen fit to escalate the conflict and disunity in our Church by declaring our ordination to the priesthood invalid. We will not speculate on the theological implications of their intemperate action except to state our view that such a position calls into question the validity of all Anglican orders."

One of the women ordinands, the Reverend Suzanne Hiatt stated, "We will practice ecclesiastical disobedience of the canons in order to be obedient to the will of God."

Bishop James L. Duncan observed, "Sooner or later the question of women's ordination will be solved by the Holy Spirit. The real issue facing the church . . . is whether this church can survive as a constitutional and democratic church in the face of such a breach of trust."

We are back to 51 A.D. and the question of what seems good to the Holy Spirit and what seems good to us.

In view of the bitter feelings generated by this dispute and the obfuscation of the real issues it may be uncharitable, if not unbecoming, for a Congregationalist whose churches have plenty of problems of their own to ask the question: Why has it taken the Holy Spirit so long to get His message to the Episcopal Church on the matter of ordaining women when He apparently had already informed the Congregationalists, (in 1853), Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, United Church of Christ, to name only a few, that it was all right?

And we are also back to an even more basic question: that of order vs. conscience. When we give primacy to conscience, what have we done to order, and when we give

LAITY ARISE

by The Rev. Tom Witzel

It was with great enthusiasm that I began serving in 1972 what was to become a four-year term on the Commission on the Ministry. What better place to help stimulate more creativity for all within the ministry, to open more opportunities for local churches, to provide tools, resource, and encouragement for the men and women called to be ministers?

And in many areas we succeeded; particularly in the areas of ministerial enrichment, continuing education, chaplaincy, working with the office of Pastoral Relations, creating tools for the ministry and for the local church.

But in the one area which seems to hold the greatest potential for the local congregation, and which is most in accord with our unique Congregational way, we seem to have had the least success: the area of the lay ministry.* Not that we as a Commission didn't spend hours and hours over these years on the subject. We updated the lay ministry manual, planned regional sessions (none of which were ever quite consummated), and discussed possible Annual Meeting seminars. But we never found the right handle. And to the extent we failed, because this has been my special interest. Perhaps this is why I have been asked to write this article. Perhaps you can help.

There is nothing quite as dull, unsatisfying, irrelevant, and senseless as spectator religion. And there is nothing quite as contradictory as spectator Christianity. By definition, our relationship with Jesus Christ makes us members of his body, vital organs in the organism formed to be the kingdom of God on earth. Each of us is called to share the talent given by God for the mutual up-building and maturing of each member individually and the body corporately. And yet Sunday after Sunday the congregation gathers for worship and sits passively while a paid professional organizes the service, leads the worship, and preaches the sermon. If the leader is effective, inspiration is received and the whole thing appears to be worthwhile.

But somehow I don't think this is what Jesus had in mind, nor what the early church reflected; neither is it likely to meet the real needs of many within the congregation. The local church from the Book of Acts onwards has the privilege *and the responsibility* to choose her own leaders; to train, examine, and call whomever she will. And

we of the Congregational way have the polity and opportunity and tradition — perhaps more than any other denomination/association — to creatively use our entire church membership. We are not subject to national standards, nor to regional bodies; no limitations of any kind are placed upon us except by local constituency. Add to this the fact that we have dozens if not hundreds of church members within each congregation who are capable of being leaders (not just members of boards and committees, but full leaders with the same responsibility and opportunity as the professional minister) and it becomes apparent where we have failed.

Perhaps as a Commission of the National Association we have failed to effectively deal with the lay ministry because we are very sensitive to abusing our influence at the expense of the local church (a necessary sensitivity). Perhaps as professional ministers we have failed because we are frightened by the specter of an uneducated ministry. Perhaps as a church we have failed because we fear the excesses caused by leaders who are ignorant of *all* ramifications on any given theological, Biblical, ecclesiastical issue. But whatever the reason, the result of the matter is that we are wasting the most valuable resource we have in the church — our members!

*Even the term "lay ministry" is a poor one, for it implies a separation between the seminary-trained ministry, and the lay (or non-professional) ministry. What we should be talking about is the body ministry, or church member ministry, or some other term which communicates but does not separate.

