

Congregational Profiles

Articles from the *Congregationalist*, 1958-1997

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

Of all the articles compiled for this course, those about people, these Profiles, caused the most anxiety. Who should be highlighted? For what reasons? How accurate a picture of the people of the NACCC do these particular profiles paint?

I do not pretend to have firm answers to any of these questions. It remains for qualified historians, sociologists, and others to conduct a thorough study of the NACCC, weighing the events and personalities from a more scientific perspective. These articles will, however, bring to your attention many people who have been highlighted in the pages of the *Congregationalist*. Whether there has been over the years any consistent basis of selection, I cannot say. Some of those profiled are leaders at the national level. Others are historical figures who someone (the editor him/herself?, an editor just glad to receive some material) thought worthy of notice. Many profiles are more on the order of human interest stories, exemplary instances, or “people in the news.”

What does it say about the NACCC that we honor, recognize, choose to lead us, listen to these particular people? There are certainly lessons to be gleaned by an observant reader. What conclusions do you draw?

Congregational Profiles

Ministers

Dr. A. Ray Appelquist: Irenic in Spirit



Committee began to consider filling the position made vacant by the earlier resignation of Walter Vernon as Associate Secretary.

Soon thereafter, an unfamiliar name (in N.A. circles) began to surface among those directly or indirectly involved in the search process. When it became apparent that this person was the enthusiastic choice of the committee and that he was at least willing to seriously consider the offer, the committee thought it highly desirable that he and I should meet one another. Thus it transpired on a lovely day in early spring, I came face to face for the first time with A. Ray Appelquist.

We spent several hours together getting acquainted and, I suspect, sizing up each others' style. When I returned home that evening I remarked to Carolyn, "I'm really getting excited about becoming Executive Secretary. Working with Ray Appelquist will be a great experience!" And, so it proved to be.

With his accustomed vigor he began his work as Associate Secretary for Missions by traveling around the world, visiting various areas where the Missionary Society was involved, in order to get a first hand look at the people and programs the fellowship was supporting.

When he returned to Oak Creek, because Carol had remained in the Washington, D.C. area to supervise the sale of their home there, Carolyn and I invited him to occupy what we came to call the "N.A. Suite" in our modest

apartment in Greenfield. Hence, for several months thereafter, informal briefings and conversations often began around the breakfast table, were resumed at dinner, and many times continued well into the evening. He studied his N.A. Yearbook almost as carefully and diligently as he did his Bible. Every weekend found him visiting churches and ministers throughout the fellowship. In addition to extensive air travel, he put over 90,000 miles on his N.A. leased car in three years. In a remarkably short time he became well acquainted with the churches and ministers with whom he was to work so effectively in the area of Pastoral Relations and later as Executive Secretary. He carried, also, a portfolio of the Commission on the Ministry.

At conclusion of my term of office as Executive Secretary, the Search Committee, at Ray's request, sought out others to assume the post. However, it became increasingly apparent that the only person who should be considered for the post was Ray, himself. The succeeding four years have validated the wisdom of that choice. His initial work load was unbelievably heavy until the coming of Walter Boring (Missions) and Harry Clark (Pastoral Relations) to the Oak Creek office. These past four years have witnessed a steady growth in the number of churches, of financial support and have seen an increase in the breadth and scope of program resources.

Back in 1975 when the name of Ray Appelquist was first mentioned, a perfectly logical question sprang to many minds: "Why name someone from the outside of our fellowship to this sensitive position?" Yet his whole past pointed to this moment.

He grew up in the Swedish Baptist tradition. Thus, he understood the nature of the free church. He

by Dr. Erwin A. Britton

Shortly after the Search Committee, appointed in 1974 to find a successor to John Alexander, had offered me the position and I had agreed to serve if elected, the

