

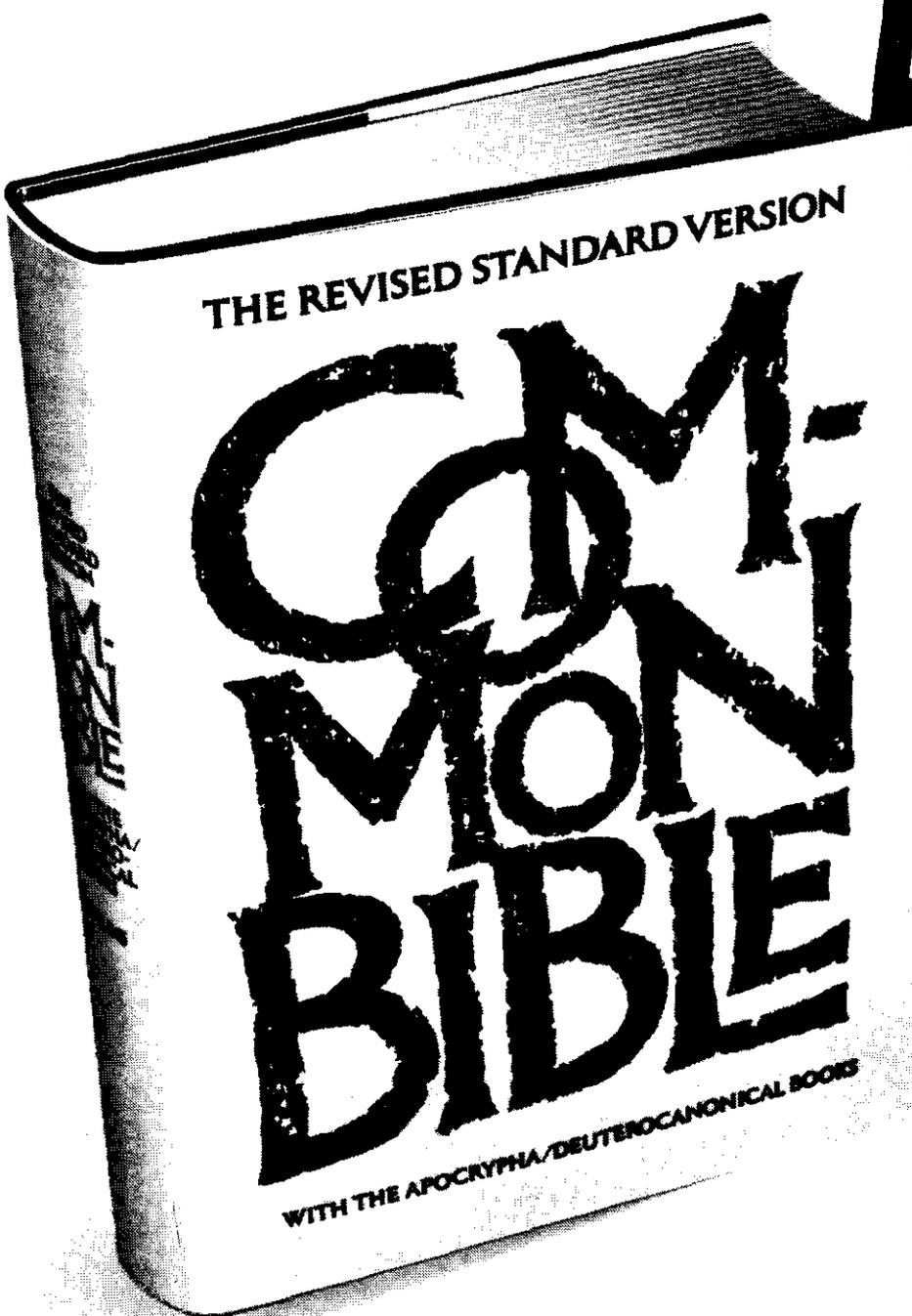
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What Ministers Join . . . And Why

by James Lowery

The minister is a joiner. He joins many organizations — social, recreational, community, professional — and for many different reasons. But among the many organizations and activities which compete for the minister's time and energy, perhaps the most recent phenomenon is the mushrooming number of professional associations and academies. Perhaps never before has the minister as minister had so many membership options available to him. How then is he to decide what, and what not, to join?

The criterion for judging a professional organization is the same as that applied to any other organization: does the organization in question support me as a person? as a partner in a series of relationships and as a minister striving to attain excellence in the practice of my ministry?

