HOW TO GATHER AND ORDER A CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH

A. VAUGHAN ABERCROMBIE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	PREFACE	
I	GATHERING BELIEVERS	1
II	OWNING A COVENANT	5
III	MAINTAINING PUBLIC WORSHIP	14
IV	PREPARING CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS	19
V	FORMALLY CONSTITUTING A CHURCH	40
VI	CALLING AND INSTALLING A PASTOR AND TEACHER	48
VII	IMPLEMENTING BYLAWS WITH WRITTEN POLICIES	61
VIII	CREATING A BELOVED COMMUNITY OF HELPFULNESS AND SERVICE	68
IX	OFFERING AND RECEIVING THE HAND OF FELLOWSHIP	74
	APPENDICES:	
	A The Office of Pastor and Teacher	86
	B The Pastor and Lay Moderator	95
	C The Church Cabinet	103
	D Rules of Order for Group Meetings	109
	INDEX	122
	POSTSCRIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	
	ABOUT THE AUTHOR	

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

-- Matt. 18:20

"Ye know that they which . . . rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: for whosoever will be great among you . . . shall be servant to all."

-- Mark 10:43

PREFACE

This book is written as a guide for any "two or three gathered in the name of Christ" who have determined to become a Church according to the principles of the democratic, or what American Christians for more than three hundred years have called the "Congregational Way" of faith and order.

They have spoken of Congregationalism as a *a way of having faith* because most Churches of this order have respected the right of individual conscience in matters of belief. Each believer has been assured by both the spirit and the form of his Church fellowship that he may hold his faith as dictated by his conscience under God.

Congregationalism has been spoken of as *an order* because, whether in "Churches of Christ", or "Baptist", or "Christian", or "Congregational", or "Disciples", or "Unitarian" Churches, the principle of *government by the consent of the governed* has been the foundation of their polity. Congregationalism is a way of ordering the forms of Church organization and voluntary inter-Church relations, under Christ, "so that things may be done decently and in order . . . in unity of spirit and in the bond of peace".

A Church of the Congregational order begins when a few disciples of Jesus meet and join in a covenant to seek and do and teach the will of God, as known or to be made known; and to walk together as a distinct Church in voluntary fellowship with all other Churches.

We hope that this effort to spell out the details of the Congregational Way will help to gather and maintain Churches worthy of the Pilgrim Fathers who gave this noble heritage of faith and freedom to all democratic Churches.

A.V. Abercrombie
Marco Island, Florida
June 1, 1986

A Congregational Christian Church
Is a gathering of believers
In covenant
Together and with God
To be His children
In spirit and in truth.

A Congregational Christian Church
Is a church of the people,
Under Christ,
Governed by the people,
For the people,
To the glory of God.

A Congregational Christian Church
Is a family of families --
A beloved community
Of memory and hope,
Of mutual helpfulness
And service to others.

A Congregational Christian Church
Is a Church among all Churches
United in voluntary fellowship
To seek, and do, and teach
God's will as known
Or yet to be disclosed.

CHAPTER ONE

Gathering Believers

A classic statement of the democratic or Congregational principles of Church government was made when The Second Church of Christ in Hartford, Connecticut, ("South Church"), was constituted on February 19th, 1669:

> "Some main heads or principles of the Congregational way of church order are those that follow, viz:
>
> "First, That visible saints are the only fit matter, and confederation the form of a visible church.
>
> "Second, That a competent number of visible saints (with their seed) embodied by a particular covenant, are a true, distinct, and entire church of Christ.
>
> "Third, That such a particular church being organized, or having furnished itself with those officers that Christ hath appointed, hath all the power and privileges of a church belonging to it; in special - 1st, to admit or receive members; 2nd, to deal with, and if need be, reject offenders; 3rd, to administer and enjoy all other ecclesiastical ordinances within itself.
>
> "Fourth, That the power of guidance or leading, belongs only to the Eldership, and the power of judgment, consent, or privilege, belongs to the fraternity or brethren in full communion.
>
> "Fifth, That communion is carefully to be maintained between all the churches of

Christ according to his order.

> "Sixth, That counsel in cases of difficulty is to be sought and submitted to according to God."

Churches, if they are to live up to this noble standard, must be composed of "visible saints" or, to use another honored word, "believers".

The Boston Platform (1865), following the Cambridge Platform (1648), defined the "saints" as those who "visibly belong to Christ", and who "having attained some knowledge of the principles of religion, and being free from gross scandals, do profess their personal repentance and faith, and walk in obedience to the word . . ."

Another report at the 1865 Council said that if Churches are to be really Churches, ". . . it is necessary, first, that they should be composed of believers, - of those who have begun to love with Christ's love; a love in which they are holy and a brotherhood."

Our Colonial forebears looked upon Church membership as a duty of all believers and their children, or their "seed", as they called them:

> "Every believer . . . should be a member of some particular church, that he may honor Christ by his professed conformity to the order and ordinances of the gospel, and that he may have the benefits of visible union and fellowship with the church which is the communion of saints. These benefits are, first a participation in the promise of Christ's special presence with his church; secondly, the increased activity and enjoyment in the Christian life by combining the affections and endeavors of believers, and by inciting each other to love and good works; thirdly, watchful and fraternal help to keep each

other in the way of God's commandments, and to recover by due admonition and censure any that go astray; and fourthly, aid in the Christian nurture and training of their children, that their households may be holy, and their posterity be not cut off from the blessings of the covenant. Should all believers neglect this duty of voluntarily entering into organized Christian fellowship, to which duty they are moved by the impulses of a renewed and holy mind, Christ would soon have no visibly associated and organized church on earth." (Boston Platform)

The above insights of our spiritual fathers are as valid today as in earlier times. Disciples of Jesus, saints, believers, dedicated to the ways of judgment, mercy and faith, still become a Church by their recognition of each other as believers. And, they become a Church by their common agreement to observe Christ's ordinances, and to acknowledge a mutual covenant as members of a distinct Church.

Those who undertake to gather a Church must seek to bring together people not only of independent mind and heart but also those who by their profession and life give evidence that they are disciples of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, since a Church of the Congregational order is a brotherhood in its actual organization, as well as in its spirit, those who compose it should believe whole-heartedly in the principle of government "by the consent of the governed." The nurture of Christlike souls requires freedom to be responsible, and abundant opportunities to take responsibility:

"It is the chief end of man to glorify God, and share his joy; and of the world, to be a place of nurture for souls thus fulfilling their end. The church on earth embraces all

> who have begun to glorify and enjoy God, and so is the essential realization of the end of creation; but, being the 'body of Christ', wherein he dwells and whereby he works, it is also the means of its realization . . . Every church must needs embody its essential idea in its organization, and be a brotherhood in form as well as in spirit . . . or its organization will be subtly, or perhaps very openly, counterworking its work. Its very organization should be the birth of a love which annihilates caste, and sense of hierarchy." (from The Boston Council)

Visible saints are the only fit matter, and confederation the necessary form of a "Christian" Congregational Church. The gathering of a Church requires a search for people who believe in Christ, and who also believe in his requirements of equality and mutual responsibility among his disciples.

CHAPTER TWO

Owning A Covenant

A Church of the Congregational order begins, as the Hartford statement says, when a number of believers, under Christ, make a covenant together and with God to be his children in spirit and in truth:

> "Second, That a competent number of visible saints (with their seed) embodied by a particular covenant, are a true, distinct, and entire church of Christ." (Emphasis added)

The Boston Platform speaks in detail about the significance of a Church covenant:

> "Those believers who dwell together in one place become a church by their recognition of each other, and their mutual agreement to observe Christ's ordinances in one society. Their covenant with Christ to be his disciples and obedient subjects becomes, by that mutual recognition and agreement, their covenant with each other to be fellow disciples and helpers of each other's faith in a distinct Church.
>
> "Different degrees of explicitness in the church covenant do not affect the being of the church, or the duties and responsibilities of its members. The essence and meaning of the covenant are retained where the agreement of certain believers to meet constantly in one congregation for worship and edification is expressed only by their practice of thus meeting, and their actual observance of Christian ordinances. However explicit the covenant may be, it can rightfully express nothing more than a mutual agreement to observe all Christ's laws

and ordinances as one church of Christ; and however informal the agreement, it can mean nothing less."

Most Churches take time to write their covenants so they may be "owned" with dignity by all members at Church meetings and in services of worship, especially those in which new members are received. New-formed Churches, even before they have been formally constituted, often have a Covenanting Service during which each family comes forward and publicly signs the covenant. A simple order for such a service is included at the end of this chapter. Also included is a typical service of reception of members in which there is a place for "owning the covenant".

Many Churches do not actually write a new covenant, but, instead, adopt one of the historic covenants of other Churches. Following is a selection of some famous old covenants, and some exemplary modern ones:

Pilgrims (England, 1602; Plymouth, 1620)

"We covenant as ye Lord's free people, joyned themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in ye fellowship of ye gospel, to walk in all his wayes made known to them, according to their best endeavors, whatever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them."

First Church of Salem, Massachusetts (1629)

"We covenant with the Lord and with one another, and do bind ourselves in the presence of God to walk together in all His ways, according as He is pleased to reveal Himself unto us in His blessed Word of Truth."

Second Church, Hartford, Connecticut (1669)

"Since it hath pleased God, in His

infinite mercy, to manifest Himself willing to take unworthy sinners near unto Himself, even into covenant relations to and interest in Him, to become a God to them and avouch them to be His people, and accordingly to command and encourage them to give themselves and their children also unto Him.

"We do therefore this day, in the presence of God, His holy angels, and this assembly, avouch the Lord Jehovah, the true, and living God, even God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, to be our God and give up ourselves and ours also unto Him to be His subjects and servants, promising through grace and strength in Christ (without whom we can do nothing) to walk in professed subjection to Him as our only Lord and Lawgiver, yielding universal obedience to His blessed will, according to what discoveries He hath made or hereafter shall make, of the same to us; in special, that we will seek Him in all His holy ordinances according to the rules of the Gospel, submitting to His government in this particular Church, and walking together therein, with all brotherly love unto His praise: all which we promise to perform, the Lord helping us through His grace in Jesus Christ."

Modern Covenant for Liturgical Use, (inspired by above Hartford Covenant)

"Since God is pleased to share his life
with men,
To be their Father, and to guide and to
encourage them:

We, therefore, covenant together,
and with God
To be his children both in spirit
and in truth.
We promise by the words of Jesus
and his love,
To seek God's will, according to
the light made known,
Or yet to be disclosed;
To grow in judgment, faith
and charity,
And, in fellowship, to do and teach
our Father's will
To His glory and our own true joy.
Amen. (AVA)

First Church (Congregational), Denver, Colorado (1874)

"We promise to cooperate with the members of this church in the study of that law which Christ taught as supreme: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself'."

Churches of the Congregational Christian denomination have met regularly in National Council by delegates assembled since 1871, and on several occasions these bodies have formulated certain "Statements of Faith", and presented them to the Churches as testimonies and not tests, of what many Congregationalists believe. The 1913 Kansas City Statement of faith is one of the most inspiring of these documents. It has had wide use in Churches as an Affirmation of Faith, and some Churches have used the full text, or parts of it, in writing their covenants:

"We believe in God the Father, infinite in

wisdom, goodness, and love; and in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, who for us and our salvation lived and died and rose again and liveth evermore; and in the Holy Spirit, who taketh of the things of Christ and revealeth them to us, renewing comforting and inspiring the souls of men.

"We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known to us.

"We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the gospel to all mankind, exalting the worship of the one true God, and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brotherhood."

"Depending, as did our fathers, upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God; and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting."

Below is a simple Order of Service typical of those used on Covenant Sundays by Churches in the process of formation:

Call to Worship
Invocation
Hymn of Praise
Responsive Reading
Anthem or Special Music
Scripture Reading
Sermon
Hymn

Service of "Owning of Covenant"
Records of Actions to Date
Verbal reading of Covenant
Signing of Covenant
Doxology
Prayer
Parting Hymn
Benediction

Below is a typical Order of Service of Reception of Members which includes the act of "Owning of the Covenant":

Sentences of Scripture:

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?

I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all his people.

Address to those who join the Church by confession of faith:

Dear Friends, you have come to this sacred service to take upon yourselves the obligations of Christ's disciples, and to make a public confession of your faith in him, and openly to join the communion of this Church.

Act of confession of faith:

Having truly repented of your sins, do you sincerely devote yourselves to the love, obedience and service of God; do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Master and Friend, and confess your purpose to learn of him, to become like him, and to advance his way of living in the world; do you accept his words as the precepts of your life, and his spirit as your Comforter and Guide, and, trusting in God's grace to

strengthen you, do you promise to do what you can to promote the peace, purity, and prosperity of his Churches, walking with his disciples everywhere in love, and glorifying him by a faithful life? And do you now cordially unite with this Church and accept its covenant of faith, polity and service; do you promise to pray and work for its upbuilding and its usefulness, to help in sustaining its worship, its activities and its charities; and to live with us in godly fellowship? Do you thus promise? (Each shall answer, I DO.)

Act of confirmation (for those baptized in childhood):

You who in childhood were brought into the Church on the faith of your parents, to be recognized as children of God, and dedicated to his service, do you accept and confirm for yourselves that consecration made for you when you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? (Each shall answer, I DO.)

Act of baptism (for those not baptized):

Will you receive baptism as a symbol of the inward purity of life which you seek, and as a sign that you dedicate yoursleves to the service and glory of God? (Each shall answer, I DO, and shall be baptized in the manner prescribed by the church of which he becomes a member.)

Word of blessing:

May our Father God so strengthen each one of you, baptized in his name, that

hereafter you shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Jesus Christ, but that you shall manfully live under his banner, and continue God's faithful sons (and daughters) forever.

Act of reception by letter:

Kindred in Christ, who come acknowledging the vows made when first you declared your faith in him, we bid you welcome. We greet you as fellow workers in his vineyard, as friends who share God's everlasting life. Do you now cordially unite with this Church, and accept its covenant of faith, polity and service; do you promise to pray and work for its upbuilding and its usefulness, to help in sustaining its worship, its activities and its charities; and to live with us in godly fellowship? Do you thus promise? (Each shall answer I DO.)

The owning of the Covenant (congregation rising and participating):

The right hand of fellowship:

We, the members of this Church, welcome you with joy into our communion and fellowship. We pledge to you our sympathy, our help, and our prayers that you may evermore increase in the knowledge and love of God. God grant that loving and being loved, serving and being served, blessing and being blessed, we may enjoy, while we dwell together on earth, the everlasting fellowship of the children of God.

Benediction:

> Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, world without end, both now and forever. Amen.

Christians gathered in a Church of the Congregational order are in truth "children of a covenant", and the solidarity of each local Church, and the stability of all agencies of fellowship created by such Churches depend upon the sincerity with which their covenants are made their own.

CHAPTER THREE

Maintaining Public Worship

The early Congregationalists of various denominations spoke repeatedly of two primary duties of the Churches, namely, the duty of worship, and the duty of edification. They considered all churchly obligations secondary to "rendering pure and acceptable worship before the throne of Divine Majesty", and "instruction by precept and example in the Divine Love".

Williston Walker, famous American Church historian, wrote a paper in 1894 on "The Congregational Idea of Worship". He listed four main elements of worship as having been characteristic of early New England Church services: (1) communion with God in prayer; (2) reverent ascertainment of God's will by reading the Scriptures; (3) unfolding of the Gospel to heart and conscience by preaching; and (4) thanksgiving to God by his praise in song. He summarized the history of worship in these Colonial Churches:

> "It has been evident, I think, that a two-fold tendency characterized the early New England conceptions of public services . . . a two-fold tendency that flowed forth from a single principle . . . that the Bible should be the test of the services of God. Our fathers strove, on the one hand, to exemplify everything in the worship of the Lord's house which they believed the Scriptures to require. On the other hand, they rejected as without authority all that was merely the prescription of man.
>
> "They sought freedom; but it was a freedom to conform with divine law. They broke the fetters in which public worship was bound; but they were fetters of man's devising. Congregationalism has never lost sight of this

principle. If its history has been one of increasing richness, variety and freedom in the worship of God, it has been because the breadth of the Scriptural injunctions has been increasingly recognized, and because men have seen that the Bible lays down general principles rather than hard-and-fast prescriptions.

"No true Congregationalist can fail to value the freedom in worship which cost the fathers so much to attain, nor can he greatly sympathize with any siren song which, under pretence of increasing aesthetic beauty, would bind public worship in the fetters which the fathers broke. The rigid simplicity of their service is not a necessity; but their rejection of all limitation that is simply the work of man is a principle to be had in perpetual honor."

We find one of the most explicit, and inspiring descriptions of "God's Instituted Worship in the Church" in the Boston Platform:

"1. Believers joined to each other and to Christ in a church are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. The church is therefore spoken of in the Scriptures as the house of God and the temple of his worship.

2. The worship of God in his spiritual temple, the church, includes prayer, the singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, the ministry of the word, the sacraments, and the contributions of gifts and offerings for the service of Christ.

"3. Prayers in the church should be grave and earnest, lifting up the thoughts and

desires of the assembly of God; being prompted by the Holy Spirit, they should not be limited by any prescribed and inflexible form, but offered freely, according to the vicissitudes of need and trial, and of joy or sorrow, in the church or in its households; they should be offered for all men, for those who are in authority, for the welfare of the civil State, and for the Universal Church of Christ on earth; and in the matter and manner they should be agreeable to such models as the Scriptures give, and, above all, to that model which Christ himself gave to his disciples, that he might teach them how to pray.

"4. Singing in the church is not for the delight of the sense, as in places of amusement, but for the union of voices and hearts in worship, and for spiritual edification. The Psalms in the Old Testament are sanctioned for this use by Christ and his apostles, and remain in the church forever, to be used in praising God. There is warrant also in the New Testament for the use of hymns and spiritual songs, but not to the exclusion or neglect of the Psalms.

"5. The Ministry of the word in the church is by the reading of the Scriptures, with such exposition as may aid the hearers in their personal and family searching of the same; and also by preaching and teaching, that the truths and principles which God has revealed in his law and in the gospel may be set forth distinctly in their manifestation of the glory and government of God, in their relations to the duties of man and to the salvation of sinners.

"6. The two sacraments of the New Testa-

ment, representing the commemorating through all ages the twofold grace of God offered in the gospel, are to be administered in all churches. Baptism, wherein the purifying element of water signifies and represents the inward washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, should be administered in simplicity, with no vain or superstitious ceremonies. In like manner, the Lord's Supper, wherein believers partake of his body which was broken for us, and of his blood which was shed for many for the remission of sins, is to be celebrated in simple conformity with the recorded words of the institution."

Author's note: Some churches, especially those of the "Baptist" and "Disciples" fellowships, insist on baptism by immersion, adults only. Some churches waive baptism whenever, for reasons of conscience, a new member prefers not to receive it. And most Churches of our order have "open" communion services, where the invitation is given "to all who may wish to partake, whether they be members of this Church, or of any other Church, or of no Church at all".