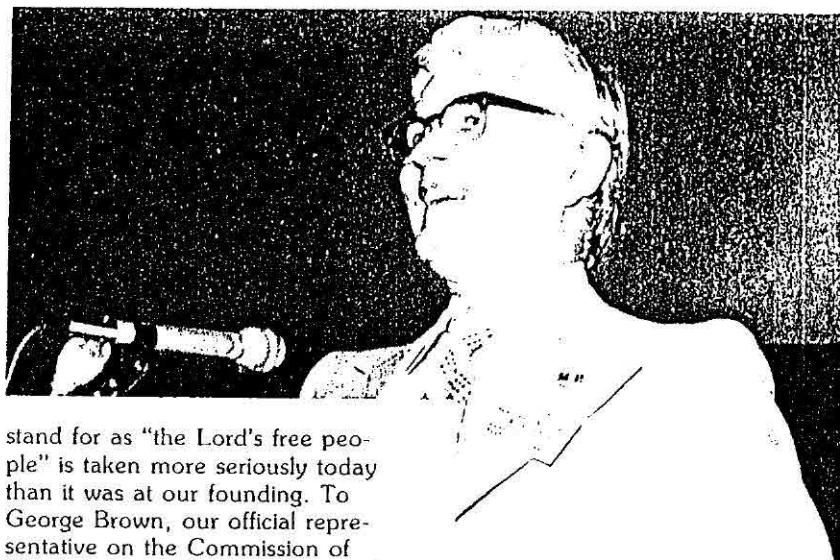
Dr. Erwin A. Britton is Immediate Past Executive Secretary of National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. Now he is assistant to the president at Olivet College.

served as an Army Chaplain. Thus, he was prepared to deal with all sorts and conditions of persons. He ministered as pastor of a church. Thus, he was prepared to understand the problems and possibilities of the parish. He served on the staff of the American Baptist Convention. Thus, he anticipated the limitations placed upon an ecclesiastical bureaucracy which must function in the context of the free church. His fourteen years as Secretary to the General Commission of Chaplains for the Armed Services in Washington brought him into contact with the leadership of a wide range of denominations and churches. This experience gave him real insight into the diversities in theology, liturgy, lifestyles, churchmanship, and social practices of the members of our Association. Finally, and most important, he and Carol are persons of prayer. They both felt God's leading in this venture, for which we as an Association can only sing the Doxology!

At the time of the founding of the National Association, we Congregationalists were regarded as crab grass on the lawn of ecumenism. Of necessity we had placed our wagons in a circle, for we were a beleaguered group. When we were not regarded with scorn or suspicion, we were studiously ignored, occasionally shunned or deliberately excluded.

It is a tribute to our genuine commitment to the concept of real ecumenism that we readily called to a critical and sensitive post on our National staff an "outsider." It is a tribute also to our fellowship and its potential that a person of Ray's stature and talent should gladly cast his lot with us.

He came to the N.A. as we were entering our 21st year as an organization. In many ways he helped us "come of age." What we



stand for as "the Lord's free people" is taken more seriously today than it was at our founding. To George Brown, our official representative on the Commission of Chaplains, must be given the credit for alerting the 1974 Search Committee to Ray's availability.

In staff meetings, private conversations, and public gatherings Ray often used the word "irenic" to describe the spirit of some church or minister for which he had particular admiration. It is a word which also describes Ray's spirit and methodology. He is a good listener, a patient and perceptive observer, and an effective doer. Though not easily provoked he could, when the occasion demanded it, be roused to righteous anger in a fashion that left no one in doubt as to his feelings, convictions, or intentions.

He is genuinely a pastor to our pastors, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who mourn. His administrative skills, honed by years of experience, are characteristically unobtrusive; therefore they are most effective. He is indefatigable, never becoming "weary of well doing."

Any tribute to Ray Appelquist would fall far short of its mark unless it included a strong statement about the contributions made by his wife Carol. She often traveled with him. She participated regularly in the activities of many N.A. groups and organizations as a speaker, counselor, or interested bystander. Their home in Franklin,

with Carol as gracious hostess, was often the center of visiting N.A. groups or persons. No one knows better than I how valuable is this kind of support.

All of us rejoice that Ray and Carol, in moving to their new assignment in Mt. Dora, Fla., will still remain within the N.A. family. We wish for them God's richest blessings in their new ventures. □

A Man Called

Richard

Helen Thuman



Nicknames? Fine for others, but he prefers to be called "Richard"—especially by his parishioners.

The National Association's current moderator, Richard J. Bower, has not missed a National Association meeting since his first attendance in 1964. During this time he has served as chairman of many major committees: Christian Education, Nominating, Executive, 25th Anniversary and Search, the latter's function being to find a new Executive Secretary.