NON-PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The social and recreational organization is a first kind of body the minister joins. The specific organization may be the country club. Or it may be the National Camping Organization, or the Odd Fellows of America,

or the Prestidigitators' Society of Northwest Delaware! The point is that he receives support in letting his hair down, relaxing, pursuing a hobby, etc. My hobby is the local history of the Adirondack region of upstate New York, and I watch eagerly for anything that comes through the mail from either the Central New York Arts Council or the Adirondack Commission. They support me in my hobby and recreation.

Next come community organizations. Whether it is the Kiwanis or Rotary, whether it is the United Community Services Coordinating Association or the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, the Neighborhood Ten Association in Cambridge or the Woodlawn Organization in Chicago, the minister comes into community groups and organizations because they support him in rendering service to the community and in ministering to community problems.

Then there are ecclesiastical organizations and groups which affirm a person religiously. These come in two brands: denominational and ecumenical. Another author will cover these in this issue, but suffice it to say that the low-church Anglican is supported by joining the Episcopal Evangelical Fellowship, the high-church Lutheran by being a member of *Una Sancta*, and the pre-Vatican Roman Catholic by joining the Catholic Traditionalist Society. Many are the national ecumenical organizations which work for unity, from the World Council of Churches to the Unity Center in Lyons. And

myriad are the local ecumenical organizations, action groups, and *ad hoc* ministries, from INPUT in Ohio to BEAM in Vermont, which individuals and clergy join in order to support religious efforts across denominational lines.

Finally there are renewal, reform, and improvement organizations whose purpose is change in the church and society for more truly pursuing the Christian mission. These too are supportive of the minister as prophet or binder up of wounds. Examples are the Methodist Renewal Caucus and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. More specialized and representing specific backgrounds are the Black Methodist Caucus, the National Committee of Black Churchmen, the Women's Caucus, the National Committee for Indian Work, and the Hispanic Caucus.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS/ASSOCIATIONS

There is a growing trend today on the part of ministers to join professional organizations and associations. A professional association may in this context be defined as an organization of ordained clergy seeking better to equip its members for their mission as effective church leaders by: 1) improving working conditions, covers the whole field of professional career process; and 3) providing strong peer support.

The first area, improving working conditions, covers the whole field of physical, legal, and economic enablement for mission. This means

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salary, compensation, and perquisites; due process; standard contracts and letter of agreement; mediation and arbitration of disputes, misunderstandings, and grievances; and the provision of civil and ecclesiastical counsel. In the second area, upgrading, the intent is to raise standards, skills, and competences; and to raise the amount of participation by *practitioners* in recruitment, selection, training, licensing, accrediting, deployment, career development, continuing education, objective evaluation, and retirement. In the third area, the attempt is to provide disciplined collaborative peer support and overcome the lone-wolf knife-in-the-back competitive syndrome. Clergy organizations have been and are accomplishing much in all three areas.

NOT TRADE UNIONS

Clergy associations are professional associations, not trade unions. Associations and unions do share the same elements, but these are held together in different balances. The trade union movement (in which clergy and churchmen were significant from the beginning in this country) has from its inception emphasized the same three elements specified above: 1) working conditions, especially pay; 2) the upgrading of the work; and 3) the brotherhood of the working man ("brother" is still a term common among veteran unionists at local meetings).

But while the actions of both professional associations and trade unions involve the same elements, the proportions differ. The truly professional association must emphasize the upgrading of the professional's service, whether in religion, law, or healing, if it is to be acknowledged as legitimate by its constituency and the general public, while the trade union must emphasize working conditions and pay if it is to be legitimate with its members and seen as a power by management and the public. There may be some unions

which, on balance, are found as very nearly professional associations, and there may be some professional associations hardly distinguishable from unions, but the difference is there in principle and the clergy professional organizations are found on the side of the professional associations.

Another difference between the two kinds of organizations is that the union will ultimately strike, and the professional association will not. Clergy members of associations will never refuse to preside at worship, teach the faith, and provide pastoral care. Thus again clergy associations are professional associations and not trade unions.

TYPES OF PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Professional organizations and associations for ministers and clergy are of two types — the specialist and the generalist. The former deals with effective specialized ministry. Of this sort are the American Association of Pastoral Counsellors and the Association for Religion and the Applied Behavioral Sciences. Over the years these two organizations have been a great help in structuring minimum requirements and conditions under which pastoral counsellors and trainers, respectively, could better work. They have upgraded standards and established a rough and ready accreditation process, consisting of a certain number of accredited training experiences, a certain amount of practice under supervision, and a certain amount of on-going self and peer evaluation. Because of this work, accredited pastoral counsellors and trainers can be trusted by people in a day and age in which there is much inexpert, unethical, manipulative, incompetent counselling and training. Finally, members of these organizations provide real peer support for each other, sharing learnings and experiences, and meeting together regularly to train, evaluate, and stimulate each other.