"7. In the place of those prescribed and definite exactions which were part of God's appointed worship before the coming of Christ, are the free gifts of Christ's disciples to his suffering brethren and to his cause and service. The contribution in the church is not a secular thing adverse to spiritual edification, but is an act of grateful homage to Christ and of communion with his brethren."

New-formed Churches need not delay the beginning of regular worship until they have their own sanctuary and their own ordained minister. The Church member-

ship may appoint any member to lead the congregation in worship. Such informal, laymen-led services are often held in homes, school houses, rented halls or churches. One recently gathered Church began its services of worship in a converted barn.

Material to assist laymen in conducting public worship have been compiled and are available from the various denominational headquarters. Suggestions for sermon subjects, and copies of sermon reprints may be available upon request.

CHAPTER FOUR

Preparing Constitution & Bylaws

We will turn now to a discussion of the third principle of Congregationalism in the Hartford Church list:

> "That such a particular church being organized, or having furnished itself with those officers that Christ hath appointed, hath all the power and privileges of a church belonging to it . . ." (Emphasis added)

This power and these privileges, and the actual procedures of a Church's self-government are usually outlined in a written Constitution and Bylaws, which are prepared with the authority of, and adopted by, the membership in duly called Church Meeting. Here again the Boston Platform speaks with wisdom about a Church's power and privileges:

> "Church power, under Christ, resides not in any priesthood or clergy, nor in the officers of the church, but in the church itself, and it is derived through the church to its officers from Christ. . ."
>
> "Officers in a church are necessary to its well-being, and to its functions, though not to its existence . . . Church officers, according to the arrangement which the apostles instituted in every church, are of two sorts . . . elders and deacons . . . Other officers . . . are not provided for a church by any precept or example in the Scriptures.
>
> "Yet a church may designate any member or members to some definite work in its behalf, such as the work of a scribe or clerk, or of that of a superintendent or teacher in its Sunday School, or that of a committee for

some inquiry. In such appointments the church institutes no new order of officers, but only distributes among its members certain duties belonging to the brotherhood."

Sister Churches have been always ready to exchange Constitutions and Bylaws for each other's edification. Copies of these are kept on file and are available from denominational offices or may be obtained by direct correspondence between Churches.

In the following pages is a general summary of articles typical of the Constitutions and Bylaws of Churches of the Congregational order. It is included simply to indicate some of the areas of responsibility which a modern Church is apt to want to assign to its members. How these assignments shall be made depends solely on the will of the membership in Church Meeting assembled.

The Articles of Incorporation, in most states, are considered to be the Constitution. The corporate charter as drafted by committee, and after due consultation with a competent legal advisor, is presented to the membership in a properly called Church Meeting for adoption and approval:

Typical Constitution or Articles of Incorporation

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the ..... day of ....., 19 ..... , by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the ..... Church of ..... , ... present at a meeting duly called and held for that purpose, the Constitution and Articles of Incorporation of said church were adopted to read as follows, to wit:

ARTICLE I

The name of this corporation shall be ..... Church

of ..... , ...

ARTICLE II

The principal place of business, of this corporation shall be in ..... , ... County, ...

ARTICLE III

The purposes for which this corporation is formed are as follows:

1. To maintain a center of Christian life and influence in the community and to support the fellowship of the Churches of Christ throughout the world;
2. To do all things and to have and exercise all rights, privileges and powers conferred by law upon a religious corporation.
3. To be permanently and completely an autonomous body, and, while recognizing the expediency and privilege of seeking the advice of other autonomous Churches and associating with them for mutual advantage and service to our fellow men, to remain perpetually amenable to no external ecclesiastical constitution or authority whatsoever.

ARTICLE IV

The members of this corporation shall consist of those persons received into membership in accordance with the Bylaws of the corporation.

ARTICLE V

This corporation shall have no capital stock and shall continue perpetually.

ARTICLE VI

The authority to make Bylaws of this corporation shall be vested in the membership.

ARTICLE VII

The temporal business of this corporation shall be conducted by a Board of not less than ..... , nor more than ..... , trustees, one of whom shall be elected by the board to act as its chairman and another its secretary for terms of one year. Trustees shall hold office three years, and their terms shall be so arranged that at least ..... shall be chosen each year. The spiritual responsibilities of the corporation shall be conducted by a Board of Deacons (or Elders) and a Pastor. The Pastor shall be called by the membership for an indefinite term. Such other Officers, Boards and Committees as may be desired may be designated in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE VIII

The Trustees, Officers, Board and Committee members to be elected by the membership shall be elected at the annual meeting of the Church, which shall be held during the month of ..... each year at the time and in the manner prescribed in the Bylaws.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we the undersigned, being the Chairman and Secretary, and a majority of the Board of Trustees of said corporation, hereunto subscribe our names this ..... day of ....., 19 ..... .

Procedures for executing and filing a corporation charter differ in the several states, and any new Church would be wise to request competent legal advice in preparing its own Constitution, or Articles of Incorporation.

The general principles expressed in the Constitution of a Church are applied more specifically in the Bylaws:

Typical Church Bylaws

ARTICLE I - NAME AND DENOMINATION

Sec. 1 Name: The name of this Corporation shall be ..... Church.

Sec. 2 Denomination: This Church shall be identified with the voluntary fellowship of Churches.

ARTICLE II - STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Sec. 1 Purpose: The purpose of this Church is to maintain a center of Christian life and influence in our community and to support the fellowship of the Churches of Christ throughout the world.

ARTICLE III - POLITY

Sec. 1 Polity: The Church, subject to the provisions of its Articles of Incorporation, shall be an autonomous body, having within itself all necessary powers of government and discipline, recognizing the expediency and privilege of seeking the advice of other Churches and associating with them for mutual advantage and service to our fellowmen, but amenable to no ecclesiastical constitution or authority except that of Christ, our Lord.

ARTICLE IV - FAITH *

Sec. 1 Faith: This Church recognizes the right and duty of each member to determine his own beliefs according to the dictates of his conscience. It joins, however, with Churches of like mind in testifying: We believe in the love of God, our father, and in the revelations of that love in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. We confess our faith in Him, and will strive to live together in the fellowship and service of the spirit of God. We earnestly desire to

* First Church, Tacoma, Wash.

know our duty as taught in the Holy Scriptures and to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known to us through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. With loyalty to God and love for all men we will labor for that righteousness which is profitable for the life that now is, and gives assurance for the life everlasting.

ARTICLE V - COVENANT *

Sec. 1 Covenant: Each member admitted into the Communion and fellowship of this Church shall give assent to the following covenant, or to the form of Covenant for Liturgical Use in Sec. 2: We declare our belief in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men. We promise to do the will of God as we now know it or shall hereafter learn it. We recognize in Christ the way, the truth and the life. We confess our purpose of Him, to become like Him and to advance His power in the hearts and lives of men. We recognize the Churches as fellowships of those who love Christ's way and are joined together for mutual encouragement and increased power in working at the common task of building the city of God here and now. We covenant with this Church as our Church; desiring to love its members; being eager to sustain its worship and work; seeking its peace, purity and increase; and promising to do what we can to share its part in transforming the world into the kingdom of God.

Sec. 2 Form of Covenant for Liturgical Use:

Since God is pleased to share His life with men,
To be their Father, and to guide and
to encourage them:
We, therefore, covenant together and with God
To be his children both in spirit and in truth:
We promise by the words and love of Jesus Christ

* First Church, Tacoma, Wash.

To seek God's will, according to the light made known
Or yet to be disclosed;
To grow in judgment, faith and charity,
And, in fellowship, to do and teach our Father's will
Unto the glory of His name. Amen. (AVA)

ARTICLE VI - MEMBERSHIP

Sec. 1 Definition of Membership: The members of this Church shall be persons who have been received upon the recommendation of the Pastor and the Board of Deacons (or Elders), and offer public acceptance of the Church Covenant, (a) on presentation of satifactory letters of transfer from other Churches; or (b) if letters are not available, by reaffirmation of faith; or (c) on confession of faith when external baptism is waived (because of conviction) by the Board of Deacons.

Sec. 2 Reception of Members: Reception of members normally shall take place at regular communion services or at any other worship service.

Sec. 3 Termination: (1) A member in full fellowship may request a letter or recommendation to another Church, and the clerk may send the customary certificate to the place designated and so notify the applicant. (2) The name of a member who has united with another Church without obtaining a letter of recommendation shall be dropped by the Board of Deacons (or Elders). (3) Names of members from whom no word satisfactory to the Deacons has been received for a period of two years may be transferred to an inactive list by action of the Board of Deacons, and shall not be reported as members. Upon their request such inactive members may be restored to the active roll or be given qualified letters of recommendation to some particular Church. (4) Any members wishing

to withdraw from Church membership may do so upon notice in writing to the Board of Deacons signifying their decision to so withdraw.

Sec. 4 Associate Member: Any member of a Christian Church, temporarily living in the community, may on recommendation of the Pastor and vote of the Board of Deacons (or Elders) and by publicly owning the covenant of the Church at any service of reception of members, be admitted into associate membership. Associate members shall have the right of voice but not to vote in Church Meetings. The associate membership of any person may be removed when such a person is no longer a resident of the community.

ARTICLE VII - OFFICERS AND DUTIES

Sec. 1 Church Officers and Duties: (a) A Pastor or Pastors shall be chosen and called by the Church whenever a vacancy occurs, and shall have in charge the spiritual welfare of the congregation. While the term of the Pastor shall be indefinite, the Church may at any time by a majority vote at a meeting called for the purpose, request his resignation with the understanding that it will be presented and become effective within ..... (.....) days. Likewise, the pastor shall give ..... (.....) days notice in case he wishes to leave of his own volition.

(b) A Director or Minister of Christian Education shall be chosen and called by the Church who shall initiate and supervise the Christian Education program of the Church in cooperation with the Pastor, Board of Deacons (or Elders), and the Board of Christian Education.

(c) A Moderator (or President), to be elected at the annual meeting, shall serve for a term of one (1) year. No person shall serve more than three (3) consecutive years as Moderator. He shall preside over all business meetings of the Church and of the

Church Cabinet.*

(d) A Clerk (or Scribe or Secretary) shall be elected for one (1) year and shall keep a record in proper form of all meetings of the Church, and the Church Cabinet. The Clerk shall collaborate with the Board of Deacons in having available an alphabetical list of members with dates of admission, dismission or death, and a list of baptisms and marriages, making written report at the annual meeting of changes in membership to date, and of such other matters as come within the scope of the office.

(e) A Treasurer shall be elected for one (1) year and shall receive and deposit all monies belonging to the Church, the care of which is not otherwise specified. He shall disburse such monies under proper authority of the Board of Trustees. He shall, at the annual meeting of the Church, make a full report of receipts and disbursements of all monies in his charge. He shall submit his books for annual audit prior to each annual meeting. The Treasurer, and all others designated by the Board of Trustees who regularly handle money for the Church, shall be bonded to give assurance of proper protection to the Church, in such amounts as the Board of Trustees may require.

(f) An Historian, to be elected annually by the Church, shall keep a record of the principal events in the life of the Church and its members and shall be the custodian of the historical archives of the Church.

ARTICLE IX - BOARDS AND DUTIES

Sec. 1 Board of Deacons or Elders: The Board of Deacons shall consist of ..... (.....) active members elected by the Church. The term of office for each member shall be for three (3) years and one (1) year must elapse before a member may be re-elected. ..... (.....) new members shall be elected each year and any vacancy that occurs

* Called variously "Council" or "Church Committee"

during the year shall be filled by the Church Cabinet for the period until the next annual meeting when a Deacon shall be elected by the Church for the remaining part, if any, of the unexpired term.

The Board of Deacons shall organize annually by electing its Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and such other officers as it may determine. It may delegate the duties of Treasurer to the Church Treasurer in lieu of electing its own.

The Board of Deacons shall be responsible for the spiritual and devotional life of the Church; be the policy-making advisors to the Pastor(s) in his relation to the Church and its spiritual activities; assist in the celebration of the Lord's Supper; visit the sick, and make calls upon members and prospective members; be responsible for receiving and distributing a Deacon's Fund for emergency cases of need; review the membership rolls annually in consultation with the Church Clerk; and provide for pulpit supply whenever required.
(Note: Some Churches combine the personnel and the duties of the Boards of Deacons and Deaconesses in one Diaconate.)

Sec. 2 Board of Deaconesses: The Board of Deaconesses shall consist of ..... (.....) active members elected by the Church and as many honorary members as the Board may desire. The term of office for each member shall be for three (3) years. One (1) year must elapse before a Deaconess is eligible for re-election. ..... (.....) members shall be elected each year and any vacancy that occurs during the year shall be filled by the Church Cabinet for the period until the next annual meeting when a Deaconess shall be elected by the Church for the remaining part, if any, of the unexpired term.

The Board of Deaconesses shall organize annually by the election of its Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and such other officers as it may

determine.

The Board of Deaconesses shall visit the ill and the shut-in; call upon new members and prospective members; arrange for chancel flowers and distribute them to the ill and shut-in; make physical preparations for the Lord's Supper, and arrange for the taking of Communion by the Pastor(s) to the ill and shut-in; and to give whatever aid they can to the Pastor and Board of Deacons in the spiritual activities of the Church.

Sec. 3 **Permanent Diaconate:** The Permanent Diaconate shall consist of all members of this Church who have ever served as Deacons (or Elders) or Deaconesses.

The Permanent Diaconate is an honorary body without any prescribed duties or responsibilities, but upon the invitation of the Pastor(s) and the Boards of Deacons and Deaconesses, members of the Permanent Diaconate may assist in the work of these Boards.

Sec. 4 **Board of Trustees:** The Board of Trustees shall be ..... (.....) in number, elected by the Church. They shall serve a term of three (3) years, and shall hold office until their successors are elected. A Trustee shall be eligible for election to not more than two (2) successive terms. ..... or the number necessary to make ..... (.....) members shall be elected each year. Any vacancy that occurs during the year shall be filled by the Church Cabinet for the period until the next annual meeting when a Trustee shall be elected by the Church for the remaining part, if any, of the unexpired term.

The Trustees shall meet regularly at least once a month except during the months of July and August. Special meetings may be called as provided for by the Board itself. The Board shall elect its

own officers and committees and determine its own mode of procedure. A quorum shall consist of ..... (.....) members.

The Trustees shall hold and care for all Church property, and see to it that the monies are expended in accordance with the budget as approved by the Church. They shall have no power to buy, sell, or mortgage, or transfer the real property of the Church, nor to execute promissory notes or other evidence of indebtedness in the name of the Church without a special vote of the Church members at a meeting regularly called; provided, however, the above restriction shall not apply in cases of necessary withdrawal of funds from savings accounts for the use of such funds for the specific purposes for which they are intended, and for which the Treasurer has been authorized to execute in the name of the Church such notes or other evidence of indebtedness as may be required by the Savings Bank or Loan Association to cover the amount of the necessary withdrawal until the end of the six months interest period, whenever such action will be to the ultimate net advantage of the Church.

The Board of Trustees shall keep a careful record of its proceedings, and shall render a full report to the Church at the Annual Meeting and at such times as the Church may, by vote, require.

The Board may authorize expenditures for items not included in the approved budget up to $..... without prior approval of the Church.

It shall be the duty of the Board of Trustees, upon the nomination and recommendation of the Boards or Committees within whose province any employment of personnel lies, (eg. the Music Committee, as to professional musicians; the Board of Finance, as to Financial Secretary; the Board of

Trustees as to office and custodial personnel; and as to the Pastor(s) and the Director of Christian Education, (as shall be directed by vote of the Church), to employ all paid personnel, to fix their salaries, terms and conditions of employment, and with the advice and consent of the respective nominating and recommending or directing bodies, to terminate their employment.

The Chairman of the Board shall sign in the name of the Church all notes, mortgages, deeds, etc., after proper approval by the Church in Meeting.

Sec. 5 The Board of Finance: (Note: Some Churches assign the functions listed here under Board of Finance to a sub-committee of their Boards of Trustees.)

The Board of Finance shall consist of ..... (.....) members who shall serve for one (1) year. One (1) member shall be appointed by each of the following Boards and Organizations: Deacons, Deaconesses, Trustees, Christian Education, Christian Stewardship, the Women's Association, Men's Brotherhood and the Senior Fellowship. The Treasurer, ex-officio, and ..... (.....) others elected at large by the Church shall complete the membership. The Board of Finance shall elect its own chairman and shall choose the Director of the annual "Every Family Canvass". A quorum shall consist of ..... (.....) members.

It shall be the duty of the Board of Finance to receive the recommendations of the various Boards and Committees of the Church relative to the annual budget, and to present a joint budget to the Church for approval at least twenty (20) days prior to the Every Family Canvass. This Board shall organize and conduct said canvass, and shall continue to canvass the members of the Church until the funds required by the budget have been

raised. It shall be the function of this Board to devise ways and means of increaing the income of the Church to meet the needs of a growing program.

The Board of Finance shall meet monthly with the exception of July and August, and a copy of the minutes of each meeting shall be presented to the chairman of all other Boards and the Church Clerk.

The Board of Finance shall appoint a Financial Secretary, either volunteer, or whose salary shall be provided for in the annual budget. The Secretary shall have charge of the records and accounts of all monies contributed for the support of the Church. The Secretary shall furnish, when requested, subscription envelopes to all members (and families) of the Church, shall render quarterly statements to each subscriber, shall have charge of the collection of subscriptions, and shall submit a financial statement to the Boards of Finance and Trustees monthly and at such other times as the Boards may request. All funds received by the Financial Secretary shall be tabulated, turned over to the Treasurer, and receipt (of deposit) issued for the same.

The Financial Secretary shall be appointed for one (1) year, but may serve successive terms.

Sec. 6 Board of Christian Stewardship: The Board of Christian Stewardship shall consist of ..... (.....) members elected by the Church. Members shall be elected for three (3) year terms. ..... (.....) or the number necessary to make ..... (.....) members shall be elected each year. One (1) year must elapse before a member is eligible for re-election. The Board shall elect its own chairman, secretary and sub-committees.

It shall be the responsibility of this Board, working

with all organizations in the Church, to make the stewardship of time, money and ability effective. This Board shall promote the outreach of the Church in friendly concern to the unchurched people around it. It shall seek to discover and enlist the talents of all Church members in the service of the Church.

This Board may appoint standing and special sub-committees, as necessary to carry out its responsibilities in such areas as Hospitality, Fellowship, Evangelism, Missions and Social Relations.

Sec. 7 Board of Christian Education: The Board of Christian Education shall consist of ..... (.....) members elected by the Church. The Pastor(s) and Minister (Director) of Christian Education shall be members ex officio. They shall serve a term of three (3) years and one (1) year must elapse before a member is eligible for re-election. ..... (.....) or the number necessary to make ..... (.....) members shall be elected each year.