I have a vision. It is not a terribly clear one, but there is something struggling to emerge. The vision perceives the local church as a training center for lay ministers; a seminary if you will. Within each congregation there are various classes for those who are interested in preparing for the ministry within that local church. The students within the class learn by doing as well as by discussing. Each week there is an assignment which involves one facet of the ministry: calling on the sick, preparing a sermon, calling on visitors, teaching a Bible class, understanding the historic Congregational traditions, leading someone to a personal relationship with Jesus,

drawing up an organizational chart of the boards, division, committees, and offices within the congregation, praying with someone who has just lost a loved one, preparing a wedding, a baptism, a funeral.

After several years of this kind of involvement — meeting weekly in small groups for several hours to discuss the problems, the discoveries, the successes of each project undertaken the week before — the candidate is examined before the entire congregation. Each candidate submits evidences of his/her calling, experience, discovery of talents. The congregation then decides whether or not to recognize the candidate as a spiritual leader within that local church, perhaps by ordination as an elder, or lay minister, or local pastor. (Each title has inherent semantic difficulties, and would have to be dependent upon the feelings within the congregation).

These then become the leaders of the local church . . . the board of ministers . . . always subject to periodic review by the congregation, and always with the expectation that as many ministers as are trained and called will be added to the board. Contrary to the presbyterial system, however, the board would have no special powers relative to the polity of the church. Final authority would remain, as always, in the hands of the congregation. If there has to be a hired professional for each local church, he is hired as a *teacher of ministers*. If the local church can get along without the services of a trained theologian and seminary graduate, then it should have access to a resource person shared by a half-dozen or so area churches. But again, this will be a *resource person* to stimulate, teach, and train other ministers. In no way will he/she have responsibility to administrate the affairs of the local church.

Now I realize that most of this is not new; in fact it is a part of our Congregational heritage. What is frustrating is that this is not happening within our churches. The pastor/minister is leader by default or fiat. And in either case, the laity is kept from developing their talents with regard to public preaching, teaching, and the spiritual ministries within the church; and is kept from becoming ministers in the accepted sense of the term.

Can you see the merit, even the excitement, of this vision? When a congregation, by virtue of its growth, threatens to outgrow its present facilities, no half-million dollar sanctuary need be built. Instead it will be time for several dozen families to gather a new church, form another congregation, and keep the vitality of small active congregations which have been a peculiar characteristic of American Christianity for the last 350 years. No longer will the ministry of the local church be dependent upon the effectiveness and personality of the hired minister, for there will be a tradition and stability of local leaders characterizing the ministry of the church and the outreach into the community. When a nearby congregation is in need of leadership, there will be trained leaders from your church who can lead,

teach, and guide in an interim or even in a *permanent* ministry.

Each local church, of course, needs to create a program tailored to meeting its own particular demands. Perhaps this is why, as a Commission, we have not been able to put this together. But if we can't . . . will you? How many adult Bible study leaders do you have within your congregation? Are there members within your church you would feel free to call upon for prayer, counseling, or for spiritual guidance? How many members of your church are asked to preach from a neighboring pulpit when that minister is away? How many men or women have been called from your church into the full-time parish ministry?

Why not?

IN BETWEEN MINISTERS

The time between ministers is a bitter/sweet time for congregations! Rarely is this not so.

The first official action of a congregation after accepting their minister's resignation is to elect or appoint a pulpit committee. There are sound reasons to delay such an immediate reaction to the minister's resignation. The most important reason by far is simply this. At this cross-roads, the congregation is in no fit condition, either mentally or spiritually, to face their loss objectively and positively. Another reason is the mistaken notion that the congregation's primary need is to find a new minister as soon as possible. A third reason is to make more effective use of the in-between-time or interim period as it is sometimes called. This *is not* the time for the boards and standing committees to sit-back and wait for "it" to happen. This *is not* the time for the congregation to be content with *only* an occupied pulpit on Sunday morning and with arrangements for buryin', marryin' and crisis intervention. *This is prime time for renewal!*

Each congregation should be acquainted with and have in their files the exceptional little booklet, PRIME TIME FOR RENEWAL by William A. Yon. It is available from: The Alban Institute, Inc., Mount St. Alban, Washington DC 20016.

Richard J. Kirk, Canon to the Bishop and Executive Officer of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri, in his pamphlet entitled, ON THE CALLING AND CARE OF PASTORS, "explores the stresses and promises of the vacancy period". He suggests why the proper use of the time in between ministers is so necessary to the future well-being of the congregation. He describes very well the bitter/sweet nature of the time immediately following the resignation and departure of the minister. Mr. Kirk has skillfully applied Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's five stages of grief work; denial, anger, bargaining, despair and acceptance to the conditions regnant in a congregation at the time they lose their minister. Avoiding or ignoring this state can only lead to later trouble in parish/pastor relations.