A native of New Jersey, his father an engineer, mother a housewife, two brothers almost a generation older, Richard grew up in the Methodist Church and was always involved in church activities. He thought of entering the ministry all the way through high school. No other profession ever really interested him—except in seventh grade when he announced that he was going to be an actor on Broadway!

Actually, he did "tread the boards" and "speak the speech" in both high school and college where his non-academic activities were participation in music groups and drama. The Thespians, honorary high school dramatic organization, named him outstanding state male actor during his senior year.

Valedictorian of his graduating class, he was accepted for undergraduate studies at Yale University but chose, instead, to attend Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT on a scholarship. A French major, he was privileged to spend a year at The Sorbonne in France. (Fortunately for his congregations, his sermons are always in English!)

His thoughts of becoming a minister became commitment. He applied to various seminaries. Again he was accepted by Yale. Again he made another choice, entering Drew University Theological Seminary in Madison, N.J. Fate had stepped in. Helen Ann Check was also at Drew! They met in 1961 and were married in December of 1962.

During his first year at Drew, Richard learned through a friend of his mother that the Congregational Church in Bound Brook, NJ, was looking for a student minister. He got the job. Thus began his valued friendship with and inspirational tutelage under Dr. Olin Lewis, the senior minister of that church.

After his second charge, a year of internship at a Methodist student church in Jersey City, Richard and Helen Ann returned to Bound Brook, became Congregationalists, and Richard interned in Dr. Lewis' church for two more years. He was ordained in 1965.

The Kewaunee, WI, Congregational Church called him to replace its minister who had been there for many years. After almost three years and the birth of their son, Christopher, the Bowers headed back to Bound Brook because Dr. Lewis, after twenty-two years of ministry there, was moving to another church. There they remained until, in 1978, the Congregational Church of the Chimes in Sherman Oaks, CA, (a suburb of Los Angeles), called him to succeed Dr. Walter H. Staves who had founded the church in 1950.

His office staff loves working with him in spite of his minuscule handwriting, his ability to spot a misspelled word a mile away and his (reasonable) perfectionism. He always remembers to express his gratitude and praise for the work that others do.

Richard's sermons are low-key, not pontifical, enriched by his knowledge of literature and poetry and his dedication to The Word.

Give him a gavel and an auctioneer's block—he'll keep up a rapid chatter and sell everything that isn't nailed down! Those of you who have attended the N.A.'s convention know that he's a master emcee (and sartorially meticulous).

Musically, Richard is a classicist, favoring Bach, Mozart and Wagner. While attending an international theological seminar at Oxford, England, this past January, he was more than delighted to be able to attend two operas at Covent Garden in London, one of them, "The Marriage of Figaro," on New Year's Eve.

Don't expect him to repair a leaky faucet or change an automobile spark plug, but give him some greens, some flowers and any kind of a container and he can fashion a beautiful display. Some part-time and summer work in a florist shop during his school years enhanced his naturally artistic talents.

The Bower parsonage is just a short spin from the church. Even if it were only a couple of blocks, Richard probably wouldn't walk. He's not an enthusiast for exercise programs or health foods! Anything with chocolate has to be delicious. Helen Ann is an excellent cook, but she knows he won't touch eggplant, squash or onions.

Helen Ann and Richard belong to the church bridge club. (He says his wife is a better player than he.) Mystery novels are his choice for diversion. A few hours basking in the sun at the beach are the perfect prescription for sheer relaxation.

The Church of the Chimes has enjoyed a constant, healthy growth during the past five years. The church school is expanding with the children of young families joining the congregation. The Christian fellowship grows deeper and the circles of outreach ever wider, reflecting the faith, the optimism, the energy and the personality of the minister, Richard J. Bower.

Helen Thuman is one of Richard's parishioners at the Congregational Church of the Chimes in Sherman Oaks, CA.

BRITT

— An Introduction to Erwin A. Britton

Some call him "Britt" or "Erv."

Others, more formal, refer to him as "Dr. Britton."

But all share in one privilege — calling Erwin A. Britton "friend."

The universal reaction of people in Detroit when they hear Britt is moving to Milwaukee as executive secretary of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC) is that they will miss him deeply.

Britt has become an integral part of the Detroit scene in his years as minister of historic First Congregational Church, located in what once was known as the "piety hill" section of the city. He's been active in both civic and ecumenical groups and he's well known around town.