The more generalist sort of professional associations serving all parish pastors are experiencing a period of real growth. One, the Academy of Parish Clergy, is ecumenical. The other 10 now functioning are denominational. They are, in order of their age, the Unitarian-Universalist Ministers Association, the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations, the National Federation of Priests' Councils, the Association of United Church Ministers, the Ministers Council American Baptist Convention, the Union of American Baptist Clergy, Inc., the Association of Lutheran Clergy and Professional Layworkers, the Society of Priests for a Free Ministry, the Academy of Adventist Ministers, and the College of Professional Christian Ministers (Disciples). Recently most of them have come to be linked loosely together by a twice-yearly meeting called the Steering Committee of an Interfaith Coalition for Ministry (SCICM). Let us take a tour of these generalist organizations, and let us look, as we pass by, at their service as support systems for the person, his relations, and his ministerial excellence.

Academy of Parish Clergy

We begin our Cook's tour of the generalist professional associations with the interfaith Academy of Parish Clergy. Much has been done recently. Colleague groups now exist all over the country in which members draw upon each other's learnings in a disciplined manner, often using the case study method as suggested by founding father James Glasse. A statement detailing the specific areas of competence in which the ministry should strive for excellence has been of much help all across the ecumenical spectrum. Alternative methods of theological education, stressing learning by ministerial practice and the local place of ministry as the chief beginning point, are being supported by a dis-

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ciplined scheme of sponsorship, certification, commendation, and consulting. The Academy of Parish Clergy continues to be the most successful professional clergy organization in tapping foundation funds, no doubt due to its ecumenical character.

The Academy is now entering an era of more broadly shared leadership. Less of the work is done by a professional executive director and his office. Work is now shared by the full APC board, four task forces, and several part-time regional representatives. The pioneering leadership of founding executive director Henry B. Adams is missed, but the new administrative style, with a full time administrative secretary in the Minneapolis office and several regional representatives, seems to point to more grass-roots activity. The Academy of Parish Clergy is over the hump in terms of being a growing, active, helpful organization. It has a well established commitment to support members in their pursuit of ministerial excellency. But it seems to serve best the upper third of the nation's pastors who are already self-actualizing and disciplined, as well as talented, men and women. Does the future lead to a more broadly based organization? Or does it point to serving the *crème de la crème*? And when will the major share of the organization's support come from the average pastor's pocketbook instead of from well heeled foundations?

**Unitarian-Universalist
Ministers Association**

The great-granddaddy of professional clergy associations, founded in the 1920's, the Unitarian-Universalist Ministers Association seems to go through cycles of more establishmentarian action and then more renewal activity — as befits an organization which is old enough to have had periods of development followed by periods of implementation. Past thrusts have seen the administration of health and supplementary pension plans for UUMA pastors, and the raising of ministerial compensation considerably. The UUMA ministerial guidelines, published in the mid-1960's, were way ahead of all others in outlining areas of practice and a code of ethics. The present administration under Leon Fay seems to be putting a major effort into training and using area mediators, who are valuable to pastors and congregations on an optional basis when they have disagreements. The program's effectiveness seems to be its own best advertisement. The isolation of pastors in this scattered denomination (except in certain historically strong areas) and a surplus of pastors over the number of viable pulpits are perennial difficulties. But these problems appertain more to the denomination than the association itself. The real internal problem is that the majority of UUMA's members are attracted by the health and insurance plans more than by the group's potential for improving ministry or giving peer support. Is the need not to deal with the problem of the association's own institutional success? The UUMA is a fine

support system, but focused too exclusively upon securing better working conditions.

National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations

A few years ago the highly centralized Association of Episcopal Clergy went out of existence in favor of the decentralized NNECA, comprising now about 30 diocesan associations in the 100 possible judicatories. There is far more participative local activity as a result, but correspondingly less coordination and more "re-inventing the wheel." Ed Sims and Pete Miller's rejuvenated communications system is beginning to work on this problem. Questions are, "Are we sufficiently accountable to one another?", "Can we offer something positive to the denominational General Convention in September in Louisville, whose probable number two priority will be problems of the ordained ministry?" Task forces are at work in several areas.

Despite these problems, there are the largest number ever of local associations. Significant grass-roots work is being done in the areas of contracts, evaluation and job performance, and enabling new types of ministry. Is there to be corresponding support for national planning, deployment, and representation of parish pastors in the higher-level decision-making structure?