The absence of the pastor is felt as a deep loss by the mem-

bers of the congregation. Regardless of his or her style of ministry, the pastor will have been seen by many parishioners as a kind of parental figure. Because of this role, the clergyman's leaving the parish can be seen as analogous to the death of the father of a family. This means that the parish is left in a state of bereavement. The longer the clergyman has served the parish, the more intense the bereavement will be. It will not depend on the esteem in which he was held by his parishioners. In biological families some fathers are loved, others hated, and most are reacted to with very mixed emotions. But in all cases the death of the father of the family produces a potential crisis in that family. It is important that the church board and the calling committee (and perhaps the entire congregation) have an opportunity to do some very necessary grief work before they settle down to considering who shall be their new pastor.

The opening paragraph in William Yon's booklet calls attention to the fact that "change in the Church — as in every other segment of contemporary society — is both ubiquitous and inevitable. Some welcome it, some resign themselves to it, others resist it, but all face it one way or another." He declares that when a congregation is searching for their new minister the time is "ripe for change". Among the reasons he lists two that have particular relevance for Congregational Churches.

1. Considering that a primary hinderance to renewal is simply the ordinary human resistance to change, the occasion of changing pastors is one time when parishioners would be most likely to see change as merely necessary, as simply a fact.
2. Since finding a pastor is not an activity in which parishioners have been engaged frequently enough to become confident of their skill, the vacancy period is one

during which they could be expected to seek and welcome outside help.

This being the case, the first reaction of the congregation ought to be a willingness to take the time required to achieve wholeness — to be renewed in *body, spirit and purpose*. The length of time required will be different for each congregation. It may be as short a time as three months or as long as 12 or even 24 months. The time really depends on the mental and spiritual condition of the congregation at the time they are confronted by their loss and need.

The Episcopal Church began in 1969 to investigate the impact of change on its local congregations. Project Test Pattern resulted in launching the Vacancy Consultation Project in 1972. It was determined through the work of sixteen consultants in nine dioceses that "the vacancy period — however welcome or unwelcome — (is) a period of genuine renewal in the congregation's grasp of its mission and ministry".

The Presbyterian, Methodist and United Church of Christ are in the vanguard of denominations accepting the concept that the time between ministers is prime time for renewal. The administrative structure of these Churches makes it possible for high level denominational leadership to influence congregations to delay their search for new ministers until *after* they have given careful attention to any negative forces known or that may be discovered within the congregation that may seriously curtail or downright destroy the effectiveness of the person called to be the new minister.

Concluded in next issue
(Contributed by George W. Brown, Jr., Ed.D., former Associate Executive Secretary NACCC and William C. Donald II, D.D., former Interim Pastor, Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis, MN.)

IN BETWEEN MINISTERS PART II

To aid their congregations they have been involving executive officers and ministers in a program, sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Association for Training and Consulting (conducted by The Alban Institute) to train them as specialists in the art of interim consulting and pastoring. Each year a small number of highly skilled and effective ministers are accepted into the program and introduced to the philosophy of interim ministry and engaged in a practicum. Upon the successful conclusion of the six months program, they are given The Alban Institute's Certificate of Recognition — Pastoral Change Specialist in one of two classifications: Interim Consultant or Interim Pastor.

The Interim Pastor Specialist is trained to function within a different framework of time, goals and planning than does a longer term minister. He or she must know the dynamics of terminal emotions both for persons and for corporate fellowships such as congregations.

There are special opportunities available during a period between pastors for dealing with such feelings as grief, loss, guilt, anger, depression, and with issues of congregational identity, and expectations for the future.

The Interim Pastor Specialist assists the congregation to reflect on what has happened and is happening, and how growth can take place in the context of new dynamics operating in the life of the congregation during a period of transition.

During this interim time span the pastoral functions of the church are maintained with the continuity of worship and program and the further nurturing of the people. Thereby a trust for the future can be sustained and enlarged.