One prominent Detroit clergyman, Dr. Carl G. Howie, minister of Westminster United Presbyterian Church, comments:

"Britt may have the traditional image of the clergyman but he has a remarkable openness and savoir faire about the way things are today."

Adds the Rev. Paul H. Young Jr., pastor of Southfield's North Congregational Church:

"I'm very impressed with his theological perspective, his churchmanship and the way in which he sees the life of the church becoming a vital force in people's lives."

"He's the type of man who can bridge the differences between conservatives and liberals. He can speak the language of both."

Bridging differences long has been a talent of Britt's.

"I remember when I was in high school somehow I got to be the intermediary between the principal and my home room teacher," says Britt.

"Somehow I must have had the reputation that I could be trusted and that I could communicate."

"The same thing happened in graduate school of theology when I was the intermediary between the dean and the faculty."

Britt says his ability to reconcile comes from his father, a supervisor of a water purification plant who was active in civic affairs and often took the role of peace-maker.

Born a Buckeye, Britt also is that rarity in Congregationalism, a native Congregationalist.

"I started attending when I was five years old," he says.

"I was active in youth programs and was the first moderator of the youth group in Northern Ohio from 1931 to 1937."

Attending Oberlin College, Britt found himself attracted to the secretary to the dean and registrar for the school of theology.

"I'd go by the office everyday to pick up the mail and every day I'd drop in," recalls Britt.

"I liked what I saw."

Britt and Carolyn had an "understanding," says the 60-year-old minister until he became minister of First Congregational Church in Wayne, Mich.

The Brittons had three daughters, Penny, Betsy and Connie. They now have a granddaughter, Amanda, less than one year old, of whom they "just happen" to have stacks of pictures handy to show friends.

"She's the cutest baby in the world," says Britt. "I have her

grandmother's word for it. I don't disagree with her."

The Brittons — Carolyn is deeply involved in Britt's ministry — spent 23 years at the Wayne church where the membership went from 225 to 1,200.

In 1964 he became minister of First in Detroit, a church founded in 1844 when Detroit had a population of 10,948 and the city was still suffering from the panic of 1837.

The current church was constructed in 1890 at a site which then was "way out in the suburbs." It is an unusual church because it combines the Romanesque and Byzantine designs.

First also is unusual because the angel Uriel tops the church tower and not many churches have angels on their roofs. In recent years Uriel had to be taken down for repairs, the second time in 20 years.

"That first time," says Britt, "the interim minister said unless Uriel was repaired there would either be a 'loose woman above us or a fallen woman in our midst.'"

Actually, says Britt, he's not sure how to address Uriel, as he, she, it or Ms., since angels don't have gender.

Humor is one of the hallmarks of Britt, who enjoys writing a limerick now and then and manages to devise gentle puns and quick replies.

With James Lyons, minister of Pine Hill Congregational Church in Orchard Lake, Mich., Britt does a modern day dialog on St. Paul. Britt takes the part of Paul while Lyons interviews him.

Asked by one person about ministers' supporting themselves, Britt quickly retorted as Paul:

"I did, through my tent ministry, and if you recall, I also said the laborer was worthy of his hire."

Britt will miss that dialog, will miss working with people in the local church.

"I do enjoy preaching but I don't think it's one of my great strengths," he says candidly.

"I enjoy working with people, doing things in and for the

church. I have the facility to have people work together who have divergent points of view."

The greatest satisfaction he's had is "seeing things that happen to people which give them personal satisfaction in terms of their coming to grips with some of the problems they're facing or the joys they experience through fellowship in the church."

Britt, who considers the NACCC annual meeting in Wichita this last June one of the "more positive," looks at his new post as working with others "side by side."

"It's not a hierarchical arrangement," he says.

His concerns for the future include new church development, encouraging others with similar viewpoints to join and support the NACCC,

and continuing to let others know that the association exists.

"I want to see a continual strengthening of the ministry, as continuing education for our ministers," says Britt.

"We have a responsibility to the non-Congregational ministers among us to give them more of our philosophy.

"We could take several days to bring people together and say 'here we are, this is what we're trying to do and this is why we're the peculiar people we are.'"

As he looks back on his years in Detroit, Britt singles out a nearby church, Plymouth United Church of Christ, for its contribution to the city in developing inner city housing for moderate income people. Plymouth, as part of its

dedication to the city, secured federal funding for the project and used black architects and a black union.