National Federation of Priests' Councils

The National Federation of Priests' Councils is the most massive of the professional clergy or-

ganizations and the one most successful in raising real budgetary funds from local membership. It is a federation playing honest broker and joint coordinator to local official senates and unofficial voluntary associations. Its membership is the largest ever, representing 30,000 of the 40,000 pastors in all American professional organizations. But it does so indirectly, since a pastor belongs to his local council and NFPC is a federation of local senates and associations.

Recent Federation victories include the establishment of diocesan due process machinery in almost all judicatories, funding significant studies on the ministry, training in new styles of prayer, and now work on how to deal with the problem of accountability under tension. The NFPC came into existence to implement the Vatican II calls to collegiality (or sharing work as much as possible) and subsidiarity (doing things at the grass-roots level whenever possible). They are learning more and more that they must regionalize their own activities, in consonance with these two principles. The Pat O'Malley administration founded the federation. The Frank Bonnike one developed the organization to the point that it must diplomatically balance between the conservative and liberal tendencies in its huge membership. And the Reid Mayo team, which took over six weeks ago, must move between these two fires. NFPC now plays a part in the official national Roman Catholic structure set up to implement plans for the future of the priesthood. But it wishes to make a pitch for subordinating the priesthood to peace, justice, and mission in a difficult world. Wither now? Roman Catholic priests now have a renewed sense of their priestly order as a brotherhood, and as a positive instrument for initiative. This represents, I believe, a tremendous support.

Association of United Church Ministers

The professional association in the United Church of Christ, which started out as the La Foret Pastors Union, is now the Association of

United Church Ministers, and it is having a dickens of a time getting off the ground. The first phase of their existence saw some strong local chapters in Iowa, Colorado, and elsewhere begin significant activities in the areas of pastor-eating parishes and support funds for clergy out on sawed off limbs. It was also characterized by an over-reliance on denominational structures for encouragement, work, and money. The second phase under chairman Bob Zinn is now beginning to build anew. The AUCM might yet become a support strong enough to enable its members to accomplish definite things; it seeks to do so.

Ministers' Council, American Baptist Convention

The Ministers Council, American Baptist Convention, is a semi-official organization serving two-fifths of the pastors of the denomination. It is finishing a three-year effort to transform itself from the denomination's support system for the clergy into a support system of the pastors for the pastors. This year will tell whether the effort has been successful. On the negative side is the fact that the salary of its long-time chief executive is still paid by the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of the denomination. On the positive side are its pushes for a personnel support program better serving the parish pastor, and its last two slates of officers have more truly represented the parish pastorate. It definitely is a support to the clergy who join, but the paradoxical thing about the American Baptist Convention is that official and semi-official boards and organizations of this congregational-polity denomination tend to be highly autocratic and centralized, and that one therefore must avoid the danger of the support offered leading to passivity instead of participative development on the part of its pastor-members.

Union of American Baptist Clergy, Inc.

The Union of American Baptist Clergy is the "angry young man" challenge to the Ministers Council ABC, and to the denomination. Its small membership has a genius for publicity and for raising issues. Its work has been in individual-congre-

gation mediation, in seeking increasing representation of the actual parish pastorate in the decision-making process of the denomination, and in pushing for official boards to serve the individual parish and pastor more and regional judicatory executives less. This year will tell the tale also, as the American Baptist Convention becomes the American Baptist Churches. Meanwhile, the UABC offers peer support for its somewhat beleaguered members.

Association of Lutheran Clergy, and Professional Layworkers

The Lutheran Church in America professional clergy association has come of age. As of July, 1972, at the Dallas Assembly of the denomination, the association found it had grown from a renewalist caucus organization into a mature association looked on as representative of the interests and goals of the working pastors. The push is for a decentralized and more participative structure in the denomination. Centralization of the total structure has been successfully opposed, but the "streamlining" of the national bureaucracy aiding the national executive went through. The organization faces the coming year re-examining its style in the light of this new situation. There is questioning and openness and solid work characterizing this association, whose most effective pastor-support thrust is through its local synod caucuses. The Western Pennsylvania/West Virginia synodical caucus is of special interest.

Society of Priests for a Free Ministry

The Society of Priests for a Free Ministry is a real peer support system of several hundred multi-talented married Latin-rite Roman Catholic priests seeking new ways of unpaid ministry and continuing to function as liturgists to worshipping communities. (One even serves as an ecumenical pastor to a Congregationalist conventicle!) These several hundred are surrounded by a brotherhood of perhaps 2,000 fellow travelers who make financial contributions and stay on the mailing list. SPFM raises continually the issue of new types of ministries, and has refused to stand on the issue of celibacy alone. In so doing, they are

making a real contribution.