This Board shall be responsible for the total program of Christian Education in the Church. It shall work with the Minister (Director) of Christian Education in enlisting and training an adequate staff of leaders and teachers. It shall evaluate and initiate from time to time new educational projects in the life of the Church. It shall give special attention to the formation of adult Bible classes, in securing teachers for said classes, and in encouraging attendance. It shall work with the Minister (Director) of Christian Education in providing a well-rounded youth program through the Church School, Church Camp, and Youth Fellowship groups (including older youth).

ARTICLE X - COMMITTEES AND DUTIES

Sec. 1 Nominating Committee: The Nominating

Committee shall consist of the chairman of each of the following Boards: Deacons (or Elders), Deaconesses, Trustees; of the presidents of the Women's Association and the Men's Brotherhood; the Pastor(s) and two members at large elected by the Church, one of whom shall be named convener. The term of all members shall be one (1) year. It shall be the duty of the Nominating Committee to consider and present to the Church, and between Church Meetings to the Church Cabinet nominations for all elective Officers and Board and Committee members.

(Note: Some Churches elect their Nominating Committee as they do other committees, and sometimes with staggered, rotating terms.)

Sec. 2 Auditing Committee: The Church shall elect annually an Auditing Committee consisting of ..... (.....) members of the Church. The duty of the Auditing Committee shall be to check and balance all statements, accounts, and all records of financial transactions made during the year in the name of the Church, and report thereon to the Annual Meeting and at such other times as may seem appropriate to the Auditing Committee, or the Board of Trustees.

(Note: Many Churches engage or elect a professional auditor or auditing firm to make an annual audit of the Church's financial transactions.)

Sec. 3 Endowment and Gift Committee: An Endowment and Gift Committee consisting of ..... (.....) members shall be elected annually by the Church. This committee shall be charged with the development and coordination of plans for the establishment, safe guarding and growth of endowments and memorial gifts to assure the continuation of and enhance the work of the Church.

Sec. 4 Music Committee: A Music Committee of ..... (.....) members shall be elected annually by the Church. It shall select and recommend to the Board of Trustees a Director of Music, organists, soloists and other musicians as shall be employed. The Music Committee, co-operating with the Pastor(s) and the Director of Music, shall plan an appropriate program of Church music; and it shall be the duty of the Director of Music to organize and carry out such programs.

Sec. 5 Ushering Committee: An Ushering Committee of ..... (.....) members shall be elected annually by the Church. They shall appoint a Head Usher and shall work with him to train several teams of ushers.

Sec. 6 Publicity Committee: There shall be a Publicity Committee consisting of ..... (.....) members elected annually by the Church. It shall be charged with drafting the Church's publicity policies, and shall have general direction and oversight of the administration of such policies.

Sec. 7 Library Committee: There shall be a Library Committee consisting of ..... (.....) members elected annually by the Church. This Committee shall be charged with the task of formulating policies for, and the management of, the Church Library.

Sec. 8 Camp Committee: A Church Camp Committee of ..... (.....) members shall be elected annually by the Church. It shall be responsible for the development and operation of the Church Camp, the coordination of its use by the various groups of the Church, and the making of rules governing its use. All legal and financial matters coming before the Camp Committee shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees. All special fund-raising activities by the Camp Committee shall be

subject to the approval of the Board of Finance.

ARTICLE XI - CHURCH CABINET *

(Note: In the example given here, all of the members of all Boards and Committees, Church Officers, and others compose the Church Cabinet, or "Council". This Cabinet meets briefly before, and for a longer period following the monthly simultaneous meetings of the Church Boards and Committees, except, of course, the Board of Finance, which is co-opted from all Boards, and therefore cannot meet while the others are in session.)

(Note: In many Churches the Cabinet consists only of Board and/or Committee Chairmen. Such a procedure is necessary when Boards and Committees do not meet simultaneously.)

Sec. 1 Church Cabinet: (or "Council") The Church Cabinet shall consist of all Officers and all Board and Committee members, and a representative from each of the following Church Organizations: Women's Association, Men's Brotherhood and Senior High Youth Fellowship. Three members at large shall be elected at the Church annual meeting, and the Church Cabinet may elect two members at large.

Sec. 2 Functions of the Cabinet: It shall be the function of the Church Cabinet to consider the entire task of the Church, to advise the Pastor(s) on the general direction of the Church's activities, and to cooperate with him in the formulation of a well-rounded program. It shall act as a clearing-house for the activities of the Officers, Boards, Committees and Organizations of the Church. The Church Cabinet may act for the Church in minor matters, such as sending greetings, or responding to correspondence. The Church Cabinet shall fill vacancies between Church Meetings of all offices,

* See note on page 27.

boards and committees. It may appoint special committees.

The Church Cabinet shall meet monthly except during July and August. Special meetings may be called by the Moderator or any five (5) members of the Cabinet. All Boards and Committees shall make summary report at each meeting, and mail a written report to the Church Office.

..... (.....) members present shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE XII - MEETINGS

Sec. 1 For Worship: (a) Regular Worship Services of this Church shall be held each Sunday except when temporarily suspended by a vote of the Board of Deacons (or Elders) in consultation with the Church Cabinet.
(b) The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be observed at such times as the Pastor(s) and the Board of Deacons may direct.

Sec. 2 For Business: (a) The Annual Meeting shall be held on the ..... day of ..... at ..... o'clock (P.M.) The purpose of the Annual Meeting shall be to hear the yearly reports of Officers, organizations and departments; and to elect Officers, Boards, etc.; transact business, and adopt a budget and make plans for the new year.
(b) The Budget Meeting shall be held early in October for the purpose of presenting a proposed budget for the ensuing year, and shall be held prior to the Every Family Canvass.
(c) The holding of Business Meetings following services of worship is to be discouraged, except for routine matters which will require little time, and call forth little discussion.
(d) Special Church Meetings may be called by the Pastor(s), the Boards of Deacons (or Elders) and

Trustees, or the Church Cabinet, and shall be called by the Clerk on written request of ..... (.....) members of the Church. The nature of the business to be transacted shall be stated in the call.

(e) **Rules and Regulations:**

(1) **Notices:** The Clerk shall give written notice of each Annual and Special business meeting of the Church by delivering or mailing such notice so that each member may receive it ..... (.....) days before the date of such meetings.

(2) **Quorums:** At the Annual Meeting and at each Special business meeting ..... percent (....%) of the active membership shall constitute a quorum.

(3) **Voting:** Election of Officers, Boards, etc., and action on other business may be decided by majority vote. Unless otherwise required, a majority vote is decisive, and each member of legal age (21) shall be entitled to one vote on each issue.

(4) **Reports:** All Officers, Boards, Committees, and Organizations shall make written reports to the Annual Meeting.

(5) **Rules of Order:** All Church Meetings shall be conducted according to ..... Rules of Order.

ARTICLE XIII - AMENDMENTS

Sec. 1 These Bylaws may be altered, amended or repealed at an Annual Meeting, or at any Special Meeting of the Church called for that purpose, by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of members of legal age present and voting. Any proposed changes or amendments to the Bylaws must be submitted to the Church Clerk at least two (2) weeks prior to an Annual or Special Church Meeting. The Clerk shall post the same on the Bulletin Board of the Church Foyer, and shall mail copies of all proposed changes to the membership at least ten (10) days prior to said meetings.

Rev. Arthur A. Rouner, Jr. strikes the proper spiritual

note upon which we should end our discussion of the organizational structure and the nature of a Christian Church Meeting:

"The ..... Church Meeting is the whole people of God in a given local church meeting together and governing themselves under the guidance of Christ. No ordinary business meeting will do. It must be a meeting for worship - beginning with actual worship, at least scripture reading and prayer.

"The important thing is the attitude of the people: the attitude of expectancy; the attitude of openness - of having eyes to see and ears to hear; and the attitude of accepting one another, of believing that the Spirit can speak through any child of God; the attitude of entering into the meeting to do Christ's will and not our own. This last is the hardest. The will of Christ can be spoken through a minority of one. The will of Christ is not to be simply identified with the opinion of the majority. In the ..... Church Meeting no close votes or even two-thirds majorities will do - decisions ought be unanimous. For after all, what good is a great decision unless the whole people of God proclaim it together, and believe in it, and support it with all their hearts?

"This does not mean that 'the Meeting' is without parliamentary rules, or without discussion and differences of opinion; that all are to think and feel exactly the same about specific issues. But it does mean that 'the Meeting' cares for the feeling and convictions of each person there . . .

"The quiet knowledge, the love, and the openness toward God which are exemplified in the traditional Church Meeting, are the characteristics of Congregationalism at its best."

(Adapted from Chapter II, "The Congregational Way of Life", Prentice Hall, 1960.)

CHAPTER FIVE

Formally Constituting A Church

We have been considering one by one the steps which are normally taken in the gathering and ordering of a Church of the Congregational order.

> (1) A number of believers are gathered.
> (2) A covenant is written, or chosen, and "owned" by all, ordinarily in a public service of worship.
> (3) A Constitution and Bylaws are prepared, and submitted to a Church Meeting for adoption by the brotherhood. Any procedures necessary for legal incorporation also must have formal approval.

Thus far we have followed the steps which any Independent Church might take in its organization. We come now to consider a fourth step, which, historically, has marked the difference between Independent Churches and Churches of the historic Congregational Way of Faith and Order.

The reader will recall the fifth and sixth principles of the Hartford Church list:

> "That communion is carefully to be maintained between all the Churches of Christ, according to his order . . . That counsel in cases of difficulty is to be sought and submitted to according to God." (Emphasis added)

Below are excerts from the records on the occasion of the formal constituting of the Second Church in Hartford. These quotations indicate what the early followers of Thomas Hooker meant by "maintaining communion between Churches" and "seeking counsel and submitting to it":

"Having had the consent and countenance of The General Court and the advice of an ecclesiastical council to encourage us in embodying as a church by ourselves, accordingly, upon the day of completing our distinct state, (viz. February 12, 1669) this paper was read before the messengers of the churches, and consented to by ourselves, (Emphasis added) viz:

"The holy providence of the Most High so disposing . . . we whose names are aforementioned . . . dispose ourselves into a capacity of distinct walking in order to a peaceable and edifying enjoyment of all God's holy ordinances; we do declare, that, according to the light we have hitherto received, the aforementioned Congregational Way (for the substance of it) as formerly settled, professed and practiced, under the guidance of the first leaders of this church of Hartford, is the way of Christ, and that such further light (about any particular points of it) shall appear to us from the Scriptures as may lead us with joint or general satisfaction to be otherwise persuaded."
(Note: See their Covenant on Pages 6 and 7)

The records go on to tell also how on the same day the Church chose Mr. John Whiting as their pastor, and upon his acceptance he was "re-ordained" with prayer and the "imposition of hands". The historian, Rev. Edwin Pond Parker notes, significantly for our purposes, that "The messengers of the other churches approved what was done by giving the right hand of fellowship . . ."

The Hartford Church, in seeking the advice and the approval of its sister Churches both as to its formal constitution, and the ordination of its pastor, was following the ancient New England Congregational practice, which has remained until our own day a

distinguishing characteristic of the Congregational Way.

This use of ecclesiastical councils in the giving and receiving of advice stems from the belief that the Churches of Christ, though distinct and equal, are, nonetheless, united to Christ as integral parts of His one visible Catholic Church on earth. In the Cambridge and Boston Platforms our forebears declared themselves duty bound to "maintain all practical communion with all other portions of the Church universal", and that "other acts of communion are specially due (to and) from Churches instituted and governed according to the congregational polity":

> "The more intimate communion existing among these (Congregational) churches is exercised in asking and giving counsel, in giving and receiving admonition, in various acts of helpfulness towards churches needing help from others, and in conferences and consultations for the . . . prosperity of religion or the general advancement of Christ's kingdom."
> (Boston Platform)

It has become axiomatic that in (Congregational) Christian Church affairs "nothing shall be done in a corner in the dark". The Churches in a given vicinity, because they are spiritually and socially inter-related, owe it to each other to avoid, by open and orderly consultation, every appearance of laxity or evil, and to forestall any occasion for wrongdoing or scandal.

For example, the risks involved in the formation of a new Church are great indeed, and to take these risks without first seeking the prayerful counsel and advice of sister Churches is to fly in the face of common sense, hence the need for an orderly procedure of inter-Church communion and mutual helpfulness whenever new Churches are constituted:

"When a competent number of Christian brethren propose to unite in a church covenant, and desire to be recognized as a church in the more intimate communion of the Congregational churches, the ordinary and most orderly method of obtaining such recognition is by an ecclesiastical council, invited (by the new Church) for that purpose by their letters to a convenient number of churches, and especially of churches in the near vicinity. Having given to that Council, when assembled, a satisfactory statement of their faith and order, and of the reasons for their becoming a distinct church, together with sufficient evidence not only of their Christian character, but also of their fitness in respect to gifts and numbers for performing the duties of a church, they receive as a church the right hand of fellowship extended to them by the council in behalf of all the churches." (Boston Platform and the "Heads of Agreement"--1691)

The following outline for organizing a Church and calling an ecclesiastical council for constituting a Church are taken from the "Pastor's Manual" of 1895, published by the Congregational Publishing Society in Boston. Some minor changes have been made to adapt these suggestions to modern circumstances, and to shorten the text:

"THE ORGANIZATION OF A CHURCH"

"Preliminary meetings (of the believers) are held to consider the propriety and possibility of such a step.

"To the meeting to take formal action should be invited all who have expressed their willingness to take part in such a movement. They should elect a chairman and clerk, and

after prayer, should by vote decide to proceed to take steps toward the organization of a church. Committees should be appointed to draft or recommend a form of Covenant, Constitution and Bylaws, to secure the letters of those proposing to come from other churches, and the names of those proposing to make confession of faith in Christ.

"At a later meeting the reports of these committees should be heard, if necessary, amended by vote and approved, to take effect at the constitution of the church.

"From this point these members may proceed to complete their organization, electing officers and publicly entering into covenant with each other, receiving new members on confession of faith, and soon thereafter calling a council to review the proceedings to date, to recognize the church thus organized, and receive it into the fellowship of the (Congregational Churches)."

All such ecclesiastical councils are called by persons or Churches seeking advice and by them only. The following form for a Letter Missive, calling a council for the constituting of a Church is taken from the 1895 Pastor's Manual; (an optional paragraph has been added should a Church wish to empower the council to baptize and receive new members as part of the public service):

TO THE .....CHURCH
in .....

Dear Brethren:

The Great Head of the Church having inclined a number of believers here to think it their duty to become associated as a ..... Church, they respectfully request you to meet, by your Pastor and a delegate, in

Ecclesiastical Council at ..... in this place on the ..... of ..... next, at ..... o'clock ..... M. to consider the expediency of the course proposed by them and advise in reference thereto; and should the formation of such a Church be deemed expedient, to assist in the public services appropriate to its (formation), constitution and recognition as a Church in voluntary fellowship with its sister Churches.

(We also respectfully request that provision be made for the baptism and reception into membership of a number of friends upon the confession of their faith during the public service.)

Wishing you grace, mercy and peace,

We subscribe ourselves,

Your brethren in Christ,

.....
.....
.....
Place and Date

Committee of those proposing to become a new Church

List here all Churches invited. (Name them all.)

The 1895 Manual suggests an agenda for a constituting council and an order of public service where the "result of the Council" may be announced amid prayer and thanksgiving:

> "1. The Council is called to order by one of the older brethren of the vicinage, who reads the letter missive, and calls for the nomination of a moderator, who is then elected either by acclamation or by ballot.
>
> "2. Prayer is offered by the moderator, after which a scribe is elected.
>
> "3. The scribe gathers the names of pastors

and delegates, and prepares the roll of the Council.

"4. If a majority of the churches invited are found to be present, (or the number required in the letter missive are represented), the Council reviews the proceedings of the new Church organization. Statements are made in regard to the need of the new church and the prospect of sustaining it. The articles of faith and the covenant adopted as its basis, (the Constitution and Bylaws), and the letters of dismission from the churches with which any have been formerly connected are examined by the Council as a whole or by committee.

"5. If these proceedings, statements, and documents are satisfactory, upon a motion made (and seconded) it is so voted.

"6. If so directed by the Letter Missive, the Council by committee listens to the religious experience of those persons who desire to unite with the new Church on confession of faith, and those approved on report of this committee share in the further proceedings with those whose letters have been approved.

"7. At this point the records may be read and approved so far as written and the scribe and moderator authorized to complete and sign them at the close of the public service.

If the public service of constitution is to be held at a special hour and separate occasion, a recess is now taken until the time appointed.

"8. The public service should be properly opened by the reading by the scribe of the proceedings of the Council thus far, (and

announcing the result - the advice given and the decision to 'proceed with the Church' in the public service).

"9. If the Council has been asked in the Letter Missive to receive new members on confession of faith, the articles of faith are read and assented to by those approved for membership. Such persons as have not been baptized now receive that ordinance. The covenant is read and assented to (or recited in unison). A brief address with the right hand of fellowship may be given if desired.

"10. - 15. Prayer of Constitution
Hymn
Sermon or Addresses
Communion (if desired)
Hymn
Benediction

"16. Dissolution of the Council
(Sine die.)"

(Note: A full copy of the records signed by the moderator and the scribe should be placed in the hands of the Church Clerk, to be filed and a copy spread upon the records of the Church.)

(Copies for safekeeping and historical record should be sent to the scribe of the local Association of Churches, and the denominational offices and library.)

CHAPTER SIX

Calling and Installing A Pastor and Teacher

Three short statements in the Boston Platform define the spiritual conditions and the polity considerations which are involved when a Church of the Congregational order calls a learned minister to be its Pastor and Teacher.

> "Though no man may assume an office in the church but he is called of God, the call of (Pastors) and deacons is not immediately from Christ, but mediately, through the church in which they are to serve.
>
> "Those who are to bear office in the church should first be proved, and should be known and well reported of as having not only the needful gifts, but also those graces of character which the Scriptures require as qualifications . . .
>
> "A church being free, none can obtain any office in or over it, but by its own free election; yet to its officers freely chosen the church will yield such respect and helpfulness as are required by the nature of the work they are to perform."