"This will hold up through the years as a creative response of an urban black church to the needs of the people," maintains Britt.

Overall, Britt sees the close relationship which developed in the past ten years between the Protestants and Catholics as one of the most significant trends and one which personally gave him great joy.

Now, that ecumenical community, which came to know Erv and Carolyn Britton so well, regret the losing of treasured friends.

From all your friends in this area — and from around the country — best of luck to you, Britt and Carolyn.

— Nancy Manser



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.

From Engineer to Minister

Road to Emmaus Issues from Local Church for CFTS Graduate

by the Rev. Richard C. Ellison
Congregational Church of Randolph, New Jersey

They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the scriptures?" —Luke 24:32

Several weeks ago, Steve, a fellow elder at the Randolph (New Jersey) Congregational Church came up to me and wanted to talk about my career change. He was considering changing careers and going to seminary. So, during the following week, we sat in my study one night and talked for three hours about all the ramifications connected with taking this tremendous step of faith. I shared with him my experience and by the end of the night, I felt very inadequate. Did I encourage or discourage him in his quest to do God's will in his life?

In reflecting on that extended conversation, I recalled that we concentrated on economic factors. Steve has three children; none in college yet. He is a middle management person with maybe twelve years left before being eligible for "early retirement."

Could his family adjust to a reduced standard of living? Would Steve be a "responsible provider" by giving up his future, full pension?

Yes, the economic factors are paramount for anyone contemplating a career change as drastic as going to seminary and then on into full-time ministry. One day your income is in the mid-seventies and the next, you hope it will reach the lower twenties. This dramatic income drop is graphically reflected in the "W2 Forms" filed with your Federal Income Tax return. For over 20 years, my total annual income was reported on a single W2 Form from one company. Then, when I entered seminary, "support" came from various sources including a variety of part-time jobs. However, as traumatic as these instantaneous economic contractions were, their importance faded as I realized that my career change was a gradual process that stretched over many years.

Let's see, how can I describe the process? The main line of the Erie-

Lackawanna Railroad is near our home. There is a two-lane road that parallels a straight stretch of track for almost a mile. There are level and very, very close. I have driven on the road when a fast freight has come up from behind and suddenly emitted a loud blast from the air horn. Thank God a car was not passing me in the opposite direction. Years ago, when I started my "career change process," I was driving along the road in my secular career and heavily involved in church activities. However, when I reached the end of that parallel section of road and track, I found myself aboard the freight train on my way to seminary. I never changed the direction I was going, just the conveyance which was going to a different destination.

I read somewhere that, contrary to popular belief, qualified clergypersons are not dropped out of heaven into our pulpits but are nurtured by sensitive congregations. One of the "blessings" of the Congregational Way is that a congregation is free to



Richard C. Ellison, and his wife of 31 years, Carol, consider themselves evangelicals in that every believer should have a dynamic, personal relationship with Jesus. They also consider themselves "charismatics" in that they believe that all the gifts of the Spirit are operative today. They would like to be called to a pastoral ministry and participate in church renewal.

act upon what it discerns as God's will for that gathered flock. The Randolph Congregation freely acted upon its commitment to become a "nurturing" flock and authorized the investment of money and Pastor Tim Witzel's time and sweat into a very comprehensive training program that would equip servant elders to minister within the congregation. So, for over ten years, my "parallel road and track" consisted of participation in this training program, elder ordination and then preaching, teaching and pastoring within our congregation while still "driving" my car. When the Lord called, I heard the call and was ready to let Him put me on the train.

Over my desk hangs a picture of the seven men who completed the first Elder's Training Class. One of my classmates was Art Smith who is currently pastoring a congregation in Vermont. Art, among others, encouraged me to apply to the Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies. I had come from another denomination and so CFTS provided a foundational knowledge of our tradition.

Another tradition has been nurtured by the Randolph Congregation. The mission collection from Communion Sunday, the first Sun-

day of every month, has always been given to support a seminarian: Art Smith, Fred Burckbuchler, John Navarre and yours truly, just to name a few.