But they have two great hangups. The first is a constant desire to negotiate recognition by ecclesiastical hierarchies, priests' groups, etc., instead of letting their evident ministry validate itself. And the second is a distaste for organizational mickey-mouse such that they do not effectively carry through and implement their many fertile ideas. SPFM remains a brain factory and a peer support group for several hundred inspiring people. But the potent force it could be it is not.

Academy of Adventist Ministers

Peek at the Academy of Adventist Ministers, and you see the reflection of the Academy of Parish Clergy. The continuing education requirements for membership are copied from the APC, as are several other things. Distinctive of the Academy of Adventist Ministers, however, is the requirement that one be recommended for membership by a number of those already members, and, that prospective members be checked out with an officer of the local judicatory. AAM attempts to give professional identity to pastors of the denomination by sponsoring training and educational events, to set up a disciplined method of pursuing continuing education, and to be a professional support system for the clergy. It is semi-official, and much of its support is from above, rather than from fellow pastors. They are off the ground, we wish them well, and are eager to see how the AAM works out. It is a little early to render judgment on their effectiveness as a support system.

College of Professional Christian Ministers

The newest appearance on the professional association scene is the College of Professional Christian Ministers (Disciples) whose activities are mostly confined to the Illinois-Wisconsin area. Their intent is to be a support system for the professional pastor personally, in his work, and in his relationship to a changing institution. They are newly organized, have over 100 members, and are determined to emphasize organization at the regional level, rather than at the national. To

see their effectiveness as a professional support, one must be patient for a time. There is positive interest in the association on the part of the national hierarchy of the denomination. Further this deponent sayeth not!

SOME THOUGHTS

We have seen that the clergy are great joiners. We have noted that they particularly join organizations which affirm and support them as persons, in their relationships, and in their practice of ministry as professionals. There is a wide variety of types of groups entered, and these include social/recreational, community/charitable, ecclesiastical, and renewal/improvement organizations and associations. Finally, and most interesting to us, are the professional associations and organizations dealing with working conditions, standards and skills of ministerial practice, and peer support. The professional organizations include those aimed at a particular specialty or function, such as pastoral counseling, and those aiming generally at supporting all parish pastors. We have looked at the known extant interfaith and denominational general associations, and seen them as real supports to ministers. But what general conclusions can we draw, and what new directions can we suggest?

One thing to note about professional organizations is their emphasis upon one particular kind of support — peer support. One may think of the clergyman as being supported, potentially or actually, from many directions: from above, by judicatories or executives; from below, by laity within one's congregation and beyond; from behind, by wife and children (the number one support, according to the literature); from the left hand by professionals of other sorts in the community and area; and from the right hand, via ministerial peers. The distinctive note of the clergy professional association or organization, specialist or general, is the peer-initiative in setting standards and sharpening skills, the fact of accountability first of all to pastoral peers, and the active initiator role of the parish pastor. In a word, the kind of support emphasized by the true professional clergy

organization is peer support.

Another thing to note about professional clergy organizations is their tendency to emphasize the professionalization of ministry just at a time when a counter-trend is rising. Some astute witnesses of the scene see a paradox in the simultaneous emphases on professionalizing the clergy, and in encouraging a growing number of self-supporting clergy who earn their living in secular endeavors and perform ecclesiastical functions part-time for little or no remuneration. The oddity is that both of these trends are becoming stronger at the same time.

This author suggests two things, stemming from the above observations. The first is that the peer support and initiative of the parish pastor coincides well with a period in religious history when there is more action at the local level than at the hierarchical, when there is a real religious power vacuum at higher levels. I would encourage professional associations and organizations to take the bull by the horns and play an increasing role in upgrading the skills and effectiveness of clergy in the practice of ministry.

Second, I would suggest that we see the increasing number of self-supporting, part-time, "tentmaking" ministries looming up on the horizon, not as competition, but as providing additional opportunities for mission and evangelism, and that we remain open to these and other new approaches to ministry in an era in which the holy spirit is busting out all over.

For this is an exciting era, to be alive and ministering. There is hope in many approaches, old and new. And the minister, as joiner, through joining professional organizations may play an increasingly effective and creative role in these changing times.

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I believe that the Ministerial Association, moribund as it may be in many local communities, can perform a vital service to local clergy if it can establish identity and assume responsibility in the areas of professional skill development, support clergy under pressure, effectively focus on critical community issues, and be a channel of communication and joint action among denominational groups.

Surviving the Ministerial Association

by James D. Glasse

Every structure and organization in our society is under attack, or at least, under scrutiny. Some of the structures will withstand the assault, others will not. All will be significantly changed. So what will happen to the "ministerial association" in the local community? The answer is: whatever local pastors decide to make it. What are some of the options? How can they be put together experimentally, be used creatively?