Dr. Harry R. Butman, after a distinguished career in the Congregational Christian ministry for some thirty-five years, writes with deep appreciation of what it means to be a Pastor and Teacher in a congregationally ordered Church:

> "No Christian clergyman of any denomination enjoys a fuller measure of 'the glorious liberty of the children of God' than does the

(minister in the church of our order). He is one of a fellowship which boldly affirms the freedom of the Christian man. At the opening of his ministry, as he takes the solemn vows of ordination, a free local Church, complete in spiritual authority, ratifies in the eyes of men the inner call God has spoken to his soul in lonely and holy places. He is not a minister of the Gospel by virtue of the authority of a great national church, betokened by a name impersonally signed in a distant office. He is a minister because God called him to preach, and his warrant to proclaim the Word is the authority born of a company of Christians gathered in accordance with Christ's promise. Not the fingers of a bishop or a spiritual father, but the hands of his brethren in Christ, prayerfully laid on his head, welcome him to an apostolic succession older than bishops. In his pastorate he has a sovereign freedom. His throne is the hearts of his free people who love him, honor him, and grant him large liberty to fulfill his dual office of pastor and teacher." (Pamphlet -- "The Freedom of the Preacher" -- 1959)

There is a detailed discussion of the ministry of the Pastor and Teacher beginning on page 86 - Appendix A. This article might well be used as a basis of discussion by a Pastoral Committee as it begins its search for candidates for the pastorate of a Church. A thoughtful review of what a Pastor is, and what he will be expected to be and do <u>for</u> you and <u>with</u> you, might be profitable.

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches maintains a National Office of Pastoral Supply in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Whenever Churches apply to this office for assistance in finding candidates for their pastorates, the following suggestions are made to Church committees seeking a Pastor and Teacher:

"1. When a Church, following the provisions of its own Bylaws, selects a Pastoral Committee, the Committee should meet promptly to select a Chairman and Secretary.

"2. The Committee ought then to discuss the task before them, and proceed to agree upon a set of ground rules: eg.

-- having regular meetings.
-- keeping the Committee's deliberations strictly confidential within its own membership.
-- getting authorization from the Trustees for specific limits within which the Committee may negotiate with prospective candidates as to salary, annuity, car allowances, living accommodations and business matters.
-- taking whatever steps are necessary to gather pertinent information about the Church for candidates and the Office of Pastoral Relations. The Milwaukee office will provide a form for this purpose upon request."

Dr. Harry W. Johnson, out of his long experience as a Conference Superintendent and the first Executive Secretary of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, listed the following as being questions most likely to be asked by a prospective candidate for the pastorate of a Church (not necessarily in this order):

"1. What salary does your church offer?
2. What help is given on annuities?
3. What help on car expense?
4. What kind of church building do you have?
(A picture of your church always helps.)

5. What is your membership?
   Church School Enrollment? Youth Group?
6. What kind of a parsonage?
   How livable is it? How many bedrooms?
7. How large is your town?
8. How many other churches?
   Which has the largest membership?
9. Is your community growing?
10. Theological and Biblical position of
    your church?"

Rev. F. Willard Kime, a former Associate Secretary of the National Association, in his wisdom, was very frank to warn Pastoral Committees about their ground rule on how they will hear and act upon candidates:

> "The Pastoral Committee should frankly accept the responsibility of making a clean-cut recommendation of one single candidate, when it makes its report to the Church. No candidate should be invited to preach in the Church pulpit who has not already become the one single candidate recommended by the Pastoral Committee, and who is presented as its candidate to be heard and voted upon by the Church. To have two or more candidates invited to preach on successive Sundays will end in confusion or worse. A Committee should itself be unanimous in making such a recommendation. If the Committee cannot agree about a particular candidate, it is usually better to drop his name altogether, and keep working until the Committee can make a unanimous recommendation."

This particular Pastoral Relations Office's list of suggestions to Pastoral Committees repeats the above advice, and then concludes with other important considerations:

> "--decide what method you will follow with

respect to hearing candidates. In general our Churches find it wise not to present a prospective minister to the Church until the Pastoral Committee has decided that he is the man they agree on recommending to the congregation. This means that generally a prospective candidate will normally not be seen by the Church as a whole until the Pastoral Committee has made up its mind favorably with respect to him.

"It cannot be too strongly stated that a Pastoral Committee is well advised to check a prospective minister's record very carefully before negotiating seriously with him. (Such an investigation should not be left to others. A man's relation to his present employer, his reputation in his neighborhood and local Associations, and his credit standing can and ought to be checked out directly by the Pastoral Committee.)

"When a committee becomes seriously interested in a candidate, if he is located nearby, normally the whole Committee will visit his Church, unobtrusively, on a Sunday. When the candidate is far removed, one or two members will normally visit his Church and then report their findings.

"When the Committee as a whole is interested it may deem it wise to arrange to bring the far-off candidate to another sister Church nearby that the whole Committee may hear and talk with him.

"When the Committee has reached a decision it will normally then notify the Church that it is ready to report to the Church as a whole. The candidate is invited to conduct a service, and to meet the congregation. Then a Church

Meeting will be called in accord with the provisions of the Bylaws to accept or reject the Committee's recommendation."

Following is a typical call extended by a Church to a minister:

Place, date.

Dear Mr. (or Reverend Sir):

The ..... Church of ..... is pleased to extend you a call to become our pastor and teacher in accordance with the recommendation of the Pastoral Committee, and a unanimous vote of the Church Meeting of ..... .

This will confirm your understanding with the Board of Trustees: Your salary, (housing allowance, if any) and annuity will be ..... yearly. The parsonage is rent free. The Church will provide ..... for your moving expenses, and an annual car allowance of ..... . The Church will also pay your regular telephone bill and the parsonage utility expenses. A vacation period of ..... will be arranged at a time mutually satisfactory to you and the Church.

We prayerfully hope that you will accept this call, and we know that under your leadership there will be the beginning of an era of spiritual enrichment in the life of the ..... Church.

Faithfully yours,
Signed,
Church Clerk.

What a happy time it is for the members of a church

when they are preparing to welcome a new Pastor and his family into the parsonage, and into the community. Then, after a few months have passed, the preparations for the new minister's formal Installation will have been completed.

There is a great difference between a "Public Reception" and the formal Installation of a Pastor and Teacher. The following quotation from the Boston Platform indicates the seriousness with which our Congregational fathers looked upon the ordination or installation of the officers of the Church:

> "Officers chosen by the church are also to be ordained by it with prayer and, customarily, with laying on of hands. The ordination of an officer is his solemn introduction into the place to which he has been chosen, and is like the inauguration of a magistrate whose power in the commonwealth comes not from his inauguration, but from his election. The ordination (or installation) of a pastor and teacher is his induction into the ministry of the word in a given place)."

In the strict tradition of our polity, there is only one difference between the ordination and the installation of a Pastor and Teacher, -- namely, installation, the laying on of hands is omitted. Otherwise, the same care and precision are taken in each instance:

> "The induction of a pastor and teacher into his office, in any church, or, on the other hand, the dismission of such an officer from his place, concerns the communion of the churches. Therefore, an ecclesiastical council is convened for the ordination or public recognition (installation) of a pastor, and, in like manner, for his dismission at his own request. A due respect to the communion of the churches requires that no man assuming

to be pastor of a church shall be acknowledged as such by other churches, unless, at or after his entrance on the duties of the office, he has been publicly recognized by receiving the right hand of fellowship from neighboring churches through a council convened for that purpose. The welfare of the churches, in the intimate communion with each other, requires this safeguard . . ."

-- Boston Platform

Quotations might be given showing that our forebears looked not only upon the precautionary aspects of orderly ordination and installation, but also upon their edifying effects upon the local Church and the Churches of the vicinage. Henry Martyn Dexter wrote in 1880, "All of the processes of . . . (Congregationalism) tend in the case . . . to stimulate the mind, to enlarge the views, to enrich the experience, to deepen the sense of responsibility, and to broaden the whole humanity." The fellowship, the giving of the paper on the faith and Christian experience of the ordinand (or installee), the public questioning, and the inspiring services and addresses, all these and more, turn an ordination or installation council into an unforgettable spiritual feast for all participants and their Churches.

Below is a Letter Missive typical of those used in the calling of either an ordination or installation council:

Place and Date

TO THE ..... CHURCH IN ..... , GREETING.

Dear Brethren:

The Great Head of the Church has kindly united us, and the Congregation statedly worshiping with us, in the choice of ..... to be our Pastor and Teacher, and he has

accepted our call to that office.

We, therefore, affectionately request your attendance by your reverend Pastor and a delegate, (or two delegates if the Pastor is unable to attend, or if there is presently no Pastor), at our house of worship, on the ..... day of ..... next, at ..... o'clock in the afternoon, to examine the candidate, review our proceedings, and advise us in reference to the same; and if judged expedient, to assist in the ordination (or installation) service at ..... o'clock.

Invitations to participate in the evening service have been sent to ..... (list all). We respectfully request that these above named be seated as honorary members of this Ecclesiastical Council.

The following Churches have been invited to send messengers: (List them all.)

Wishing you grace, mercy and peace
We are fraternally yours,
Signed, Church Clerk.
Committee:

Following is a typical order of procedure of an Ecclesiastical Council for the ordination or installation of a Pastor and Teacher; (obviously, the Moderator is at liberty with the consent of the Council to follow a procedure agreeable to both):

The Call to Order
The Reading of the Letter Missive
(by one of the older brethren)
Election of a temporary Moderator
Election of a temporary Scribe
Calling of the Roll by temporary Scribe
and declaration of a quorum

Election of a permanent Moderator
Election of a permanent Scribe
The Constituting Prayer
Presentation of Records
by Church Clerk:
Records concerning the Call
Terms of the Call
The Letter of Acceptance
Action of Church calling Council
Motion: that these be deemed satisfactory
By the ordinand (or installee)
Records concerning his education
Records of his ministerial status
Records of his Church membership
(Ministers are normally members of the Church they serve.)
Motion: that these be deemed satisfactory
Presentation by the Minister of his Faith and Christian Experience
Roll Call for public questioning of the candidate
Motion: that the Council sit by itself, (which means that the candidate, all members of the inviting Church, and all guests shall retire, leaving the members of the Council in "executive session").
Motion: that the Council finds the records and procedures satisfactory, and that the Council shall proceed with the Church in the Public Service of Ordination or Installation.
Discussion
Roll Call with each delegate voting
Appointment of a Committee to inform the candidate, to notify the guests and others that the Executive Session is concluded, and to present the candidate to receive from the Moderator the action of the Council. (While the Council is awaiting the candidate, the Scribe may read the minutes as so far prepared.)

Presentation by the Minister of the proposed program for the Public Service (and any other announcements).

Motion: that the Program be deemed satisfactory, and that the Moderator and Scribe be authorized to complete the Minutes, and to forward copies to the Church, the local Association of Churches, the denominational Libraries, and its state or national offices.

Motion: that the Council now recess and be dissolved, sine die with the Benediction at the end of the Public Service.

(Note: Copies of actual minutes of councils are available from the various denominational offices and libraries.)

Following is a typical order for the Public Service held in connection with an ordination or installation Council:

Processional Hymn
Statement by the Moderator or Scribe of the result of the Ecclesiastical Council
Call to Worship
Invocation
Responsive Reading
Anthem
Scripture Reading
Ordination or Installation Sermon
Anthem
Address to the People
Hymn
Address to the Minister
The Service of the Laying on of Hands with the Ordination Prayer, in the case of ordination, otherwise
The Prayer of Installation
The Right Hand of Fellowship
Parting Hymn
The Benediction, by the new Minister

It has become the custom for host Churches to provide a meal, when expedient, for the members of the Council, honored guests, and the family and friends of the Minister. This occasion is a valuable opportunity for fellowship, and makes it possible for the minister to introduce his parents and other special guests.

Some Churches and Ministers in our time have chosen to celebrate a minister's call and "settlement" with a "Service of Recognition". Such services are not preceded by an examination of the candidate or the records, and those who attend from sister Churches come as guests, and not delegates. Similar services are held and are appropriate for the reception of "licensed" Ministers.

The spiritual high-point of a service of ordination or installation is the prayer during which, in the case of ordination, hands of the brethren, both laymen and ministers, are placed upon the head of the person being set apart as an ordained minister, and to the office of Pastor and Teacher. The following prayer was offered by a Deacon in the ordination of his Pastor:

> "Our Father, we thank thee for the gift of this thy servant whom thou hast sent to be our Pastor and our Teacher. We praise thee for the ties that bind our hearts in Christian love, and for the happy prospects in thy Kingdom's work before us as a congregation gathered in Christ's name.
>
> "We (lay our hands upon they servant's head, and) do declare our kindest thoughts and fondest hopes for his success. We pray that all the blessings of thy loving care may guard and guide his path through all his life.
>
> "Send down thy Holy Spirit as we set apart this brother member of our Church, and by thy grace, ordain him to the ministry of Christ.*

"Sustain our holy purposes for him and for thy world, and for ourselves throughout the years to come, that we may taste the peace which passeth understanding, and know the joys of human love that never die.

"We pray in Jesus' name, Amen."

* --or if he has been ordained and is being installed: "install him to his office in this Church"

CHAPTER SEVEN

Implementing Bylaws With Written Policies

We have applied, thus far, all but one principle of those set forth by the founders of Hartford's Second Church -- the fourth, which is an ideal text for the subject of this chapter:

> "That the power of guidance or leading belongs only to the Eldership, and the power of judgment, consent, or privilege, belongs to the fraternity or brethren in full communion." (Emphasis added)

The second half of this text has by now been well impressed upon the mind of the reader -- that the final authority in a Church of the Congregational order is the membership gathered, under Christ, in duly called Church Meeting! The ultimate power of judgment, consent, or privilege, begins and ends with the Church-in-Meeting; but this same power is divided and delegated between meetings through the standing rules in the Bylaws, and by specific actions taken at regular or special Church meetings. The Eldership, or, as we would say, the Officers, Boards and Committees of the Church are given specific instructions to act for the Church, and to use with discretion the "power of guidance or leading" thus bestowed; subject, always, to the Church-in-Meeting.

The Elders, the elected officers, in that historic old Church were expected to lead. They were not apt to be caught in the undignified position of fearfully keeping one ear to the ground and a finger to the wind, as if even minor details of the administration of a Church needed to become the subject of perpetual referendum to all of the members of the Church. Such matters are graciously left to the discretion of the particular leaders, boards or committees to whom the Church has entrusted specific

responsibilities with power, to use the parliamentary term. There is truth in the old proverb -- what's everybody's business is nobody's business -- and unless a Church develops strong leadership, capable of acting upon clearly defined policies, openly arrived at, it will become, not a democracy, but a state of anarchy presided over by whoever can wield the most influence, and this not necessarily "under Christ".

Church officers in our time, like their counterparts in industry and politics, run the risk of being misled by the false idea that a leader ought to find out what his people (as individuals) want, and then help them to get what they want. This, of course, is cynical nonsense.

Even Church people are apt to want a variety of things, some good and others not so good. A very few simply want what they want when they want it, or else they won't cooperate. No leaders can expect to satisfy such inclinations, nor long keep in the good graces of those who demand their own way.

Others, some of whom are the finest people in the world, want the impossible. No leader dare promise to deliver what cannot be; nor can any leader fulfill the vain hope of those who insist that things shall remain always just the way they are.

Dedicated leaders, then, in every walk of life, and especially in Churches where the principle of government by the consent of the governed is coupled with a morally binding covenant to "seek and do and teach the will of God", must act upon the belief that the people who elected them will work together and with their leaders to attain goals which are desirable, possible, and worthy of wholehearted support by the majority in-Meeting, and the minority acting as "the loyal opposition".

Churches of the Congregational Way of Faith and Order need officers who will try sincerely to lead each Church toward ideas and actions which, after prayerful

consideration, open discussion, and by common consent, seem to be the best for all concerned, and to the Glory of God.

Nothing in a Church does more to create a climate of wistful mutuality and progressive cooperation than a written Policy Book, in which are spelled out in detail what each Officer, Organization, Board and Committee undertakes each year to implement the instructions given, and the authority granted in the Church Bylaws.

Below is an illustration of what the writing of a Policy Book entails:

BOARD OF DEACONS (OR ELDERS) POLICY SHEET

A - OBJECTIVES: (from the Bylaws)

"The Board of Deacons shall be responsible for the spiritual and devotional life of the Church; be the policy-making advisors to the Pastor(s) in this relation to the Church and its spiritual activities; assist in the celebration of the Lord's Supper; visit the sick; plan for regular visitations in the homes of members; be responsible for receiving and distributing a Deacons Fund for emergency cases of need; review the membership rolls annually in consultation with the Church Clerk; and provide the pulpit supply whenever required."

B - ORGANIZATION:

1. **Officers:** Chairman, Vice-chairman, Secretary, and Finance Board representative to be elected at their first regular meeting following the Church Annual Meeting.
2. **Sub-Committees:**
   (a) Family Calls and Visitation of the sick and shut-in.
   (b) Deacons Fund

(c) Membership:
Visitation of New and Prospective Members
Revision of the Rolls
Training for Membership.
(d) Services and Ordinances

C - GENERAL POLICIES:

1. Sunday Morning Worship at ..... and ..... o'clock; Summer services from ..... to ..... at ..... o'clock.
2. Worship Services: The Pastor(s) shall provide a varied, well-balanced program of worship and preaching experience for the congregation. Major departures from the regular order of service shall not be made without consultation with the Board of Deacons (or Elders).
3. The Lord's Supper: Communion services will be held on the ..... Sundays of ..... , ... , ... ; at the annual Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service (Extinguishing of the Lights); and on one Sunday in ..... .
4. Funeral Services: The pastor shall conduct funeral services in which he shall use appropriate selections of Scripture and poetry, and a minimum of eulogistic materials, and in such good taste as will reflect a high standard of spirituality and culture.
5. Owning of the Covenant: The act of "owning the Covenant" shall be included in Communion services, services of Reception of Members, and on other such occasions of importance to the life of the Church.
6. Reception of Members: Services of Reception of Members shall ordinarily be held on Communion Sundays, and on Palm Sunday. A Deacon (or Elder) shall assist, and join in extending the right hand of

fellowship to new members.

7. **Baptisms** shall be held at the convenience of our constituents, and, if possible, during services of Morning Worship. A Deacon shall assist at the font.
8. **Deacons shall take turns as greeters** at all services, unless, in their discretion, others are appointed.
9. **The Pulpit** shall be spiritually and academically free to the Pastor; but when he shall preach, and who shall preach when he is not preaching, shall remain the prerogative of the Board of Deacons.
10. **Pastor's absence**: Whenever the duties of the Pastor, or his personal needs, require him to be absent from the community for more than a day or two, it will be understood that he will leave word with the Clerk, or the Chairman of the Board of Deacons as to where he can be reached, or if he cannot be reached, in case of emergency need of his services.
11. **Special assistance to the Pastor**: The Pastor may call upon members of the Board of Deacons (or Elders) to assist in any pastoral problem requiring him to take undue risks, or where lay assistance would be advantageous.
12. **The Deacons Fund**: shall be expended at the discretion of the Pastor, with the understanding that he will consult with one member of the sub-committee charged with the Fund, and so designated by them.
13. **The Church Mailing-list**: The Church mailing-list shall not be made available to any except Church officers and Church Organization officers, and shall be used for local Church purposes only.
14. **Fellowship Activities**: The Board of Deacons offers its services to assist the Fellowship Sub-committee of the Board of

Stewardship in setting up and promoting the Annual Men's Retreat at the Church Camp and the Fall Colony Kick-off Dinner.