I would call my personal stretch of road and track, my road to Emmaus. As Carol and I started traveling along the road, a fast freight did not come up behind us and scare us half to death. No, the Body of Christ came up and joined us. The Randolph Congregation gave us many opportunities to serve in serious, faith-stretching ministries and when the call to pursue a new career of full-time ministry was accepted, the congregation and the National Association sustained us with spiritual and physical support.

The two disciples on the original Emmaus Road were changed after experiencing communion with the risen Christ. They now had a life-giving message to share and they joyfully and enthusiastically ran back to Jerusalem. Carol and I have been changed by our communion with our local, gathered Body of Christ and our extended, national fellowship during these past three years. We now have a life-giving message to share with the "Congregational" congregation that calls us to share in its local witness and pilgrimage. ■

About Richard Ellison

After serving as a technical instructor for the United States Air Force, Richard returned to New Jersey in 1962 to join the Automatic Switch Company. During his 24 years with ASCO, he earned an industrial engineering degree at Newark College of Engineering. He worked in engineering, inside and outside sales and was national sales manager. He left ASCO to become international service manager for a high-power laser manufacturer, resigning after two years to enter Drew Theological Seminary where, sponsored by CFTS, he earned a Master of Divinity degree with honors in May, 1991 at 52 years of age.



ONE MAN'S MINISTRY

A FORTY-SEVEN YEAR STORY

John F. C. Green, D. D., Pastor for thirty-nine years at the Evangelical Congregational Church in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, was tendered a Testimonial Dinner on the occasion of his retirement on February 18, 1966. The following biography was printed in the program for the evening.

John F. C. Green was born in Kratt Regierungsbezirk Eckernfoerde, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, May 6, 1892. He attended the public school in Soeby, and was confirmed some months early, prior to his immigration in 1907 to Montana where he hoped to become a rancher. After several years of working on ranches, he entered night-school, intending to return to the ranch after a few months. But his teacher, Dr. Virgil V. Phelps, persuaded him to consider higher education. And so he completed the high school course and college by 1916, graduating from Shurtleff College, Alton, Illinois. In 1917, he received the Master of Arts degree at the University of Chicago. In 1919, he graduated from Chicago Theological Seminary, and after that he spent another year in special study at the University of Chicago. In 1947 Washington and Jefferson College awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

He was ordained to the Congregational ministry in the Congregational Church of Godfrey, Illinois, March 7, 1919, following brief work in a mission at Pana, Illinois. In 1922 he was called to the Congregational Church of Batavia, Illinois. In 1925, he undertook the pastorate of an independent Evangelical Prot-

estant Church in Madison, Indiana, which, under its previous leadership had gotten into Lutheran influence. The congregation voted to unite with the Evangelical Protestant Conference of Congregational Churches prior to his acceptance of a call to the Evangelical Congregational Church of McKeesport, Pennsylvania, where he was installed November 21, 1926.

During his 39 year pastorate in McKeesport, Dr. Green saw the congregation expand and flourish. The dreams of the Church for a new Parish House and a new sanctuary were realized when the present edifices were dedicated in 1936 and 1952 respectively. Young people's groups flourished and added new life to the Church. The first children's and young people's choirs were organized with great success in 1927. Boy Scouts and Cubs were John Green's real interest and the first Cub Pack in the area was at the McKeesport Church. Dr. Green served as Scoutmaster for some 10 years. The young people continue to be leaders among the Churches and other organizations of the community.

Much of what has been accomplished can be considered a personal triumph for Dr. Green. His influence was felt, not only in his own Church, but in other Churches and organizations throughout the area. He was ever active in the local Ministerium both as president and as chairman of various departments. With other colleagues, he organized the Sunday evening services, which, for a term of years were very well attended. The Reformation services, on a community scale, were largely his work. The first and largest was led by Bishop Otto Dibelius of Germany. For many years during his pastorate, double services were held bi-monthly; English at 10:00 and

German at 11:00. For a while this brought the largest German attendance the Church had ever had, drawing not only from our own congregation but from all German families of the community.

Dr. Green has been a foremost leader in the preservation of the free Church and has been active in the Western Pennsylvania Association of Congregational Churches and the state conference of these Churches. He has been active in the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches from the start and is now a member of the World Christian Relations Commission with interests and contacts in many parts of the world.