Each local situation will have its own unique realities to deal with. All I want to do is identify some of the variables, and suggest an experimental model for beginning or renewing a local ministerial association.

The basis on which I am writing this article is the same as that on which I do all my writing: preaching watching. This is my basic research specialty. I watch a lot of preachers, asking the question: what does that mean? I have been asked to pull to-

gether some of my observations, some of the things I have seen while watching preachers at ministerial association meetings.

I go to a lot of these meetings. Looking at my datebook, I am reminded that I have been to 7 of these meetings in 3 different states in the last 4 months. That's a lot of soup and sandwiches! And I remember my own efforts to keep a group going in Nashville, Tennessee for 15 years, off and on. Before that, as a local pastor, I belonged to a couple of groups. That may not be a random sample of the nation, or even a fair sample of a part of the scene. But it is all I have access to. These reflections are offered with all the force of my opinion, in the hope that they may be of some interest and value to others.

THE COMPANY OF OTHERS

Let's face it, some ministers like the company of other ministers, and some don't. Some of us are "joiners." For a pastor who likes to get together with other pastors once a month, no "reasons" are needed. He tried it. He liked it. There's nothing wrong with that. In fact, given the highly competitive style of parish

ministry in America, we should rejoice at any kind of de-militarized zone in which ministers can meet and enjoy each others company.

And look at the other side of the coin. Some ministers are "loners." They wouldn't be interested in a ministerial fellowship no matter what it offered them. Being busy in "my parish" and taking care of "my people" seems to be reason enough for some pastors to neglect not only professional relationships with colleagues in the community, but wives, families, friends — anybody.

But somewhere between the joiners and the loners are the legion of local pastors who have a decision to make: to go or not to go, to join or not to join. It is this great silent majority in the middle to whom I address these lines. My hope is that the idea of the ministerial association may provide a basis for action.

Inducements to belong to a local ministerial association include: desire for informal fellowship with ministerial colleagues, need to affiliate with a group to have access to some community service (like free radio time or the use of some public facilities), opportunity to relate to clergy

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of other denominations, availability of programs of interest and value, chance to establish reputation as a cooperative and community-minded pastor, etc.

NEEDS AND INTERESTS

Ministerial groups will tend to attract pastors who have the following kinds of needs and interests:

1. Ministers of denominations which are lightly represented in the local community. Pastors of predominant groups tend to have a denominational association of their own, with quite a lot of area-wide programming done through the denomination. In Nashville, for instance, Methodists and Baptists had so many denominational meetings to go to that they had little time for inter-denominational ones. The Church of Christ ministers didn't believe in clergy groups. So the city-wide ministers' group tended to attract Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, and others who did not have much local denominational fellowship, and needed the inter-denominational group. I do not know if this is a general principle, but if you are trying to start or spark a local group, I would look first for leadership among those who have a need for such a group.

2. Ministers who have a high commitment to inter-denominational and community-wide activities. These men (and women) are usually already involved in a variety of activities. They will have been put to work for the heart fund, the mental health association, etc. But they will also be open to association across denominational lines, and into community issues because of their own professional and personal commitments. Some may consider the ministerial fellowship "Mickey Mouse," but their hearts will lead them where their heads can follow.

3. New arrivals are fair game for the association, especially if the minister is a "joiner." If he has had a good experience in his previous parish — or a bad one and is hoping for a better one. But if you are going to sign them up, get to them early before they have a chance to develop other relationships, or get locked into their private parish operation.

4. Don't underestimate the attrac-

tion of low-commitment groups. Like the "functional uses of marginality" concept I have described in *Putting It Together in the Parish*, (P. 125), let me suggest the creative possibilities of superficial societies, the positive values of vaguely defined groups, the opportunities provided by groups that don't offer anything at all except provide food, fellowship, and maybe some fun — and don't demand much, either.

5. Sometimes the ministerial fellowship is the only opportunity for relationships across racial lines. In many communities the ministerial association was in the forefront of inter-racial fellowship. That is now passé. But there was a time, especially in the South, when the churches could not officially relate across racial lines, but the pastors could do it unofficially — and did.

I believe that the ministerial association, moribund as it may be in many local communities, can perform a vital service to local clergy if it can establish identity and assume responsibility in the areas of professional skill development, support clergy under pressure, effectively focus on critical community issues, and be a channel of communication and joint action among denominational groups. My specific proposal is for a network approach, spinning off groups with different styles and tasks, and coordinating them in a community-wide fellowship.