The Interim Pastor by not being a candidate for the position which is open, can help the search committee as it seeks to keep alive the important relationship between what it is doing and the congregation's faith in the outcome of their work. The Interim Pastor aids in building anticipation for the selection of a new leader and helps the congregation to clarify expectations as well as to deal with

anxiety about the new relationship. This enables a church to be more free in entering into a creative ministry with the new pastor.

With interim guidance the congregation does the "work" necessary to prepare adequately and appropriately for a new pastorate. This reduces many of the tensions of pastoral search and pastoral start-up.

In summary, then, the Interim Pastor Specialist gives identifiable leadership during the vacancy period; instilling the past with a proper memory picture and preparing for the future, while the congregation celebrates its covenanted life together. This permits the Pastoral Selection Committee the necessary time to choose the right person for the years ahead.

To be sure each vacancy that occurs in a church has its own built-in needs and opportunities, and there are no two vacancies identically alike. However, the trained Interim Pastor is sensitive to these differences and able to fit in anywhere along the spectrum. There are many congregations passing thru pastoral change that would improve their future by making the vacancy a prime time for renewal.

The major differences between the roles of Interim Pastor and Interim Consultant are two. One is the length of time the Interim Consultant contracts to give the congregation. It is a short term role with carefully defined areas of responsibility. The congregation may choose to, or choose not to retain the services of the Interim Consultant after an Interim Pastor Specialist has been engaged. Two, the Interim Consultant *will not* assume the role of pastor to the congregation. In very general terms the Interim Consultant is the interpreter of the idea that the time in between ministers is prime time for renewal and will assist the congregation to make it just that. The Interim Consultant will guide the congregation through a self-study and counsel with the pulpit committee as they carry out their task. The Interim Consultant may be described as a facilitator-enabler.

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The writers of this article are Certified Consultant and Pastor respectively. They believe that our Congregational Churches need to be made aware of ways to turn the time between ministers into a period of personal and corporate renewal. The future success of the congregation's mission depends on this. We heartily recommend that they send for the booklet, *PRIME TIME FOR RENEWAL* and that when the congregation faces the inevitable; the time between ministers, for whatever reason, they seriously consider a Pastoral Change Specialist.

When they retire, most ministers will have the opportunity to consider interim ministries. Unless the congregation intentionally employs the services of a Pastoral Change Specialist, the time between ministers may be only one of waiting for the Pulpit Committee to present their candidate for the Office of Pastor and Teacher. Therefore, we urge the ministers in our fellowship who expect to respond to a congregation's call to provide interim pastoral services to prepare to give the congregation *something more* than a maintenance ministry. We suggest that ministers explore The Alban Institute's program and choose to be trained as Pastoral Change Specialists against that day when they will be called upon to help a congregation work through its grief, affirm its purpose and install their new minister.

We urge the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches to join other major church bodies and consider appropriate ways to advance the philosophy of the time between ministers as prime time for renewal and raise up a corps of Pastoral Change Specialists.

George W. Brown, Jr., Ed.D., former Associate Executive Secretary NACCC. William C. Donald II, D.D., former Interim Pastor, Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

By Dr. B. Margaret Voss

As a young student at Hartford Seminary it never occurred to me to challenge the advice of the Dean to give up my "notion" to be a preaching minister. He urged me to develop a career as a minister's wife contributing my skills to the Christian Education program of my husband's church. Or if the Lord led us to a large city church I could be the Director of Christian Education. Why didn't I speak up and demand ordination? For two reasons: first, as a carefully raised New Englander to respect authority and not talk back I showed respect and kept silent. Yet, I churned, screamed and cried inside. Why? Why? Second, because of the cultural influence and tradition of the male dominance in the home, world of work, church and marriage. The man was the head. Only men held positions as Pastors of our church. Only male theological students came to our church on field work assignments. Yet, I had listened to some outstanding women thoroughly versed in Biblical history; very articulate in the development of Christian thought; accurately insightful to social issues and exercising a tremendous expanse and depth of compassion. They were considered very valuable to the church community but were never encouraged to be ordained as the head of the church. Why? Why?

Following the advice given I became the Director of Christian Education of a large city church. Later, I followed my husband as he received his Call to a small town church and there I served as a full time Minister's wife. This pattern followed for several years. These were busy times and we met many wonderful people. We always felt we were needed. Yet, I was restless because there was unfinished business with my spirit.