15. New Members shall be given the greetings of the Deacons (or Elders) and a period of orientation on the Sunday previous to their formal Reception; and at the first subsequent Coffee Hour they shall be guests of honor, and shall be introduced to the congregation by members of the Board.
16. Requests for Letters of transfer of membership should come from the person wishing to transfer, and ordinarily such transfer shall not be granted except on such personal request in writing.
17. Revision of Policy Sheet: It shall be our purpose to revise or up-date the Board of Deacons' Policy Sheet at the June meeting of the Board, so that changes may be included in the next edition of the Church Policy Book (usually published for Fall use).

In summary, the elected leaders in a Church of the Congregational order are expected to lead; and the above illustration is an indication of how written policies provide the whole Church with an understanding of how its officers go about implementing the assignments entrusted to their care.

We would be remiss, however, if we did not mention a second duty of the elected officers of a democratically organized Church, -- and that is the duty to teach new leaders how to lead. Said John R. Mott, "Blessed are they who do the work, but more blessed are those who multiply the doers." A written Policy Book is one of the most effective tools for teaching young and inexperienced Church members what the powers of guiding and leading require of them.

The right to lead, then, is a privilege granted by a

leading require of them.

The right to lead, then, is a privilege granted by a Church to its members. It is a trust to be exercised with initiative and with due respect for the Church-in-Meeting from which the power of guiding and leading proceeds and to which it must be returned.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Building A Beloved Community of Helpfulness and Service

Earlier we quoted in context the following excerpt from the Boston Platform's delineation of the benefits of Church membership:

> "These benefits are, first, as participation in the promise of Christ's special presence with his Church; second, the increased activity and enjoyment in the Christian life by combining the affections and endeavors of believers, and by inciting each other to love and good works; third, watchful and fraternal help to keep each other in the way of God's commandments, and to recover by due admonition and censure any that go astray; and fourth, aid in the Christian nurture and training of their children, that their households may be holy, and their posterity be not cut off from the blessings of the covenant."

We see, in these lines, what is meant when a Christian Church is spoken of as "a family of families, a beloved community of memory and hope of mutual helpfulness, and service to others". Our purpose in this chapter will be simply to suggest how some modern Churches are working to realize this ideal in their own Church life and fellowship.

Blessed indeed is the country Church set with its steeple right in the heart of a small village where the sense of community is predetermined, as we say, in the nature of the situation. Most Churches, in our day, especially those in larger towns and cities, are obliged to devise ways to create meaningful community within their memberships, and among their constituencies. We have

arranged the following paragraphs around a few provocative questions. The comments given merely scratch the surface of one of the most challenging aspects of modern Church life:

1. **What could your Church be doing to better keep alive its ties of holy remembrance?** Families are temporary, the beloved communities where they sanctify their affections, and fund their memories are eternal:

> *"O blest communion, fellowship divine,*
> *We feebly struggle, they in glory shine,*
> *Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine."*

This question is particulary significant for study by the Deacons (or Elders), Deaconesses and the Endowment and Gift Committee.

2. **At what points could your Church's program of christian nurture for adults as well as children and young people be strengthened?** The Deacons and the Board of Christian Education should meet jointly for at least an annual conference on this theme, and the next.

3. **How can a larger number of your Church members be inspired to enlist in the teaching and spiritual ministries of the Church?**

4. **Is your hospitality program sufficiently varied to reach the maximum number of your people, so they may know and appreciate one another as persons?** One Church in our fellowship has instituted a "Bouillon Hour" after Sunday Morning Worship, because it found that a cup of bouillon seems to please more people than coffee before dinner. Such creative innovations are the responsibility of a number of Boards and Committees and of all Church Organizations.

5. **Is your Church mailing program being used to the best advantage in creating a feeling of welcome to newcomers, and a feeling of belonging among the families**

of the parish? Sound policies on matters of personal mention often prevent the slighting of sensitive people, and minimize the tendency toward placating special persons or special interests within the Church.

6. **Are there sufficient opportunities for the families in the Church to enjoy church activities as families?** All program planning bodies need to be alert to avoid segregating young and old, men and women, boys and girls, married and unmarried, to the point where the character building resources of the whole "Body of Christ" are not allowed to do their perfect work.

7. **Could your Church develop more adequate methods for helping members and friends who live in the same neighborhoods to become better neighbors, and better witnesses to the unchurched around them?** This is only one of the creative functions of Church colony programs which are becoming quite general in Churches with a wide-spread membership.

8. **What can your Church do to help its people become happily involved in the support of the Church?** Boards and Committees charged with the financial program have a spiritual opportunity which, if properly emphasized, will take the drudgery out of their more mundane enterprises.

9. **What can your Church do to better help its constituents to become happily identified with its services rendered to others?** Dr. John Claxton, Associate Secretary of the National Association with responsibility for Pastoral Relations and Dean of Foundation for Theological Studies, was asked by a Church to suggest a Benevolence Policy Statement for a local Church. It is included here because of its general wisdom:

> "A. Does the benevolence project under consideration clearly help to further the Church's primary mission which is the proclamation of the Gospel? -- In commission-

ing His disciples the Master said, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel.' This is still the Church's main task and everything it does should bear a definite relation to this objective.

"B. In a time when many worthy philanthropic causes are clamoring for our support, it ought to be remembered that certain causes have a prior claim on our support as a Church. These are the causes that are not likely to be supported by any other group or agency except the Churches. So while a Christian will normally contribute to the Community Chest, for example, as a citizen, it hardly seems logical that his Church should be expected to make a contribution to it also. It follows, therefore, that certain causes such as the support of institutions that exist to train Christian leaders, the undergirding of weak Churches, the maintaining of missions and missionaries, are particularly the responsibility of the Churches.

"C. Since, as Christians, we recognize the importance of having fellowship with other Christians of like mind and purpose, and of supporting those institutions that contribute to the strengthening of the particular Church fellowship to which we belong, it follows that one of our major benevolence concerns should be the undergirding and strengthening of our own denominational work . . ."

10. **Does your Church consciously present to your young people the opportunity of choosing to enter the christian ministry or other church vocations?** Dr. Claxton likes to phrase it this way: "If you use a minister, then see to it that you produce one." The Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies is prepared to offer its advice and financial assistance to worthy applicants

when financial assistance is needed. Consult your denominational offices for sources of help available for future ministers.

11. **Is your Church alive to the social problems in which its people are involved, and does it have a policy whereby it may do its duty to the commonwelath without violating the individual consciences of its members or weakening the cherished separation of Church and State?** This final question goes to the heart of one of the most controversial questions of our modern world, and deals with the Churches' relations to the society in which they live. Our Colonial forebears worked out these matters in both the Cambridge and Boston Platforms, and we quote their counsel here as a guide to those who are called upon to lead a modern Church in fulfilling its social responsibility:

> "If the law of the land require of any man, under whatever penalties, that which the law of God forbids him to do, or if it forbid him to do what the law of God requires, it is better to obey God rather than men; and the church is to require of all its members obedience to the higher law of God. Yet, inasmuch as the Scriptures require of every Christian soul subjection to existing powers in the civil state, whether Christian or anti-Christian, the duty of loyalty to the government, of conscientious obedience to every law which does not positively require what God forbids, or forbid what God requires, and of patient submission to persecution or other injustices when there is no lawful redress, is a duty of religion which the discipline of the church must honor and maintain.
>
> "With matters exclusively political the church as such has no concern; for Christ's kingdom is not of this world. But with matters of

morality and religion, the church, in the administration of its discipline, and in the testimony which it is to give for God, has much to do. Especially in a free commonwealth, where the government proceeds continually from the people, the church is bound to testify, in its discipline and in its teaching, against wicked laws and institutions, not fearing to assert and apply the law of God as revealed in the Scriptures, whatever may be the contradiction of sinners, and whatever the conflict between that supreme law of Christ's kingdom and the laws ordained of men, or the institutions and usages of society. Thus the moral sense of communities and nations must be made to advance with the progress of the church, till Christ shall be honored in all lands as King of kings and Lord of lords, the blessed and only potentate." -- The Boston Platform.

Speaking on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the Boston Council, Dr. Howard Conn, Pastor of the historic Plymouth Church in Minneapolis, paid tribute to the genius of those who framed the above statement:

"I have great admiration for the way in which those delegates expressed their moral convictions and their social concerns, and yet had the clarity to restrain from partisanship as to the political alternatives toward the achievement of those goals . . . Let us remember that (congregational) polity is able to . . . (speak) clearly the moral judgments of God, yet doing so in a way that still respects the freedom of individual choice." -- from the 1965 Lecture at Pomona, California, "The Enduring Significance of our Congretational Heritage."

CHAPTER NINE

Offering and Receiving the Hand of Fellowship

The Congregational Way of Faith and Order, we have seen again and again consists of two main principles -- the autonomy, or self-completeness of the local Church, and the communion, or voluntary fellowship of the Churches.

We turn now to the discussion of the second principle, but before we do, we will let Dr. Leonard Bacon restate our understanding of autonomy:

> "(For us Congregationalists) there is no church other than the (local) church organized for government; that no (outside) censure, or admonition, or excommunication, no ordination of a minister, no inauguration or deposition of church officers, can be had by any other authority than that of the particular or local church. That is the first principle, out of which our whole moral system proceeds." -- from the Boston Council Proceedings.

Now we will let Dr. Bacon introduce our consideration of the meaning of the communion of the Churches, quoting from the same speech:

> "The (second) great principle (of Congregationalism) is the principle of the communion of the churches one with another; and the development of that principle, added to the development of the first, makes Congregationalism . . . It is the definiteness with which we hold (to the fellowship of the churches) which makes us one body, and which gives us power to recognize one another, and to act

> together as a common body in mutual confidence . . . Do we believe in the importance of the communion of the churches one with another, as that idea has been developed and applied in the experience of the two hundred and seventeen years that have elapsed since the Cambridge Platform (1648) . . . ? Do we believe in it? I do for one; and . . . I will have nothing to do with any denomination of Congregationalists in which that principle of the communion of churches one with another, and their responsibility to give account of their proceedings one to another, in all matters of common interest, is not recognized and acknowledged . . ."

These learned and impassioned remarks, we are told by the Scribe, were greeted by hearty applause, showing that the more than five hundred delegates from every section of the nation realized the significance of Dr. Bacon's testimony. Dr. Harry R. Butman has been the leading spokesman for the principle of fellowship in our time:

> "For nearly four hundred years Congregationalists have made a serious and successful application of the principle of the fellowship of the Churches. Congregational (Christian) Churches have walked together out of mutual desire, not because a book of discipline or official mandate has made them do so. Their association is voluntary, devised for mutual counsel, help, and inspiration. In fellowship the ultimate power lies with Christ who is the head of each local Church, and whose informing Spirit gives a common mind to the several Churches. The Congregational documents which deal with the relationships of the Churches have consistently maintained that power under God resides in the local Church, and that <u>love</u>, not law, is the link

> that binds (Congregational Christian) Churches together. The fellowship of the Churches is a free relation of affection." -- from THE CONGREGATIONALIST.

Where other forms of Church order rely on Bishops, Presbyteries, Canon Laws and mystical apostolic successions to create catholicity and maintain ecclesiastical order, congregational Christians have deliberately chosen to let "association in Christ" be both the guiding principle of our common life and the only foundation of our cooperative activity.

Whatever organizational techniques we may have come to use are always subject to voluntary association, are justifiable only insofar as they help to create fellowship, and maintain agencies of service. Associations, Conferences, and National Agencies (including their standing commissions, paid secretaries, etc.) are tools, as it were, which the Churches find useful in expediting the demands of the "duty of fellowship". As in local Churches, so also in the bodies created by the Churches through their delegates assembled: "Where two or three are gathered in Christ's name, there he is in their midst." The presence of the Spirit of the Lord in all congregational Christian bodies should be their joy, and their assurance that things shall be done "decently and in order". But the initiative for the Churches associating together and working together to the glory of God and the service of men must arise in the Churches as a sacred duty.

The Boston Council adopted what it called an "Epitome of Church Government and Fellowship". We reproduce here parts of the last two sections on "The Communion of the Churches" and "Of the Ministry". We have underlined the phrase hand of fellowship, whenever it appears, because the act of giving and receiving the hand of fellowship is the symbol for the ties of affection and heartfelt sense of duty which account for the historic unity and the creative enterprises of service and

missions of the Churches of Christ.

III - THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCHES

"I -- Although churches are distinct and equal yet they ought to preserve fellowship one with another, being all united to Christ their head.

"II -- When a company of believers propose to unite in a distinct church, it is requisite that they ask the advice and help of neighboring churches; particularly that those churches, being satisfied with their faith and order, may extend to them the hand of fellowship.

"III -- Communion is to be exercised by recognizing each other's rights, by due regard to each other's welfare, and by consultation before acts of common concern.

"IV -- Councils are the ordinary and orderly way of consultation among churches, and are proper in all cases where the communion of the churches is involved.

1 -- In councils, the churches meet for consultation, usually by messengers (pastors and delegates) chosen for the special occasion.

2 -- Councils are properly called of churches in the near vicinity, except when matters which excite strong local sympathies render the advice of distant councils necessary.

3 -- Councils are called only by a church, (or an unauthorized party in case of disagreement, when the church unreasonably refuses to join); that is, by a church desiring light or help; by a church and pastor (or other member or members) in case of differences, when it is styled a mutual

council; or by either of these parties when the other unreasonably refuses to unite, when it is styled an ex parte council; which ex parte council, when properly convened, has the same standing as if it had been mutual.

4 -- Councils consist solely of the churches invited by the letter-missive, to which no member can be added and from which none can be removed.

5 -- Councils are convened when a church desires recognition; when a church asks for advice or help; when differences are to be composed; when men whose call of God is recognized by the church are to be separated to the ministry; when pastors are to be inducted into the office or removed; when a brother claims to be aggrieved by church censure; and when matters of common moment to the churches are to be considered.

6 -- The desision of a council is only advisory. Yet, when orderly given, it is to be received as the voice of the churches, and an ordinance of God appointed in his word, with reverence and submission, unless inconsistent with the word of God. But councils cannot overrule acts of churches, so far as they are within the church, nor exercise government over them.

7 -- When in any case of difference, a council properly convened, whether mutual or ex parte, has given its judgment, neither party can demand that another council be called, whether to re-examine the substance of the question referred to the first, or to judge of its advice. An ex parte council in such case is manifestly disorderly, and without warrant.

"V -- Fellowship should be withdrawn from any church . . . which gives public scandal to the cause of Christ, or which willfully

persists in acts which break fellowship . . .

"VI -- (Associations of churches, and Associations of churches and ministers), and Conferences of churches are allowable and profitable; but they hear no appeals, and decide no question of church or ministerial standing." (Emphasis added)

(Note: The assumption here is that the standing of a church as a Church of Christ is decided by the council at the time of its formal constitution; and that the standing of a minister as a duly ordained Christian minister is decided by the council at which he was duly ordained. The National Association of Congregational Christians, meeting in Cheyenne, Wyoming, in 1961, expressed its concurrence with this position: "It has been the universally accepted custom of Associations of Ministers, Associations of Churches, Conferences and National Councils, to make and keep periodic listings of Churches and Ordained Ministers . . . The National Association . . . shall undertake henceforth to keep, maintain, and publish a list of Churches, Ministers, etc. . . Such listings . . . shall not be construed as conferring, or confirming, but only acknowledging . . . standing.")

IV - OF THE MINISTRY

"I -- The ministry includes all men called of God to that work, and orderly set apart by ordination.

"II -- When ordination of a pastor is to be performed, the church in which he is to bear office invites a council to examine as to faith, grace, and ability, that, if he be approved, they may extend the hand of fellowship. If the ordination be in view of any sphere of labor, (eg. missionary), the request for a council ought to come from the church of which he is a member.

"III -- A pastor dismissed does not cease to be a minister; but he can not exercise any official act over a church until orderly replaced in office, except when particularly invited by a church.

"IV -- In case a pastor offend in such a way that he should no longer be recognized as a minister, (his) church should request a council to examine the charges, and, if it find cause, to withdraw all fellowship from him, so that his ministerial standing shall cease to be recognized. If a minister who is not a pastor be the offender, the church to which he belongs, or the church nearest his residence, should take the same course.

"V -- Associations of ministers are useful for mutual sympathy and improvement. They can exercise no sort of authority over churches or persons, save to prescribe that their examination of candidates for introduction to the churches (by annually issued certificates of 'licensure') is a wise safeguard."
(Pages 131-133, -- "Debates and Proceedings of the National Council of Congregational Churches", 1865, American Congregational Association, Boston, Massachusetts)

The principle of the duty of voluntary communion of the Churches is everywhere in evidence among the continuing Congregational Christian Churches. The majestic Pilgrim ideal of non-paternalistic Churches in a non-paternalistic society is alive among them, as is the sublime conception of human nature and its spiritual potentialities from which this most extreme of all millenial ideals arises.

For these Congregational Christians the validity of this Pilgrim ideal is obvious in the fact that it can be demonstrated. In a free society believers can gather

Churches of the people, under Christ, which are governed by the people, for the people, and to the glory of God.

Such Churches, furthermore, are able to devise local, state and national institutions of fellowship, helpfulness and service to others, which these same Churches are competent both to manage and control. Examples of the energetic development of Associations of Churches and/or Ministers, (of the Michigan Conference), and of fellowship groups which are dedicated to keeping all forms of voluntary inter-Church fellowship directly responsible to the autonomous local Churches, can be seen from coast to coast.

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches of the United States*, formed in 1955, was the first of the new-formed bodies of inter-Church fellowship and cooperation to be established upon this historic principle, i.e., the management of and control over all its affairs by the some three hundred Churches to which it belongs. Its Annual Handbook is available for those who may be interested in its Articles of Association and its services and missionary activities.

Churches of the Congregational Christian denomination have always given the hand of fellowship to Christians confirmed in Churches not of our order, and have not limited their inter-Church cooperation to those within the more intimate Congregational Christian Associations, Conferences and National and International Councils.

Declarations on the unity of all Churches of Christ have been made repeatedly since the Cambridge Synod of 1648 by the Congregational side of their tradition. The Burial Hill Declaration of 1865 is but one of the dozen such reaffirmations of our belief in the unity of all Christians:

* Formed by Churches of the Congregational Christian denomination which did not become a part of the United Church of Christ. It maintains an office at 8473 South Howell Ave., P.O. Box 1620, Oak Creek, Wisconsin 53154-0620.

"We rejoice that, through the influence of our free system of apostolic order, we can hold fellowship with all who acknowledge Christ, and act efficiently in the work of restoring unity to the divided church, and of bringing back harmony and peace among all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

"Thus recognizing the unity of the church of Christ in all the world, and knowing that we are but one branch of Christ's people, while adhering to our own peculiar faith and order, we extend to all believers the hand of Christian fellowship upon the basis of those great fundamental truths in which all Christians should agree . . ."