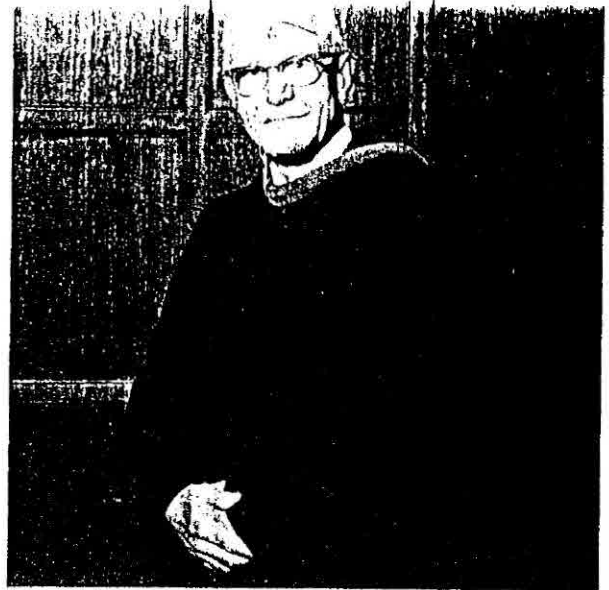
Dr. Green's services were not merely in the wide realm of the ministry. In 1928 he organized the first welfare association in McKeesport, The Family Welfare Society. In the same year he organized the first boys club of the Optimist Club for this entire district. He also organized the Interracial Committee. He was a member and also served as chairman of the City Planning Commission and a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals for 25 years. In 1950, he founded and organized the Youth Guidance Council of McKeesport and with the Reverend Father Peter Kreta was co-chairman until 1965.

It would be impossible to list the many services the Rev. Dr. John F. C. Green has contributed to his Church and his community. The McKeesport Church, on the occasion of his resignation, presented gifts, and tributes by the Mayor, the President of the Ministerial Association, the President of the McKeesport Optimists and the Chairman of the Youth Guidance Council, were received.

Retirement from McKeesport is merely another phase in the life of this man of God. ●

... 50 Years in the Ministry

Rev. Alfred D. Grey
Interim Minister
Extraordinaire



The First Congregational Church of Detroit was host to an unusual gathering recently, the occasion being a dinner and reception honoring two men who had served "Old First" as *interim ministers* at critical periods in the Church's history.

The Rev. Ralph P. Claggett was born in 1891, educated at Oberlin College and Oberlin Graduate School of Theology. Five years in the retail department of the Johannesburg Manufacturing Company in Michigan were followed by five years as a Y.M.C.A. secretary in Kansas City, Missouri and Detroit.

Mr. Claggett is the author of two books and four plays, and has had religious drama as a life-long avocation.

From 1926 to 1957 Mr. Claggett served successively five Congregational Churches—one in Ohio, and four in Michigan. He was interim at First Church, Detroit for one winter after his retirement.

The Reverend Alfred D. Grey, D.D. was hailed on the 50th Anniversary of his ordination, and also the 50th wedding anniversary of the Greys.

Dr. Grey has served Congregational Churches in Washington, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Kansas, Ohio,



Rev. Ralph P. Claggett

California and Michigan. In Michigan the Congregational Church of Birmingham and the Pine Hill Congregational Church were gathered around the Greys.

More than any other man in our fellowship, Dr. Alfred D. Grey has become a father-in-the-Lord to younger pastors and to the numerous Churches he has served as interim or as first minister.

The following vivid commentary is from an address delivered by Dr. Grey, entitled "My Fifty Years in the Ministry."

"I was ordained by the laying on of hands, October 18th, 1914 in First Congregational Church, Tacoma, Washington where I had been called as Associate Minister, just out of seminary. The church instituted the ordination call, not the Tacoma Association. It was a vicinage council.

"For the first ten or twelve years I had a rugged time, jumping from one job to another, satisfying neither myself nor anyone else. The problem was for the most part, one of adjustment.

"It is the challenge of the exigencies of occupation which either makes you or breaks you. This is especially true of the Christian ministry. It is when God's upper and nether mill-stones grind you exceedingly fine that your self-confidence and self-esteem are reduced to the irreducible minimum, and you come face to face with yourself for the first time—am I a phony or am I real—and you throw yourself on the mercy of God and you pray as did Cowper,

*Return Oh Heavenly Dove,
return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made
Thee mourn
And drove Thee from my
breast.*

"My life has been blessed by the influence of several great men, both