NETWORK APPROACH

The model I propose is based on the assumption that we are dealing with 100 clergy. This could be a whole county in some cases. In other situations, that would be just part of a city. I use the round number so multiples are easy to compute. Parts of the model would apply to any constituency of more than 15 clergy.

1. Of the 100 clergy in the area, probably no more than 75 would ever attend, let alone, affiliate with, the ministers association. I don't think this is defeatist. What pastor expects more than ¾ of his members to be active in the affairs of the parish? Use some ecclesiastical realism gained in the parish to plan for the ministers group. Of course, everyone is welcome — including the Roman Catholic and Orthodox

priests, and rabbis.

2. Of the 75 who would want to be on the mailing list, probably no more than 50 would ever get to a particular meeting. Once again, use the attendance figure of your congregation to give you a realistic estimate of participation patterns.

3. Offer a variety of levels of participation. I prefer the following:

a. Some *area groups*, such as a small fellowship of "downtown" pastors, a suburban group, some "sector" groups. (As, when you cut a pie, you get some from the center, the middle, and the edge, so in a city, the ministers of a "sector" cut across the concentric circles that describe the race/class lines.

b. Some *"issue groups,"* working on drugs, schools, mental health, etc. These groups could provide some good "programs" for the larger group from time to time, growing out of the issue-oriented activities of the smaller group. These could be organized as "task forces" of the larger group, or have a degree of autonomy and independence. Some will be clergy sub-groups of community organizations. A Key 73 group is another possibility.

c. Some *skill groups*, working on some aspect of professional practice, committed to some discipline to develop those skills. At this point I assert my conviction that the best single source of assistance in professional development is other pastors. And I propose the case method — as the best (because it is the easiest) method for a group of pastors to get going. See "Putting It Together in the Parish," Chapters 7 and 8, and Arthur Sherman's article "Getting Down to Cases" in the January 1973 edition of the Christian Ministry magazine.

d. *Support groups*, developing disciplines to increase personal interaction and depth understanding of persons. Some groups will be primarily "study groups," using books, articles, and maybe even writing "pa-

THEORY...



DO and TELL:

Engagement Evangelism in
the '70s

by Gabriel Fackre

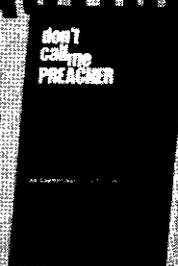
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Board of Discipleship,
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& PRACTICE



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pers" in the manner of a seminary seminar. Others will be prayer groups, developing disciplines of meditation and awareness.

- e. *Denominational groups* ought to have some defined relationship to a larger, more inclusive fellowship. Depending on the nature of the community, these groups could be the primary sub-groups of a community-wide group.
- f. A *community-wide fellowship* meeting at least annually and perhaps quarterly. "Programs" would be primarily in the form of feedback from the smaller groups and providing a forum for community-wide concerns. This group could be the point-of-entry for new pastors in town, and some recognition of newcomers could be made at these meetings. The major purpose of these meetings is to marshal the whole clerical cadre from time to time to make the "critical mass" of clergy visible.

Another way this group exists is in the form of a mailing list. One of the services of the association is maintaining this list. A membership fee of \$2.00 to \$5.00 per year might be appropriate, but I believe everyone should be on the mailing list — dues or not.

FEEDBACK

I have separated groups according to the variety of needs, desires, interests, and commitments which I see in the larger group. But most of these values are not attainable in a larger group, nor would they sustain the interest of a large number of pastors over a long period of time. But, carried on intensively in small groups, they provide a constant feedback for the community-wide fellowship in the form of "programs." Such feedback would acquaint the whole group with the resources available in the total community. It provides a way for a pastor who doesn't want to make a big deal out of ecumenical cooperation to cover it with an issue,

skill, or support identification.

In the center is a steering committee of representatives of the smaller groups. This committee is concerned to monitor the information flow among and between groups, to design community-wide activity, to plan quarterly meetings of the general fellowship, and generally assume responsibility for the total network. And, the steering committee may become, itself, one of the support groups!

The key in this whole system is the commitment and skill of a few pastors for whom the starting or sparking of a community-wide ministerial association is a priority item on their personal and professional agendas. The key to the future for these groups, as for parishes, denominations, etc., is leadership. Someone who cares, has the ability, and makes the commitment. Good will is not enough. Design skills, risk-taking, experimental approaches, and the willingness to fail are required. That means leadership.