The Christian Church segment of the Congregational Christian denomination was born out of the dream of the ultimate spiritual union of all of the followers of Christ. They hoped that by their witness they might win all Christian peoples to the simplicity and reasonableness of the "six principles of the disciples" and restore the New Testament Church:

"1. Christ the only head of the Church.
2. Christian a sufficient name for the followers of Christ.
3. The Bible the only rule of faith and practice.
4. Individual interpretation of the Scriptures the right and duty of all.
5. Christian character the only test of fellowship.
6. Union of all the followers of Christ."
(c--1811-1827 -- as taught by Alexander Campbell, et al.)

These ideals of both these Congregational and Christian forebears did not die on the vine, but were

translated into the Christian Endeavor Society (1881), countless local and state councils of Churches, local and state Ministerial Associations which included clergymen of every religious affiliation, and the National and World Councils of Churches.

The continuing Congregational Christian Churches have been forced into a dilemma by the modern ecclesiastical pressures for the organic, or organizational, mergers of the denominations. Dr. Howard Conn, distinguished pastor and long-time national Congregational leader, has written most helpfully on this subject:

> "The dilemma of Congregationalism is how to serve the grand idea of church government brought with the Mayflower, and at the same time to accommodate to the new awareness of Christian unity that has emerged in the twentieth century.
>
> "(Some) Congregationalists . . . believe that if the essence of free choice in local affairs can be retained, the spirit of adventure so characteristic of the Pilgrims can lead their descendants into organic union with other groups (of different polity).
>
> "Yet there are other Congregationalists who discern their responsibility to require resistance to the lures of organizational unity. They, too, pray that Christ's people may be one, but they interpret this unity in terms of spirit, purpose, and goodwill, rather than structure." -- The Dilemma of Congregationalism -- 1962.

Dr. Conn's lecture commemorating the hundreth anniversary of the Boston Council, given at the 1965 National Association Annual Meeting in Pomona, California, dealt with the contemporary significance of the Burial Hill Declaration -- (see excerpt on page 82):

"The Burial Hill Declaration which summarized the stand of the Boston Council, clearly expresses the concern for ecumenical goodwill, and sets forth the Congregational Way as a sufficient ground for achieving the desired unity . . .

"Our fathers in 1865 were saying what many of us have practiced in our ministry, that we openly accept as brothers in Christ, those of every local church, by whatever polity it may be guided. We respect, welcome, and work with Lutherans, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, and all others, hoping that they likewise will find it possible to join hands and hearts with us in common obedience to our Lord and in service to his world . . . How much better and more hopeful a way to unity than those who insist on ecclesiastical technicalities (and organic consolidation).

"We Congregationalists have been at least a century ahead of the other denominations who are now struggling over these legalisms . . . Congregational principles offer the only way by which the hand of welcome can be extended to all, because they alone are broad and inclusive. Our fathers in 1865 made clear the path which promises the greatest hope for unity in 1965." -- "The Enduring Significance of Our Congregational Heritage" -- 1965. Copies are available from the Wisconsin Office of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, 176 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, Wis.

Let it be the calling of both laymen and ministers to see to it that the communion of all Churches of the Congregational Way of Faith and Order exemplifies that unity in Christ's spirit which is the bond of peace, the

hope of human brotherhood and righteousness, and one spiritual manifestation of our everlasting life in God, Our Father.

(Note: Those interested in further study of Congregationalism and Church unity, see also: *"Report of Committee on Free Church Polity and Unity" - L. Wendell Fifield, et. al. - 1954; "Free Churches and Christian Unity" - Marion J. Bradshaw, Beacon Press - 1954; *"Destiny for Congregationalism" - Malcolm K. Burton - 1953; *"How Church Union Came" - Malcolm K. Burton - 1966; *THE CONGREGATIONALIST, especially articles by Carolyn D. Abbott, John H. Alexander, Warren S. Archibald, Helen J. Berkaw, George V. Bohman, Erwin A. Britton, Howell D. Davies, Royal D. Davis, Palmer D. Edmunds, Joseph D. Fackenthal, James W. Fifield, Jr., Henry David Gray, John F.C. Green, Kenneth W. Greenawalt, Alfred D. Grey, Irving E. Howard, Alan Jenkins, Harry W. Johnson, Angust G. MacDonald, Bruce H. Masselink, Norman S. McKendrick, Cary H. Mead, Sinclair T. Roberts, Arthur A. Rouner, Sr., Joseph J. Russell, Arvel M. Steece, Max Strang, Harry J. Stubbs, Neil H. Swanson, Jr., James E. Walter, Raymond A. Waser and Norman Whitehouse. See articles also by Messrs. Burton, Butman, Conn, Rouner Jr., Neil H. Hansen, Lesilie G. Deinstadt, and Edward W. Day.)

*Available through the National Association Milwauke office.

APPENDIX (A)

The Office of Pastor and Teacher

Dr. Elton T. Trueblood has said, "The mark of a great pastor is to stir up the powers of the people under his care to equip them for their task of ministering. He must not monopolize the ministry." This doctrine is not new to Congregationalists, for, in truth it epitomizes the historic view of the ministry of the "Pastor and Teacher" in a Church of the Congregational order.

Your pastor is called to the ministry which he shares with all of the other members of the local Church. He is a ministry of Christ, from Christ, mediated to the pastor through the consent of his fellow-members and fellow-workers. Theirs is a common ministry of Christ, each to all and all to each -- a priesthood of believers fulfilled in all and by all.

Pastor, or Church Administrator?

The pastoral committee of a Church was interviewing a candidate for the office of Associate Pastor. Before them in writing was a detailed analysis of the duties of the position, and the committee quietly awaited the candidate's reaction to it. In this particular Church the routine duties of the Associate Pastor are "program" responsibilities, directing religious education departments, and guiding fellowship organizations.

"After reading this," the candidate responded, "I have been wondering what there is left for the Senior Pastor to do."

The Senior Pastor, sensing the possibility that some members of the committee might be entertaining similar thoughts, replied in good fun, "The Senior Pastor is paid not for what he does, but for what he is."

This remark caused some friendly laughter, but also served to point out the fallacy of simply looking upon the pastoral office in administrative terms; as one layman cynically expressed it, "The Pastor is the fellow we hire to do all our Church work for us".

A modern Church needs professional guidance in the program aspects of its busy institutional life. Most ministers have some training in program building and some experience in Church administration. They should be expected to be available as consultants in these important matters; but the role of Pastor and Teacher is an all-inclusive ministry to people with people which cannot be accomplished if the pastor's time and energies are consumed in "running the Church".

Virtually all of the program and administrative aspects of a well-ordered democratic Church are assigned by the Bylaws to laymen. These tasks are unquestionably vital to the life of a Church, in fact, they are a sizable part of its total ministry. But it is enough for the pastor to share in them as a consultant; then he will be sufficiently free to lead the whole Church in its total ministry.

As has been pointed out in the foregoing chapters, a Christian Church is a body of believers, a family of families, a beloved community of memory and hope, of mutual helpfulness and service to others. Its sister Churches, being like communities, extend the fellowship of their members and ministers to assist their sister Churches in "setting apart" their Pastors and Teachers in solemn ordination or installation. What is the total ministry of these beloved communities? To what primary functions in this total ministry are these pastors called and set apart?

The Ministry of Worship and Sacraments

Your Pastor and Teacher is called to lead in worship, and to coordinate the Church's ministry in sacraments.

Churches of the Congregational order are "gathered" to worship. They consist of believers who covenant together and with God to be his children in spirit and in truth because they are grateful for their faith that God is pleased to share his life with them. Their common "liturgy" is just what the word means "the work of the people" in worship.

"Come, dearest Lord, descend and dwell
By faith in every breast;
Then shall we know and taste and feel
The joys that cannot be expressed."

Worship, like every other refined art, has its history, its classic forms, its adaptations to varied tastes, and its different levels of spiritual development. Your pastor spends years of his life studying these aspects of men's devotional experience. Great freedom is given him and the deacons, who are his policy advisors, to the end that the Church's worship shall be a worthy expression of thanksgiving, adoration, penitence and aspiration in which the people may wholeheartedly join. The pastor's right to lead in worship is not based upon any notions of esoteric distinction between laymen and clergymen, but solely upon his people's desire that their ministry to each other and to the community through worship shall be orderly, dignified, and productive of spiritual renewal and growth. A good leader in worship will teach his people to share that leadership.

The sacraments, too, (or ordinances, if you prefer) in a Church of the people are rightly spoken of as "the work of the people". Whenever children are baptized, both the parents and the congregation accept the obligation to bring up the children "in the admonition of the Lord". At confirmation, the confessor of his faith and the congregation "own the Covenant" of mutual dedication to seek and do and teach the will of God. These holy ties, and others, like marriage, coupled as they are with the most spiritually significant events in the lives of the people, need to be coordinated by the guiding hand of a

wise pastor, not only in the preparatory instruction of the principals, but also in leading the congregation in its participation.

This interdependent ministry of pastor and people is especially apparent in the services of Communion, as each communicant serves his neighbor the symbols of sacred remembrance:

"Here have we seen thy face,
And felt thy presence here;
So may the savor of thy grace
In word and life appear."

At the Communion Table pastor and people join in an everlasting circle of love, remembrance, and rededication. The pastor's part is not to be looked upon as a perfunctory "reading of the ritual". His whole life among the people, his entire vocation of study, teaching and preaching, and his every act of pastoral helpfulness, all of which the people share, become, as it were, his and the congregation's preparation for communion shown "in self-forgetting love".

The Ministry of Teaching and Preaching

Your Pastor and Teacher is called to study, to teach and to preach, and to coordinate the teaching ministry of the Church.

Anyone who wishes to better understand the role of a pastor in teaching and preaching, should turn to Horace Bushnell and Henry Ward Beecher. These giants gathered up the best of three centuries of free church experience and set it forth clearly in principles of Christian nurture, and in useful, if somewhat overdrawn, distinctions between the teaching and preaching roles of the pastor.

Horace Bushnell, feeling the basic incompatibility of Congregationalism and revivalistic Calvinism, outlined the principles upon some extreme expressions which the

home and Church, working together could, by precept and example, lead their children toward spiritual maturity, without first taking them through excessive emotional orgies, and the over-simplied doctrinal disputations of mid-19th Century American Christianity. His summary remarks in CHRISTIAN NURTURE indicated the direction future thinking about the Churches' teaching ministry would take:

> "Religion never thoroughly penetrates life, till it becomes domestic. Like that patriotic fire, which makes a nation invincible, it never burns with inextinguishable devotion, till it burns at the hearth . . . Let us . . . train up our children in the way that they should go. Simply this . . . (and thus) fill common life and the relations of the house with a Christian spirit."

Your pastor stands in the great tradition of Bushnell, and his successors George A. Gordon, Francis Greenwood Peabody, and George A. Coe. This tradition looked upon the pastor as the coordinator of a teaching ministry which involves every home, every Church board and committee, and every officer, teacher, and leader in every phase of the Church's life. Henry Martyn Dexter described in his HANDBOOK this relation of every activity of a Church to its teaching ministry:

> "All the processes of a (Congregational) Church naturally tend in the case of each member to stimulate the mind, to enlarge the views, to enrich the experience, to deepen the sense of responsibility, and to broaden the whole humanity . . . Congregationalism trains and then trusts the people. It leans upon them, and each one of them . . . And it is only the natural result of the normal processes of Congregationalism that her children should preeminently grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus."

Henry Ward Beecher in his YALE LECTURES sought to make a helpful distinction between the roles of a pastor and a teacher:

> "A teacher brings before men a given view, or department of truth. He expends his force upon facts or ideas. But the preacher assumes or proves facts or truths as a vehicle through which he may bring his spirit to bear upon men . . . He looks beyond mere knowledge to the character which that knowledge is to form. It is not enough that men shall know. They must be . . . It is the moral fruit in men's souls for which he plants his truth as so much seed . . . Number, weight, dimension, have no relation to a preacher's personal feelings; but hope, fear, joy, love, faith have. A preacher is in some degree a reproduction of the truth in personal form. The truth must exist in him as a living experience, a glowing enthusiasm, and intense reality. The Word of God in the Book is a dead letter . . . In the preacher that word becomes again as it was when it was first spoken by prophet, priest, or apostle . . . Paul -- the greatest of preachers -- aimed all the way through . . . at reconstructed manhood . . . The end, Manhood. The means, Truth. The spirit, Love. The ideal, Christ. The inspiration, the living Spirit of God."

Now Beecher would have been the first to admit that teaching is more than indoctrination, and that great religion requires more than preaching directed toward character building; and the wise pastor will not limit himself to themes which deal exclusively with Christian nurture, nor the very desirable social consequences of character transformation. Mourners need to be comforted, saints need encouragement to stand firm in their faith, and all men need to be assured of the moral law within and the everlasting Grace and Providence of God. But

unless salvation is presented as being directly related to the development of Christ-like character to the glory of God in this world, men of independent mind and heart are not apt to suffer long under any preacher.

Congregationalists of any denomination do not expect very many pastors to become outstanding preachers like Beecher, Abbott, Gladden or Cadman; but their longing to hear great preaching is not apt to be even partially fulfilled until more of the people in the pews see the need of it, lovingly demand it, and faithfully help to build an atmosphere within the congregation which will support and maintain it. Here again, Henry Ward Beecher says a significant word to both pastor and people:

> "Again, we are to seek to preach, not simply by our own personal experience, but by bringing together one and another in the Church, and having the whole life of the Church so beautiful in the community that it shall be a constant attraction to win men unceasingly . . . This is what Christ commanded, what the early Church did; and the world will be converted, not until the whole body of Christians becomes in this sense preachers."

The Ministry of Fellowship, Helpfulness and Service

Our pastor and teacher is called to lead in the Church's ministry of fellowship, of mutual helpfulness, and service to others. He is called to be perpetually on call, to listen and to pray, to counsel, comfort and inspire his people during all of the crises in their lives.

It has been said that fellowship is heaven, while lack of fellowship is hell. Surely the fellowship which blossoms within the family of families where each is treated as a man full-grown before his Father-God, and in the eyes of all, -- surely inter-Church fellowship which

grows deep because it is not coerced but grounded in voluntary associations is the nearest state to heaven on this earth.

Such fellowship is created and maintained by friendliness, neighborliness and hospitality expressed in Christ-like relations within the Churches, and sisterly inter-communion between the Churches. The deliberate creation of such meaningful fellowship, is, also, a ministry of the pastor and people. Pastoral calls, calls upon the sick and shut-in by deacons and deaconesses, hospitality shown by ushers and greeters, companionship of members in groups within the Church, all-parish events which bring the members and friends together as a family, the union services and Association meetings of the Churches of the vicinage -- all contribute to the building of meaningful fellowship. And in the midst of these vital inter-relationships of all the people we find the pastor and his family, taking the lead in this ministry of fellowship.

Then there are always those who are in some special need. Ordinarily the pastor, deacons and deaconesses become a team to meet these needs with spiritual ministrations, discretionary funds, calls and cards and flowers. The congregation joins in common prayer for the comfort and relief of all those "afflicted or distressed", and makes generous offerings in support of its prayers.

But charity which begins at home is not content until it finds expression in the community around the Church, and in the world-wide enterprises of good will which serve the human family. All of these ministries of the Churches require the attention of the pastor, living as he does in the center of a wheel of helpfulness, referring requests for help to boards, committees, professions, agencies; or soliciting assistance from other individuals, or serving on community, or denominational, or inter-denominational groups in behalf of his people.

Meanwhile, the pastor's special ministries to individu-

als and families in need of "pastoral care" incease in answer to the growing demand for counselling from people within and outside his constituency who arc caught up in the many varieties of personal and interpersonal conflicts of these bewildering times.

Pastoral counselling has become a specialized art -- a discipline utilizing insights not only of religion, but also of psychology and social work. The pastor of a Congregationally organized church can and must begin to share this vital aspect of the Churches' ministry with qualified laymen, many of whom are well equipped by professional training to deal helpfully with people's problems. Others may become adequately equipped by special training.

So, as in all the other areas of the Churches' ministry, we find that even in this most specialized field of pastoral care, the pastor has a ministry which his people are able to share with him, if not as trained assistants, at least as sympathetic and appreciative supporters of his role as personal counsellor in their behalf, and in the name of Christ:

"O master, from the mountain side,
Make haste to heal
These hearts of pain;
O tread the city's streets again."

APPENDIX (B)

The Pastor and Lay Moderator

A question which persistently engaged the 17th and 18th century philosophers of congregational polity was, "What is the proper division of labor between the Pastor and the lay Moderator in a local Church? The need to debate this subject grew out of our spiritual ancestors' running battle against the invasion of Presbyterian influences from England and the Bay Colony. Like our forebears, we need to clarify our thinking about the roles which Pastors and lay Moderators ought to play in our time, if we are to avoid the inadvertant Presbyterianization of, or centralization of government within our free Churches.

Teaching and Ruling Elders

Much of the discussion in the early days revolved around the terms "Teaching Elder" and "Ruling Elder". One classic instance where the distinction between these two classes of Church officers became critical is reported in Edwin Pond Parker's monumental "History of the Second Church of Christ in Hartford" -- (South Church):

> "Within a decade after Mr. (Thomas) Hooker's death (1647), a controversy occurred in (First Church, Hartford) which soon . . . became greatly complicated and exceedingly virulent, and drew in its train councils, and synods and courts . . .
>
> "Dr. (Benjamin) Trumbull attributes the origin of the controversy to a difference between (Mr. Hooker's successor) Rev. Mr. Stone and Mr. Goodwin, the Ruling Elder . . . as to 'the rights of the brotherhood' for which Elder Goodwin stoutly stood as against

> Mr. Stone, who stood stoutly for his clerical prerogatives. He magnified his office and had exalted notions about its prerogatives . . . He defined Congregationalism as 'a speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent democracy'. 'His idea of Church government,' says Trumbull, 'bordered more on Presbyterianism and less on independence than those of the first ministers of the country in general . . .'
>
> "Elder Goodwin, also, magnified his office of Ruling Elder. He was, by virtue of that office, the natural Moderator at Church meetings. It was his duty to prepare business for the action of the Church . . . to call and dismiss meetings and, in the absence of the Pastor and Teacher, to preach."