Opportunities were presented and I responded to get more education and develop skills in radio, television, curricula writing, teacher training, journalism, techniques of business, membership drives, fund raising, counseling and others. As I pursued my formal education I volunteered my time and skills to my church. These all led to rich and rewarding experiences. Yet, I was restless because there was unfinished business with my spirit.

We became involved in placing children in need of love and care in the homes of the members of our church community, thereby developing a Christian Foster Care program. A girl of eleven years of age became our first child. She remained with us and is a permanent member of our family. We adopted two other children and have had exchange students share our home. We have had a fun, loving, enjoyable, stretching, growing family life. This experience has been tender, warm, inspiring and deeply cherished. Yet, I have been restless because there was unfinished business with my spirit.

My work as Executive Director of the Community House offered opportunities to draw plans, raise funds, work with builders and contractors to create a building for our programs and the city's first Day Care Center. This home mission work was a tremendous experience. A weekly radio and television unrehearsed children's show was a great challenge and expulsion of creativity. This opportunity to offer the children of the larger community Christian Education was gratifying. Yet, I was restless because there was unfinished business with my spirit.

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Advanced degrees made me aware that the more I learn, the greater the need to serve. A career change brought the responsibilities of Student Personnel Services on a small growing college campus. In its smallness it was necessary to "wear many hats" to get the job done. As the college grew staff was added but the need to serve students was a constant companion. The problems and challenges have always been and are being viewed from the Christian perspective. As Dean of Students during the turbulent 60's and 70's and now into the new 80's the work has been, and is, stimulating. Yet, I have been restless because there was unfinished business with my spirit.

Only this spring did I do something about the unfinished business with my spirit. I petitioned the Board of Deacons of the Traditional Congregational Church of Stanton, Michigan to sponsor my ordination. I appeared before the Ecclesiastical Council of the Visinage for examination and was ordained by the Western Michigan Association of Congregational Churches.

(Dr. Voss received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, served on the faculty of Davenport College in Grand Rapids, was executive director of the Methodist Community House in that city and worked with her minister-husband in many churches throughout the midwest. The next issue of The Congregationalist will carry Dr. Voss' article concerning the questions she faced in the ordination process.)

THE CONGREGATIONALIST 13



Carol DiBiasio-Snyder

A SHARED MINISTRY—A SHARED LIFE

Mary Woolsey

"Sharing" is the word most typical of both her ministry and her total life style. She is Carol DiBiasio-Snyder, petite, brown-haired with sparkling brown eyes that reflect both her lively sense of humor and her concern with performing well in her chosen ministry.

A recent M.A. graduate of Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Carol and her husband, Ralph, share the Christian Education ministry of North Shore Congregational Church in Milwaukee, WI. Together they are creating an exciting and extremely active C.E. program. Carol takes charge of the church school (infants through high school) while Ralph is in charge of adult education. Together they organize and work with the youth ministry for the junior and senior high school groups as well as intergenerational events. The duties of the position have been divided to take advantage of each person's talents. It is an arrangement that is advantageous for the church and allows them each to work less than full time.

"Having a male and female working with the youth has great advantages," says Carol. "At a time when youth are developing their own sex role identities, we both offer role models. Since neither Ralph nor I fulfill the traditional stereotypes for our sex, we feel that the youth have alternative models to the 'macho' male or the 'shrinking' female extremes."

One role that Carol feels is important to model for the youth is that of women in the ministry. "As a woman in ministry, it is a privilege to be able to model the church professions as valid and important vocational options for women. It is a great joy to encourage youth to listen without limits for the voice of God calling them to service."

Sharing a position at the church with her husband is only one extension of Carol's chosen total life style. She and Ralph also share, in a real sense, their home life. Each performs household duties according to their talents and inclination. An organized person, Carol says they have formally set up the organization of their home. For instance, Carol shops, Ralph does the laundry and they share meal preparation.

Carol and Ralph also share in another important area of their life, their name. DiBiasio (Dee-Bee-ah-zee-o), Carol's maiden name, was linked with Ralph's Snyder upon marriage.

Why have they chosen a sharing life style? "This arrangement leaves us free to pursue other life goals and interests," says Carol. "We both wanted a career in the ministry but we knew a full time career for either or both of us would bring conflicts. Full time ministry often leaves little time for other activities or for family. We have seen others burn out and we didn't want that to happen to us."

With her career and household sharing arrangement, Carol finds time to enjoy her artistic talents as well as volunteer her services in

worthwhile community activities that interest her. Ralph finds time for writing and music.

Carol first became aware that she was interested in the ministry as a career in high school but it wasn't until she was in college that she seriously considered this option. She received her B.S. degree from Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio and for a time worked as a graphic artist. It was also during her college career that she began attending a nearby Congregational Church. "I became a Congregationalist by accident," she grins, "but I stayed by choice."

Totally immersed in Congregationalism now, Carol was chosen to give morning devotions at the recent National Association meetings in Lansing. She also serves on the Christian Education Commission. It was during these annual meetings that one of Carol's secret passions came to light. She is a confirmed Chocoholic! During the awards portion of the meetings, she was presented with a gigantic chocolate bar by fellow Chocoholic Richard Bower. Upon completion of the meeting, fellow Congregationalists found Carol at the exit—sharing, of course.



Looking at the Future of the Congregational Ministry

A summary and highlights of a report by the Long Range Planning Committee, Panel II.

By the Rev. Dr. Mark P. Jensen

With a concern for the vitality of our Congregational Churches, the Long Range Planning Committee, Panel II, was assigned the task to examine the current profile of our Congregational clergy, as well as establish recommendations concerning the maintenance and development of standards of excellence in the ministry for the years to come.

Accepting the charge, the panel shared its corporate knowledge, research documents, conducted interviews and made up a questionnaire to survey our clergy. Of the 207 surveys returned, 148 were from active senior pastors and associates. While the focus of the report was on these particular clergy, it is not meant to discount the valuable nature of the varieties of ministry conducted by others. Rather, the charge was interpreted as being specifically concerned about parish ministry.

Areas of concern were to develop an understanding of the current profile of ministers. Then we sought to examine educational issues, forms of ministry, ordination and standing, ministerial compensation and support, as well as others.

In summary, our clergy are mostly middle aged, male, and married. Fifty percent of our clergy have working spouses and the majority of the ministers have been Congregational since ordination. Most clergy have followed the normal route to ordination; that is, a four-year undergraduate degree and a three-year degree from an accredited

*. . . Our clergy are
mostly middle-aged,
male and married.*

seminary has been obtained. In reviewing educational credentials, the panel often asked, "would the individual with below average educational background be the one most likely not to return the questionnaire; thus limiting our data's usefulness?" Forty of the 148 are Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies graduates.

Of that same number, 54 told us that they own their own homes. This reflects the growing trend in many other groups of clergy. The theological self designation resulted in these figures: Liberal 30, Moderate 56, and Conservative 57. Among the retired clergy who completed the form, Liberals represent a greater percentage. Ironically, the same number of clergy expressed concern about the Association being too Conservative as the number concerned about it being too Liberal. Most clergy expressed concern about the lack of benefit programs such as insurance and retirement.

Educational Issues

With some further reflections and recommendations, the Panel confirmed the traditional route to ordination of a Bachelor's degree and a Master of Divinity. We also applauded the program of CFTS. Before making recommendations, we did comment on one assertion made in the initial charge to the panel.

The suggestion that the quality of the clergy has gone down, caused us to ask, "what is quality?" In many cases we find that our present clergy often have different qualities than "old Dr. Pilgrim." In the first place, when one speaks of the quality clergy of the past, they recall the famous and

learned and forget that these individuals were often supported by many clergy of "lesser status," who often served their parishes well. Further, the quality is assigned at the end of a career, forgetting that it took 50 years of practicing ministry to obtain such a reputation. Further, such clergy were from a time when few were well educated, and when television clergy with all the props did not set the standards assumed positive by some. At this point in history the minister is called to incorporate knowledge in far more areas of interest than ever before. The increased secularization of society and high technology all impact on what the minister is to be and to know.

*... we suggested the
development of
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After affirming the CFTS program, the Panel members stated their belief that educational experience, fellowship, and unity would be enhanced by the education of our seminarians at seminar clusters. Further, that within these clusters we suggested the development of "Congregational Houses."

While we affirm the right and desire of seminary students to pick their own seminaries, we would encourage them to select from the wide variety of schools that are found grouped in the Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and Boston areas. We would add Colgate Rochester Divinity School to the list because of its role in the Rochester Center for Theological Schools, and because of its history of supporting free church ministry and CFTS students in particular. In the metropolitan areas mentioned there are seminaries that serve students of differing theological expression and academic interests.