The position on the duties of Pastor and lay Moderator defended by Elder Goodwin and the minority which seventeen years later became Second Church was in accordance with the Cambridge Platform of 1648:

> "The office of Pastor and Teacher appears to be . . . to Administer a word of Wisdom . . . to Administer the Seals of that Covenant (the Lord's Supper, etc.) . . .
>
> "The Ruling Elder's work is to join with the Pastor and Teacher in those acts of Spiritual Rule which are distinct from the ministry of the word and sacraments . . . to call the Church together when there is occasion, and seasonably to dismiss them again . . . To prepare matters in private, that may be carried to an end with less trouble, and more speedy dispatch . . . To moderate the carriage of all matters in the church assembled: as to propound matters to the church, to order the season of speech and silence; and pronouce sentence according to the mind of Christ

with the consent of the church . . . to be guides, and leaders to the church, in all matters whatsoever, pertaining to church administration and actions . . ."

The Presbyterian Pastor-Elder Moderator

When Trumbull spoke of the Rev. Mr. Stone's ideas of Church government as bodering on Presbyterianism he was, among other things, referring to Mr. Stone's leaning toward the traditional and present practice in Churches of that order where Church Law prescribes that the Pastor shall be the Moderator of the local congregation and its session:

> "The official 'dignity and usefulness' of the minister as an elder is shown . . . by the fact that . . . he is . . . the bishop of the congregation and the moderator of the Session . . . Ministers are, by virtue of their office, members of the Presbytery, and both in that Judicatory, and when exercising authority in a particular church, are representatives of the Church at large." (1951 edition "Manual of Presbyterian Law for Church Officers and Members" -- see Pages 240-243)

In the Presbyterian system, the Pastor-Elder-Moderator presides and rules with the whole weight of the National Church Constitution and its graded courts behind him:

> "The decisions of the pastor as moderator of the Session, in all matters constitutionally within his authority, cannot be appealed from by the other members of the Session. This is based upon the fact that the pastor is a member of the Presbytery, and the representative of that body. If any decision made by him as moderator is unsatisfactory, while an elder may dissent or protest, the

only prompt way of securing redress is to file a complaint with the Presbytery." (Manual op. sit. Page 244)

Exit the Ruling Elder

Elder Goodwin and the founders of the Second Church in Hartford foresaw the gradual exit of the Congregational Ruling Elder in the tendency to merge the duties of Teaching and Ruling Elders as prerogatives of the Pastor. By 1856 George Punchard was saying:

> "Even from the time that the Cambridge Platform was laid, (1648), there were some persons in our churches . . . who could not see any such officer as we call a Ruling Elder, directed and appointed in the word of God. And as early as 1702 Cotton Mather wrote: 'Our churches are now nearly destitute of such helps in government.'"

Punchard describes what he considers to be the general rule of Congregational Churches in 1856:

> "On Congregational principles a pastor is, ex officio, the moderator of the church -- its presiding officer; and as such, has all the power that a presiding officer in our best regulated legislative or deliberative bodies has, but nothing more. It is his duty to see, so far as in him lies, that the business of the church is conducted in an orderly manner." (Both quotations from Punchard's "View of Congregationalism", 1856)

The Boston Platform of 1865 is less convinced than was Punchard of the demise of the Ruling Eldership as a general rule among the Churches, but it concedes the right of the Churches to empower their Pastors with the prerogatives of Moderator:

> "The modern usage, concentrating all the powers and responsibilities of the eldership in one person, (the Pastor), is founded on convenience only, and is exceptional rather than normal . . . a question which every church may determine for itself, without infringing any principle of order."

By 1916 William E. Barton, in answer to the question, "Who presides at Church Meetings?" replies:

> "Unless the constitution of the church provides otherwise, the pastor commonly acts as moderator in all business meetings of the church, excepting those which relate to his own salary or work . . . Some churches provide in their constitutions for an elected moderator other than the pastor. In some states (because of corporation statutes) the moderator must be elected annually . . . In churches which have no rule concerning the moderator and in which the pastor . . . presides by right of established custom, the church may at any time elect another moderator at its pleasure." ("The Law of Congregational Usage", 1916)

Oscar Maurer's Manual (1951 edition), written after it became fashionable in Congregational Churches to set up "Prudential Committees", or "Cabinets", or "Church Councils", says of the Pastor:

> "He shall ordinarily preside at all meetings of the church except when matters concerning himself are considered or when another moderator is chosen. He shall be ex officio an advisory member of all boards and committees, and shall be the chairman of the church council."

Should the Office of Lay Moderator be Utilized?

This brief history of the Ruling Eldership in one family with the congregational order has been recounted to stimulate discussion among the continuing (Congregationally ordered) Christian Churches of the question, "Should the office of Lay Moderator be utilized?" Such subsidiary questions as follow suggest themselves: Were the problems we faced in the merger controversy in any way related to the concentration of the powers of the Eldership in the Pastor-Moderator? Did some Pastors as Moderators become, in fact, if not in constituted authority, the "representatives" of State and National Church bodies in promoting the formation of the United Church of Christ?* Can a modern Pastor be a true "Moderator", now that his duties have become so varied and demanding in the areas of pastoral care and in program promotion requirements, not only in the local Church, but also in community service and denominational outreach? Can laymen truly share the multiple ministries of a modern Church without feeling responsible for, and being in direct control of, the government of their free Churches?

One Church in our free fellowship has considered these questions and within the last ten years has reinstituted the office of Lay Moderator. Its administrative policies describe the division of labor between its Pastor and its Moderator:

"Practices of the present Pastors:

A -- The present administration assumes that the Pastors, under the policy guidance of the Board of Deacons (or Elders), fill the traditional Congregational role of 'Preaching and Teaching Elders of the Church', and to them is assigned the leadership of all minis-

* Note on 1959 Merger

tries of helpfulness and spiritual welfare.

B -- The Pastors are the staff officers responsible for guiding all of the program aspects of the Church's life, making themselves available for the giving of advice and help to all leaders and workers in the Church's program.

C -- The Pastors assist the Moderator in preparing the agendas of Cabinet and Church Meetings, and are available for consultation with Chairmen of all Boards and Committees and Organizations responsible for the Church's program." (e.g., Board of Deacons (or Elders), Deaconesses, Stewardship, Religious Education, and the Music Committee.)

"Practices of the present Moderators:

A -- The present Administration assumes that the Moderator fills the traditional Congregational role of 'Ruling Elder', presiding at meetings of the Church and Church Cabinet; interpreting the Bylaws when rules are required, and when not overruled by the Church-in-Meeting; and moderating points of difference between the various Officers, Boards, Committees and Organizations of the Church.

B -- The Moderator is responsible for the preparation of agendas for the Church Cabinet and regular and special Church Meetings, and does so by regular consultation with Church and Organization officers.

C -- The Moderator acts as the responsible lay officer in coordinating all of the non-program aspects of the Church's life, making himself available for the giving of advice

and help to Officers and administrative Board and Committee Chairmen. (e.g., Boards of Trustees, and Finance, the Nominating Committee and the Committee on Endowments and Gifts.)

D -- The Moderator from time to time calls together the various Board chairmen as an ad hoc advisory committee to assist him and the Pastors in surveying the administrative problems of the Church, and for advice in the preparation of resolutions for presentation to regular and special Church Meetings."

APPENDIX (C)

The Church Cabinet (or "Council")*

There is greater danger to the Congregational Way of Faith and Order than the Presbyterianizing of Associations, Conferences and National Agencies. It is the willful or inadvertent Presbyterianizing, or centralization of the government, within local Churches.

Churches of the Congregational Christian denomination have struggled for twenty years to stem the ecclesiastical tide which threatened to submerge Congregationalism from outside the local Church. This predicament came upon them as an external force. But they will have only themselves to blame if the growing tendency to run the internal affairs of Congregational Churches by Presbyterian methods is not reversed.

Leonard Bacon, writing in the middle of the last century, clearly stated the distinction between Presbyterian and Congregational methods in the ordering of local Churches:

> "A Congregational Church, like a Presbyterian (congregation) may have its ruling elders (officers, boards and committees); but while the Presbyterian system makes (these) accountable, not to the (congregation), but to some 'superior judicature', Congregationalism permits nothing to be done in the name of the Church without the distinct consent of the brotherhood."

* Note: In classical Congregationalism the word Council has been used to refer to inter-Church communion; and to apply the word to a local Church "Cabinet", or "Church Committee" or "Prudential Committee" leads to some confusion and misunderstanding. We have chosen, therefore, to use the word Cabinet.

In other words, a congregational Church manages its affairs and program through its duly elected officials without mandatory reference to or approval by any internal 'Consistory', or external Church court of appeals.

Churches of our order have always had to overcome the temptation to be led into, or to drift toward, consistatorial centralized government in the management of their internal affairs.

In this brief section we shall seek merely to discuss the difference between a Consistory in a Presbyterian congregation and a Church Cabinet in the Congregational Church.

The Presbyterian Consistory

Dr. James E. Wagner, distinguished past-President of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and former co-President of the United Church of Christ, gives an excellent description of the Consistory:

> "In the presbyterian form, authority is exercised and discipline administered . . . by an elected group of individuals, whether it is the local Consistory, or the Synod, or the General Synod . . . It is the elected group characteristic of the presbyterian form of government, which is important . . .
>
> "You and your colleagues on the Consistory 'rule' the congregation. You exercise authority. You administer discipline. You transact the congregation's business. You initiate, plan, launch and promote the congregational program. You counsel with the pastor . . . You oversee the work of all congregational auxiliaries.
>
> "But you do this as the elected representatives of the congregation. The congregation,

properly called into business session, in addition to its other prerogatives, can initiate matters which you as Consistorymen have overlooked, or which you feel you do not want to proceed with without securing congregational approval. And if your service on the Consistory is in any way unsatisfactory to the congregation, the congregation can in due time elect someone else in your place." (From "So You Are A Consitoryman" -- Emphasis in the original)

Here are some key points to remember about the nature and the functions of a Consistory:

1. The Consistory is actually a "Board of Directors" with power, as Dr. Wagner says, "to 'rule' the congregation . . . to administer discipline . . . to transact the congregation's business . . . to initiate . . . and promote the congregational program . . . and oversee the work of all congregational auxiliaries (boards, committees and organizations)."

2. The Consistory, again quoting Dr. Wagner, is the "immediate link" between the members of the congregation and the "wider circles to which they belong" (i.e., the Synod and the General Synod, and the various denominational and inter-denominational agencies to which all members are committed, and in which they are "represented by" official delegates).

3. The Consistory is elected by a congregation which itself gets its authority from a charter granted by its Synod. The powers of both Consistory and congregation are prescribed by the written Constitution of the "General Church", (the legal term for all presbyterially organized National Churches).

4. The congregation can "in due time" replace Consistorymen, (subject to the General Church's rules and regulations, including review on appeal to Synod and

General Synod).

The Congregational Church Cabinet

The Church Cabinet in a (Congregational) Church has none of the above powers:

In the congregational form, authority is exercised and discipline administered by the Church-in-Meeting. It is the Church-in-Meeting characteristic of the congregational form of government which is important.

The members of the Church 'rule' themselves by a Constitution and Bylaws of their own making. Between annual and special Church meetings certain specific, but constitutionally limited, authorities to act for the Church are delegated to various officers, boards, committees and organizations, all of which are directly responsible to the Church-in-Meeting. These officers and groups, each working within specifically defined areas of responsibility, plan, launch and promote the Church's program, and may clear details and cordinate their activities through a Church Cabinet. (Many Churches of the congregational order have no Church Cabinet.)

The Church may delegate responsibilities not specifically charged to officers or groups to the Church Cabinet; but the Church Cabinet does not properly have the power to over-rule the decisions of any officers or elected groups.

The election of and the termination of service of all officers and official groups and the Church Cabinet are determined by the Church Bylaws, and no system of appeals exists other than the due process of a properly called Church meeting and the amendment of the Constitution and Bylaws.

Here are some key points to remember about the nature and the functions of a Church Cabinet:

1. A Church Cabinet is a clearing-house for the activities of the offices, boards, committees and organizations of a Congregational Christian Church. It is not a Board of Directors.

2. It is an axiom of Congregationalism that a Church Cabinet shall never act for any of the officers or groups of which its membership is composed. It is not an approving agency.

3. Some Church Constitutions empower the Church Cabinet to "act for the Church (between meetings) in minor matters", such as the election of delegates to Ecclesiastical Councils or to denominational or inter-denominational meetings.

4. Some Church Cabinets are empowered to sponsor and set up special committees for all-parish activities not specifically assigned by the Church Bylaws to constituent officers or groups.

5. Some Church Constitutions require that Social Relations Committees seek the advice (and approval) of the Church Cabinet before making public pronouncements on controversial issues. This is an exception which we might call a semi-presbyterial procedure.

A Consistory, then, is an instrument of centralized government within the local congregation of a Presbyterian Church. A Church Cabinet is an instrument of voluntary cooperation among all the officers, boards, committees and organizations to each of which a (Congregational) Church has delegated specific responsibilities with power.

Both a Presbyterian Consistory and a (Congregational) Church Cabinet are ways of doing things "decently and in order" according to their respective polities; but the Church Cabinet is especially designed to properly meet both the organizational and spiritual ideals of the Congregational Way:

"Congregationalism teaches its members that equal responsibility and privilege rest upon them, and it treats each as if he were a man full grown, to whom Christ has assigned a specific work, and from whom He expects a specific and intelligent obedience . . . Congregationalism throws its members and its ministers, (and its boards, committees and/or organizations) immediately and habitually upon God and Christ and the Holy Spirit, for guidance, help and sympathy . . . It directly throws the responsibility of success or failure upon its constituent agents; which squarely puts all upon each . . . Congregationalism trains and then trusts the people . . . It educates them to feel that, humanly speaking, God has left the work of reconciling the world unto Himself through Christ, to them . . ." -- "Congregationalism As Seen In Its Literature" -- Henry Martyn Dexter -- 1880.

APPENDIX (D)

Rules of Order for Group Meetings*

Arranged from George M. Boynton
by AVA
(With some omissions and additions)

All matters relating to the affairs of any democratic society should be discussed and decided in the simplest and most fraternal way. And yet, in order that progress may be made, and that all may be content with the results, it is necessary that the common rules for conducting business should be observed by all and enforced by the presiding officer.

It ought to be remembered that rules and methods adopted by particular State legislatures, or by Congress, are often variations from and additions to common parliamentary practice, and that such variations should not be regarded in fraternal affairs. "Majority rule" is not to be equated with a truly democratic society. The members of a church, for instance, meet "under Christ" or "under God" to seek and to do the will of their Heavenly Father. Sixty-forty votes without unity of spirit, and where the minority cannot in good conscience remain the "loyal opposition" are an indication that there has not been sufficient prayerful consideration of the issues. Parliamentary short-cuts or the use of pressure tactics have no place in Church or fraternal society meetings.

The following rules are taken from the ordinary practice of deliberative bodies in the United States of America. They have been carefully compiled by the editor (George M. Boynton) and submitted to Reverend Alonzo H. Quint, D.D., for his revision and valuable suggestions, and go forth with his approval and endorsement (1895). This 1971 revision conforms with

* From the 1895 Pilgrim Pastor's Manual

modern parliamentary practice.*

I. ORGANIZATION, ETC.

All meetings should be opened with prayer.

Regular or Special Meetings should be called to order by the Moderator (or President), or in his absence by the Secretary (or Clerk), who may call for the nomination and election of a Moderator pro tem.

If the meeting is called to consider special business, (at a Special Meeting, rather than an Annual Meeting where any business may be presented), the Call (or Warrant) should be read by the Secretary, or stated by the Moderator, or at his invitation by the Chairman of the Committee which has issued the call.

A Quorum

If the number necessary for the transaction of business is not fixed in Bylaws, any number present at a properly called meeting are competent to transact businsss, though often it may be unwise to proceed with a small number.

If a quorum has been present at a meeting, it is presumed to be still present, unless the question is raised by the Chair or any member. If the quorum is not found to be present, the proceedings must be stayed until a quorum is secured; otherwise the body must adjourn, but it may fix the time and place to which it adjourns.

Order of Business (Agenda)

The natural order, in the absence of any special rule, after the meeting is opened is (1) to read, correct, and approve the records of the last meeting, if any; (2) to take up unfinished (old) business, reports of committees, etc.; (3) to receive and act upon resolutions or motions for new business.

* Cf. Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 1970

II. THE MODERATOR (OR PRESIDENT)

This is the customary title for the presiding officer in many groups.

He should state all motions made, secure order in the discussion of them, put them to vote, and announce the results. He is to decide points of order, subject always to the vote of the members when an appeal is made. Likewise (subject to appeal) he must rule on what the Bylaws require. He may appoint a competent member to act as parliamentarian; or he may engage a professional parliamentarian for consultation and advice (at his own expense, if not provided for in the budget).

If two or more persons claim the floor at the same time, he must impartially decide as to who is entitled to it. If in doubt, he may properly give the preference to the one who has not already spoken, or to the one farthest from him.

He cannot speak on the merits of a question without leaving the chair, and calling some other member to preside while he is speaking.

He may vote in all cases where the vote is by ballot, or by yeas and nays, and at other times when his vote would change the result.

(Some Churches and Synagogues have adopted the practice of electing the Pastor or Rabbi to be the Moderator, requiring that he leave the chair when matters affecting himself are under consideration. The same would be a wise procedure when executive secretaries and other paid employees are "in the chair".)

III. THE SECRETARY (OR CLERK)

His duties are to form the roll as required, to make and keep a record of the business transacted ("minutes") at regular or special meetings, and usually to take charge

of all documents belonging to the group, also to read whatever may be called for with the sanction of the Moderator.

All motions or resolutions upon which a vote has been taken, and such only, should be recorded. Records should be approved by vote of the body whose proceedings they report, and thus declared to be accurate, (motion *"to approve"*).

If the permanent Secretary is not present, a member should be appointed to fill that office temporarily, ("Secretary pro-tem").

IV. DISCUSSION

A member desiring to offer a motion or speak to one should rise and address the Moderator, wait for recognition (the announcement of his name), speak to the question, and resume his seat as soon as he has finished.

No discussion is in order unless it be (1) upon a motion already made; (2) to raise a point of order; or (3) by unanimous consent.

All dealing in personalities or discourtesies of speech or manner between members should be carefully avoided and respect should be shown for the suggestions and decisions of the Moderator. Strict attention should be given to those addressing the meeting and private conversation should be abstained from. A speaker or member neglecting these proprieties may be called to order by the Moderator, or by any member, and he must conform to it.

A speaker may yield the floor for a question or an explanation by another, but not for continued remarks. In this case he forfeits his claim to it.

Discussion cannot be stopped by calls of "Question! Question!" The proper methods are stated elsewhere. (VI)

V. MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

A motion is a proposal looking to some simple and immediate business; a resolution is a more formal expression of the opinion or will of an official or public body adopted by vote. A motion, if simple and brief, may be stated verbally, but must be written if it be requested by the Moderator. A resolution should be reduced to writing and read by the Secretary before it is discussed or a vote taken.

A motion or resolution should be proposed by one member and seconded by another, so that at least two shall agree in presenting it for discussion or adoption. It should then be clearly stated by the Moderator as made and seconded, and opportunity given for its discussion. It cannot then be withdrawn by unanimous consent, but must take its regular course.