If students are in these clustered areas, then "Congregational Houses" might be established for the purpose of providing common living and study space for our students. Program activities there should enrich fellowship and scholarship while enhancing the relationship to Congregationalism.

Mid-career education was a concern of the Panel and the ministers. Believing in lifelong learning, we endorse the concept of continuing education for the sake of the churches and the clergy. We encourage the local churches to support the ministry of their churches by providing opportunities of study for their ministers.

While nearly half the churches seeking ministers in March, 1987, stated they provided time for such educational quests, less than 20 percent made provision for financial support of education. When

it is pointed out that over half the churches seeking ministers never even consider the matter, the level of commitment to supporting "learned clergy" is clear. Perhaps that fact is evident because the churches have not come to understand that the value of such education is important to the church. If the minister is to feed and challenge the congregation, she must be fed and challenged.

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It is also the belief of the Panel that every minister of every member Congregational Church should have basic knowledge and education in Congregational history, polity, and contemporary practices. Therefore, we express concern about the present situation wherein the avenue to become a Congregational minister can be that of simply being called to a Congregational church. While many of those called have served our churches well, evidence suggests that the rate of successful Congregational ministries and the welfare of the Congregational Christian Churches would be enhanced by courses of introduction into Congregational ministries. The right of the local church to call whom it pleases is primary, but it is incumbent upon the fellowship to respond to this expressed concern. The Division for the Ministry in its present efforts to develop such courses is encouraging, but only the local church support of such efforts will enable the success of such programs.

Forms of Ministry

Recognizing the needs of our congregationalists and their varied abilities to support full time pastoral leadership, we endorse the viable and well respected tradition of "tentmaking ministries." Such ministries are those conducted by fully educated and ordained clergy whose primary occupation may be one that is outside parish ministry. The "tentmakers" force us to recall that the Apostle Paul earned his living as a tentmaker.

We also endorse the recruitment and training of lay ministers who would occupy an especially named category of ministers. They might be called "Shepherds" or simply "Lay Ministers." Presently it is the practice of some of our churches to use such persons who are licensed annually.

Under the heading "forms of ministry" we do not list "male" ministry and "female" ministry, for we believe that the Congregational tradition of ordaining women and men need not be defended or explained. We do believe that our conscientious efforts of calling pastors only on the basis of com-

petence should be endorsed. Today a significant number of seminarians are women and it is appropriate that we benefit from their ministerial training and gifts.

Ordination, Standing and Ministerial Fellowship

With a concern for our churches, the Panel discussed the issues of ordination standing and ministerial fellowship. Again for most of our churches and clergy, there can be nothing but praise; for some, however, questions do need to be raised.

While most ordinations are carried out with a seriousness that serves Congregational tradition and laws of usage well, there are times when we fail to see the importance of our task. It is clear that to begin an ordination council when the ordination service bulletins have been printed, and the aroma of the post service dinner permeates the air, the process of ordination has been too lightly considered.

While the avenues to ordination have varied throughout history, there has always been a concern about order and due process. The goal has been to involve the Hand of God and the hands of God's people in a shared act of faith. The manuals of William Barton, Charles Emerson Burton, Henry David Gray, Vaughn Abercrombie and others comment on the process and offer guidelines.

In the time that Barton's 1914 manual appeared, it was noted that local ordination was not necessarily accepted outside the ordaining local church. Indeed, he cited a Massachusetts ruling that determined a person so ordained is not a Congregational minister and is possibly liable if that person performs a marriage. Thus, Barton affirms ordination by council of assembled churches of association. Even as we concur that ordination has been the right of the local church since the 17th century, because the clergy usually serve the broader fellowship of churches, the fellowship of churches is wisely called upon to participate in the process of ordination.

In 1936, Burton suggests that "to avoid possible embarrassment of having to refuse ordination, it is desirable that the candidates be examined in advance . . . of the proposed ordination." By so doing, the credentials, evidence of call of membership, and ordination paper can be properly considered. In short, the council can do its job well!

The Panel confirms the traditional understanding of holding ministerial standing in the local church or association. At the same time it endorses the establishment of a Ministerial Fellowship. Such a Fellowship shall in no way confer standing. The purpose of the fellowship would be to nurture and

maintain standards for professional training of clergy in keeping with the Congregational tradition. Participation in the Fellowship would be voluntary. No minister would be required to subscribe to any theological position as a condition for membership.

Those clergy present in the Congregational Christian Churches' ministry would automatically be included in the Fellowship, but after a designated date, application and the following expectations would be met.

A primary goal of the Fellowship would also be to protect the churches . . .

tions would be met. They must submit documentation of: CFTS participation or completion of a Congregational study course; hold a Master of Divinity degree or equivalent from an accredited institution; be ordained; and a member of a Congregational Christian Church. The status of Fellow shall cease when membership in a Congregational Christian Church ceases.

A primary goal of the Fellowship would also be to protect the churches by listing only those providing documentation. Even in recent years, negative experiences have demonstrated the need for such a list. On the issues of ordination and standing, it is clear that the churches, clergy, and greater fellowship need to work together.

Ministerial Compensation

The ministry offers unique opportunities and benefits for those who practice it; however, the minister is not so unique as to have little concern for appropriate compensation for serving. There are expectations of the minister both in preparation for ministry and in the kinds of services the minister provides. So, too, the minister should expect to live in the community in the same way others live there, being able to feel rewarded for his or her efforts and being able to partake of the benefits life has to offer. For that a "just stipend" is needed.

A just stipend concept first asks, "What is fair?"

A just stipend concept first asks, "what is fair?" It goes without saying that there are minimums and maximums. The danger of paying a clergy person too much is rarely noted within Congregational circles, however. Establishment of the stipend may be approached by asking what are the salaries of other professionals in the community who have similar educational or complexity of service requirements. Church size and resources, and com-

petitive salaries are realities that must be dealt with, while the individuals within a congregation must ask themselves if they are doing their best in supporting the church.

In comparison to the stipends of some other groups of churches, Congregational churches offer low salaries. If in 1987 50% of responding ministers' total packages were under \$30,000, we need to ask what that package includes, and then make some judgments. First, we must understand that whereas in the secular world when we speak of salaries and add the value of benefits, for ministers, the benefits are usually included in a package. Thus, a \$30,000 package might be more properly seen as a \$20,000 salary. To be subtracted could be church business car expenses (not a benefit) plus, health and disability insurance, any kind of retirement program, and Social Security tax at the higher self employed rate.

If Congregational ministry is to be a viable consideration for the individuals we espouse to need, our churches need to examine their covenants with God and their ministers. An aid for this is *The Congregational Connection* available from the Oak Creek office.

Other Concerns

Career advancement and support were other areas of concern for our ministers. The reality is that the nature of our fellowship often dictates what happens in both areas.

We have a high number of large and small churches, with relatively few middle sized churches. This has a tendency to provide an obstacle for clergy seeking to develop their careers by moving to larger churches. A corollary to this is that many of our larger churches go outside the fellowship to find ministers because they fail to find ministers with middle sized church experience. In a recent survey, one third of our larger churches gained their minister from outside the Association. On the other end of the spectrum, smaller churches go outside the fellowship because the salaries they are able to offer limits their choices. When survival is the issue for a church, obtaining a minister with a Congregational background is not a high priority. Obviously, the support and development of middle sized churches is a concern.

*The support and development
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All indications are that the Congregational Christian Churches' staff have been responsive when they are called upon by the clergy for sup-

port. However, again the time of staff, and the resources of the Association are limited and help is realistically not always possible; therefore, the development of resources by local associations and local churches is essential.

An awareness of resources in the local community, and the practice of "preventive medicine" in the areas of offering insurances, contracts, avenues for counseling, and fellowship go a long way to help. Specifically, attention paid to retired clergy is something that we can address at every level.

In Conclusion

The future of the Congregational Ministry is dependent upon many variables. In many cases, to control these variables is impossible. However, the responsibility for supporting a quality group of Congregational clergy is in the hands of the local churches and the greater fellowship. The churches do indeed determine standards, as well as levels of support and nurture. They do this at home and as they gather as the Congregational Christian Churches.

Dr. Jensen is Senior Minister, North Congregational Church, Southfield, Michigan.

Panel members active during the development of the report: the Rev. Elizabeth E. Bingham; the late Dr. George V. Bohman; the Rev. Sally Nolen; the Rev. Dr. Donald B. Ward; the late Dr. Carl Spangler, and the Rev. Dr. Mark P. Jensen, chairman.

The report has been commended to the Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies, the Division for the Ministry, the Missionary Society, the National Association staff, ministers and churches for further consideration and possible action as appropriate.