When a question is under debate, the Moderator shall receive motions only to *adjourn*, to *lay on the table*, to *move the previous question*, to *postpone to a time certain*, to *refer*, to *amend*, *or to postpone indefinitely*, which several motions shall have precedence in the *foregoing* order.

VI. MOTIONS CLASSIFIED BY THEIR OBJECTS

1. TO SECURE AN EXPRESSION OF OPINION OR ACTION ON ANY SUBJECT.

This is called a main or principal question, and may be introduced when no other question is immediately before the body.

2. TO MODIFY OR IMPROVE THE MAIN PROPOSITION.

(a) To *amend*. This may be done either
  (1) by striking out certain words; or
  (2) by adding certain words; or
  (3) by striking out and adding words; or

(4) by substituting a different proposition (substitute motion) on the same subject; or
(5) by dividing a question so as to get a separate vote on its parts.

Words inserted by the adoption of an amendment cannot be removed nor those stricken out inserted again except, in either case, in connection with additional words.

An amendment may not conflict with the spirirt of the original motion, and must be on the same general subject; that is, it must be germane or relevant. It is not considered proper to amend by inserting the word "not", because a direct vote for or against is more simple.

A motion may be entertained to amend an amendment, but *not* to amend an amendment to an amendment.

Motions which cannot be debated *cannot* be amended.

The mover and seconder of the principal motion may accept an amendment if no objection is made, (common consent), but not otherwise. The amendment thus becomes part of the original motion.

When an amendment is under consideration, discussion should be confined to the amendment only.

A motion is sometimes passed which leaves blanks to be filled with numbers, names or dates. If several numbers are suggested, the vote is taken on the largest number or amount first, and so on to the smallest; if dates, that most remote; if names, that first mentioned is voted on first. This being really an amendment, when the blank is filled, a vote should be taken on the motion thus amended.

(b) To *refer* to a committee. This is either that the form of the proposition may be improved, or that the subject may be discussed in committee and definite

action recommended.

This motion can be made while an amendment is pending, and is debatable. It can be amended by defining the number of the committees, determining how it shall be appointed, and where it shall report, or by other instructions. (See Committees VII)

3. TO DEFER ACTION.

(a) By *postponing to a definite time.*

(b) By *laying on the table.* This is done that some more pressing matter may be first considered. This motion cannot be debated or amended. The question is by it laid aside until by vote it is taken from the table for discussion and action, and cannot be taken from the table until some other business has intervened. Laying an amendment on the table carries with it the main question.

4. TO SUPPRESS THE QUESTION.

(a) By *postponing indefinitely.* This motion cannot be debated or amended.

(b) By *laying on the table* with the expectation that it will not be taken up again. This is an easier way of effecting the same result if there is a majority who desire it.

5. TO SUPPRESS DISCUSSION.

(a) By *moving that the previous question now be taken.* This is done to prevent a minority from protracting discussion needlessly or obstructively. A member may "call for the previous question"; and this being seconded, the Moderator says, "Shall the main question now be put". This motion is open to discussion. By an affirmative vote discussion ceases and the question is at once put to vote, beginning with any pending amendments.

As this is a technical phrase and often not understood, it would be better not to introduce it into Church or fraternal gatherings, but rather to accomplish the same end:

(1) By moving to *close the discussion,** which is exactly equivalent, or to

(2) *Limit the discussion,** by fixing the time to be allowed to each speaker, or the time at which the vote shall be taken, which ought not to be immediate.

6. TO REVISE ACTION ALREADY TAKEN.

The motion *to reconsider:* This is the remedy for hasty or uninformed action, or is sometimes used to fix beyond repeal, by its own defeat, action already taken. It can only be moved by one who has voted with the majority. The first motion is to reconsider. This, if carried, brings up the main question as though it had not been voted on at all. It should be made at the same meeting at which the vote to which it refers was passed, and, in fairness, when there are as many members present as voted at that time. The body retains its right to rescind its action at a subsequent meeting, provided due notice is given of the proposal, and unless prohibited by the standing rules (Bylaws).

7. TO FACILITATE OR HASTEN BUSINESS.

(a) By *suspension of the rules.** This should be done only where speed is essential and the action *unanimous,* and only where the standing rules (Bylaws) give authority therefor.

(b) By *"the order of the day."* Where it has been decided that certain questions should come up at a definite time, the order of the day may be announced by the Moderator; or, in case he neglects to do so, it may be called for by a member and must be taken up. The business thus in order may, of course, be laid on the table or further postponed by vote.

8. TO SECURE ORDER

(a) *Point of order:* If the Moderator fails to enforce the rules and preserve order, a member can "rise to a

* Rules of order generally call for a two-thirds majority.

point of order," state the matter of which he complains without discussion, and ask for a decision by the Chair.

If a proposition is introduced which a member believes to be outside the proper objects of the meeting, he may object to its consideration as out of order. This must be done at its first introduction, and is decided by the Moderator.

(b) *Appeal:** Any member may appeal a decision by the Moderator. The appeal must be seconded when, the decision having been again stated, together with the reasons for it, the appeal may be discussed, the members speaking first and the Moderator closing -- not however, leaving the chair therefor. The question is then put: "Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained?" In regard to indecorum, the appeal is undebatable.

(c) *Question of Privilege:* This is a question affecting the rights of the meeting or of any member who may state the "question of privilege," and the Moderator decides whether it is such a question or not. This must be disposed of by immediate consideration, postponement or reference to a committee before the discussion which was interrupted can be resumed.

9. TO CLOSE THE MEETING.

(a) By *fixing in advance the time at which to adjourn.*

(b) By *adjourning to a certain time or "sine die."* This motion cannot be amended or discussed, unless the motion itself contains a specification of date or place, or unless an adjournment would dissolve the body.

VII. COMMITTEES

Committees are appointed as the meeting may direct, or under standing rules. They may be nominated by the Moderator or by a nominating committee, in either case

* Rules of order generally call for a two-thirds majority to overrule the Chair.

to be confirmed by vote; or the Moderator may be authorized to appoint. An odd number of members is usually appointed to avoid a tie vote in committee.

A (special) committee appointed to carry out instructions should be small and so composed that a majority shall be favorable to the proposed action. A committee for investigation or deliberation should be large enough to represent those of various opinions, so as to secure ample discussion in committee.

The first-named person on a committee should call it together, and act as chairman until another chairman is elected. Usually the body intends that the first-named person on the committee shall be its chairman. If he fails to summon the committee, the second person named may call it together.

If all do not agree, the majority should report in the name of the committee. A minority report may be made and can be by vote of the body substituted for the committee's report.

When a committee to whom any matter may have been referred shall recommend any specific action to the body, or shall desire the body to approve or adopt the sentiments or statements of a report, such proposed action shall always be embodied in resolutions. While many bodies use the term "accept" as equivalent to "adopt," it is much clearer to distinguish between the two. The question should then be: "Shall the report of your committee be accepted?" This, if carried, *receives* the report from the committee. The question should then be: "Shall the resolutions recommended by the committee be *adopted?*" If no resolutions are amended, the report, after acceptance, should be placed on file.

A committee is discharged when its report is received. A committee may, however, merely report progress and be continued (by vote or by common consent), until its final report is made.

When business is referred to a committee *with power*, it may take action on the matter referred to it at its discretion.

A meeting sometimes resolves itself into a committee of the whole, in order to discuss freely and ascertain the sentiment of the majority. A committee of the whole is governed by the same rules as any other committee. In this case the Moderator does *not* preside, but calls some other person to the chair. The same end may sometimes be accomplished by agreeing to take an informal vote, before taking formal and final action.

A standing committee is one appointed under general rules, (or Bylaws), to act during a given time on *all* business relating to the department with which it is entrusted, either to make recommendations to the body, or to take final actions, according to the terms of its appointment. (e.g., Boards and Committees elected annually by Church, Synagogue, or other corporate groups.)

VIII. THE VOTE

(For duties and rights of Moderator see II.)

No question is properly put to vote except by taking the votes *both* for and against.

In most group meetings the vote is usually taken by raising the hand. If the vote is close, so that the Moderator cannot easily decide, the hands may be counted. If the decision is doubted, the vote may be repeated or taken by standing, and tellers may be appointed to make the count. The right of a written ballot may *not* be denied if it is requested by any member.

In elections required by standing rules (Bylaws) to be by ballot, every member *present* must have the opportunity to deposit his own ballot and to vote for whom he will. Instructions given by vote of the meeting

to one person to cast a ballot for all, deprives the members of their rights and makes the election one by acclamation, and violates the rule. A motion to that effect is therefore out of order. Members are not obliged to vote, but all must have the opportunity to deposit a written or printed ballot.

In elections by ballot tellers are appointed to distribute, collect and count the ballots. They report to the Moderator, or at his request to the meeting. In announcing the result, there should be stated the *whole* number of votes cast, the number necessary to a choice, and at least the number cast for the successful candidate, and for all other candidates, if called for. The Moderator must announce the names of the persons elected. If there is no choice, the number cast for the various candidates is always reported.

A majority vote is more than half of all the votes cast. A plurality is more than those cast for any one other candidate.

IX. A TABULATED STATEMENT

MOTIONS WHICH CANNOT BE AMENDED.

To adjourn - except to a specified time.
To amend an amendment.
To appeal a matter of decorum.
To lay on the table.
To postpone indefinitely.
The previous question.
To suspend the rules.
To take up a question out of its order.
To take from the table.

MOTIONS WHICH CANNOT BE DEBATED

To adjourn.
To appeal a matter of decorum.
To lay on the table.
A question upon which the
previous question has been ordered.

To take up a question out of its order.
To take from the table.

VOTES WHICH CANNOT BE RECONSIDERED

To adjourn.
To suspend the rules.
An affirmative vote to take from the table.
To reconsider a question.

MOTIONS REQUIRING MORE THAN A SIMPLE MAJORITY

To appeal the decision of the Chair.*
To limit (extend) or close discussion.*
To suspend the rules.*
(We recommend a *unanimous* vote and *only when specifically authorized* in the standing rules, or Bylaws.)

* Rules of order generally call for a two-thirds majority.

INDEX

A

Abbott, Carolyn D., 85
Alexander, Rev. John H., 85
Amendments, 38, 113, 120
Annual meetings, 37, 110
Archibald, Dr. Warren S., 85
Articles of Incorporation, 20
Associations, local, 76, 79, 81, 93, 103
Associations of ministers, 79, 80, 83
Auditing Committee, 34
Auditor, professional, 34
Autonomy of the local church, 19, 21, 23, 74

B

Bacon, Dr. Leonard, 74, 103
Baptism, 17, 88
Barton, Dr. William E., 99
Beecher, Dr. Henry Ward, 89
Believers, 2, 3, 5, 15, 40, 43, 77, 88
Benevolence Policy, 70
Berkaw, Helen J., 85
Bible (Scriptures), 9, 14ff, 24, 33
Bohman, Dr. George V., 85
Boston Council, 2, 4, 73, 74, 81, 83
Boston Platform, 2ff, 5, 15, 42, 43, 48, 54, 55, 72, 73, 98
Boynton, George M., 109
Bradshaw, Dr. Marion J., 85
Britton, Rev. Erwin A., 85
Budget meeting, 37
Burton, Rev. Malcolm K., 85
Bushnell, Dr. Horace, 89
Butman, Dr. Harry R., 48, 75, 85
Bylaws, 19, 23ff, 40, 101, 110

C

Cabinet, Church, 36, 101,103,106ff

Calling a Pastor, 48ff, 53
Calvinism, 89
Cambridge Platform, 2, 72, 75, 96, 98
Camp Committee, 35
Campbell, Alexander, 82
Canvass, Every Family, 31
Christian Church
(Merged with Congregational Churches - 1932), 82
Christian Endeavor Society, 83
Christian Nurture, 3ff, 16, 90ff, 99ff
Church and State, Separation of, 72
Church Clerk, 27, 111
Church "Council" (see cabinet), 36
Church meetings, 19, 20, 37, 61, 67, 101, 102, 109
Church membership, associate, 25
Church membership, benefits of, 2ff, 68
Church membership, definition of, 25
Church membership, termination of, 25
Church treasurer, 27
Claxton, Dr. John W., 70
Coe, Dr. George A., 90
Communion (See Lord's Supper)
Communion of the Churches, 2, 40, 74ff
Communion "open", 17
Conferences, State, 76, 79, 81, 100, 103
Confession of Faith, 8, 10, 23, 25, 88
Confirmation, 11, 88
Congregational Foundation for
Theological Studies, 70, 71
"Congregational Idea of Worship", 14ff, 87ff
Congregationalist, The, 76, 85, 94
Congregational Library, 47
Congregational Principles, 1, 74, 90, 103, 107, 109
Conn, Dr. Howard J., 73, 83ff, 85
Consent of the governed, 3, 19, 62, 81
Constituting a Church, 40, 43
Constitution and By-Laws, 19, 20, 40, 44
Councils, Ecclesiastical, 41-44, 45, 56, 76, 77ff
Councils of Churches, 83
Covenant, 1, 3, 5, 24, 44
Covenanting Service, 6, 10

D

Day, Dr. Edward W., 85
Davies, Dr. Howell D., 85
Davis, Rev. Royal G., 85
Deaconesses, 28
Deacons, 22, 25, 27, 63
Deacons' Fund, 28, 63, 65, 93
Deinstadt, Dr. Leslie G., 85
Dexter, Dr. Henry Martyn, 55, 90, 108
Diaconate, Permanent, 29
Disciples of Jesus, 3ff, 17, 71

E

Edification, 5, 14, 20, 55, 86ff
Edmunds, Dr. Palmer D., 85
Education, Board of, 33
Education, Director of, 26, 33
Endowment and Gifts Committee, 34, 69, 102
Evangelism, 33, 70

F

Fackenthal, Hon. Joseph D., 85
Faith, Articles of, 23
Fellowship, Interchurch, 2, 40, 74ff
Fifield, Dr. James W. Jr., 85
Fifield, Dr. L. Wendell, 85
Finance, Board of, 33, 31
Financial Secretary, 30, 32
Foundation for Theological Studies,
Congregational, 70, 71
Free Church Polity and Unity Report, 85
Funeral Services, 64

G

Goodwin, Elder William, 95, 97ff
Gordon, Dr. George A., 90
Gray, Dr. Henry David, 85

Greene, Dr. John F.C., 85
Greenawalt, Kenneth W., 85
Grey, Dr. Alfred D., 85

H

Hansen, Dr. Neil E., 85
Heads of Agreement, 43
Historian, 27
Hooker, Thomas, 40, 95
Hospitality, 65, 69
Howard, Rev. Irving E., 85

I

Installing a Pastor, 48, 55ff, 58

J

Jenkins, Rev. Alan J., 85
Johnson, Dr. Harry W., 50, 85

K

Kansas City Statement of Faith, 8ff
Kime, Rev. F. Willard, 51

L

Letter Missive, 44, 46, 55ff, 78
Library Committee, 35
Lord's Supper, 17, 29, 64, 89

M

MacDonald, Rev. Angus G., 85
Mailing List, 65, 69
"Majority Rule", 39, 109, 120
Masselink, Rev. Bruce H., 85
Mather, Cotton, 98
Maurer, Dr. Oscar, 99

McKendrick, Norman S., 85
Mead, Dr. Cary H., 85
Membership (See Church membership)
Ministry, Congregational, 79ff, 86ff
Missionary Society,
Congregational Christian Churches, 70
Missions, 33, 70ff, 93
Moderator, 26, 95ff, 101, 111
Mott, John R., 67
Music Committee, 35
Music Director, 35

N

National Association of
Congregational Christian Churches, 18, 49, 81, 85
National Church bodies and agencies, 76, 81, 100, 103
National Councils (1871, 1913), 8
New Testament, 16
Nominating Committee, 33ff

O

Offerings, church, 17
Old Testament, 16
Ordinances, 1-3, 5, 6, 17, 37, 63ff, 88
Ordination, 49, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 87ff
Owning the Covenant, 5ff

P

Parker, Rev. Edwin Pond, 41, 95
Pastoral Care, 65, 92-94
Pastoral Committee, 49, 86
Pastor and Teacher, 22, 25, 26, 65, 86, 95ff, 100
Pastoral Supply, Office of, 50
Pastor's Manual of 1895, 44ff, 109
Peabody, Dr. Francis G., 90
Pilgrim Fellowship, 33
Pilgrims, 6, 80
Plymouth, Massachusetts, 6

Policies (See Written Policies)
Policy Sheets, 63, 66
Politics, Church and, 72ff
Polity, 23, 42, 54
Prayer, 15, 92, 93
Preaching and teaching, 16, 65, 89
Presbyterian, Influences of, 95, 97, 103-106, 107
Psalms, 16
Public Worship, 14ff, 18
Publicity Committee, 35
Punchard, Rev. George, 98

Q

Quint, Dr. Alonzo H., 109
Quorum, 30, 33, 37, 38, 110

R

Reception of Members, 10, 25, 64
Recognition, Service of, 59
Right hand of fellowship, 12, 74ff, 76ff, 79ff
Roberts, Sinclair T., 85
Rouner, Rev. Arthur A., Jr., 38ff, 85
Rouner, Rev. Arthur A., Sr., 85
Rules of Order, 38, 109
Russell, Rev. Joesph J., 85

S

"Sacraments", 16ff, 37, 87ff
Salem Covenant, 6
Scripture reading, 16
Scriptures (See Bible)
Singing in the Church, 16
Social relations, 32, 107
Special Church Meeting, 37
Standing, Church and ministerial, 79ff
Steece, Dr. Arvel M., 85
Stewardship, Board of, 32
Stone, Rev. Samuel, 95, 97

Strang, Dr. Max, 85
Stubbs, Dr. Harry J., 85
Swanson, Rev. Neil H., Jr., 85

T

Trueblood, Dr. Elton T., 86
Trumbull, Dr. Benjamin, 95
Trustees, 22, 29

U

Unity, Christian, 81ff
Ushering Committee, 35

W

Wagner, Dr. James E., 104
Walker, Wiliston, 14
Walter, Dr. James E., 85
Waser, Rev. Raymond A., 85
Whitehouse, Rev. Norman, 85
Whiting, Rev. John, 41
Worship, 5, 14ff, 64, 88
Written Policies, 61ff

Y

Youth fellowship groups, 33

POSTSCRIPT

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This book has been restricted to the primary concerns of those engaged in the gathering and ordering of Congregational Christian Churches. It therefore has dealt only in a general way with the roles of Associations, Conferences, and national and inter-national church bodies in modern Congregationalism.

It is the author's intention to write about these matters in a companion volume on "The Inter-Communion of Congregational Christian Churches". Included will be a discussion of the professional aspects of the Congregational ministry, and the subject of dismissal councils which has been mentioned in passing in the present writing.

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-- AVA

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