If this proposal is like most of the ones I have made in the past ten years, I will be hearing from pastors all over the country, writing to say: So be it. Now, back to the tables for dessert, before we have the program for the day. What is it? The issue group of 5 ministers who meet twice a month for half a day to study the application of Transactional Analysis to counseling couples will report on their most recent discoveries, and open the floor for questions and discussion. And next month we will hear from the ecumenical theological study group who are reading Peter Berger's *A Rumor of Angels*. But before that, let us welcome the three new pastors in our area who have come to be with us for the first time. Then, those who didn't want to come for lunch will join us and we will have the program. After the meeting we will want to meet the newcomers, tell them about the groups in the area, and enlist them.

Where else can you get so much for \$2.00 a year, plus lunch when you feel like eating. Upward and onward . . . !

The Denomination: What's in It for Us?

by Douglas Johnson

As a pastor views his denomination, he may think primarily of the assistance it provides him in securing new assignments. He may think of the program materials provided by the denomination, or of its world outreach. He may view the denomination as providing a measure of personal identification for him, or he may see it as a means for marshalling power and prestige for social-action stances on a national front. But as with most things in life, there is a note of dissonance that accompanies this melody of positive feeling. In fact, a pastor may fault his denomination on some of the same things that he feels it does quite well.

What in the world is a denomination? Responses from pastors in a recent study frequently identified the denomination as "somebody in headquarters." In other words, for a good many pastors the denomination is a set of impersonal operations at the regional or national level. For these men the people at headquarters are rather far removed from their own more localized frame of reference. The minister who knows only one or two people at the denominational level, perhaps because of past or current associations, is therefore reduced to paper contact—for generally his relationship with the denomination is limited to form letters and promotional literature. Thus his reaction to or feelings about his denomination will often depend largely upon the quality of such literature.

Thus, knowing people at headquarters affects the pastor's relationship to the denomination, and his

thinking about that relationship. His own life situation will also affect his perception of the denomination. Age is certainly a factor here. An older man will have witnessed several changes in the people in power, and will therefore have a clearer sense of what, in his denomination, is owing to long-range theological, social, and liturgical stances, and what merely to personality, administrative innovation, and whim.

"Success" is surely another variable in the determination of one's attitude towards a denomination. The highly "successful" pastor and his less "successful" colleague will probably not share the same feelings about their denomination. (About the only gauge which is commonly used to measure success is the size of church a pastor serves. Therefore, the more successful pastors are those who serve larger congregations. Application of this criterion cries for an adequate definition of success in the ministry.)

With these and other factors qualifying one's attitude toward the denomination, it is a bit hazardous to indicate general feeling tones about denomination. However, the average, once the reader has been reminded of the ways in which variations influence the average, is a useful tool in assessing general attitudes. It must be kept in mind that averages are indications of reality rather than reality itself.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

As a means for suggesting some of the general feeling tones, I shall cite here some data from a recent study of pastors and laity. (The North American Interchurch Study consisted of interviews with 3,450 pas-

tors and laity in the U.S. and Canada during the early months of 1971. Involving 15 denominations, it collected data from a wide variety of persons in varying relationships to the church, although all were members. A popular version of the findings is available as a paperback book entitled *Punctured Preconceptions*.) I shall refer only to the responses of United States pastors involved in the North American Interchurch Study. The denominations represented by these pastors include a relatively wide variety of polities and belief systems.

One question, "Do you feel the denomination is helpful to the congregation?", sought to get a qualitative assessment of the relation of the denomination to the local church. In addition to answering "yes" or "no," pastors were asked to give reasons for their answer.

Slightly more than nine of 10 ministers said "yes" the denomination was helpful to the congregations. However, they gave reasons which indicated that there were some significant qualifications to the first statement. For instance, one pastor said, "The denomination is helpful to the local church when it serves God and Christ."

Other comments:

"Occasionally there are some books and literature that help; sometimes there is an issue that sparks. Mostly it's irrelevant."

"It gives us the opportunity to reach out with influence to parts of the world where we otherwise could not."

"[It provides] leadership in social action; guidance in theological thinking; guidance in ecumenical effort;

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"In terms of assistance from the denomination, therefore, it is obvious that the ministers rated the tasks listed from the point of view of their own needs. Their own training was most important, but the impetus of what the training is about, i.e., mission support, ranked nearly as high."

guidance in Christian education."
"It lacks vision and inspiration."

DENOMINATION AS RESOURCE BANK

These comments indicate that the denomination is seen by the local pastor as a resource bank. When it fails to provide help for the pastor where he is, it fails completely for the pastor. The quality of the resources provided to the pastor for use in the local church is a key factor in his judgment about the denomination. The need for these resources is the reason for program divisions existing in most denominations. If these program divisions do not perform the task of providing materials to the local pastor, he tends to grade them down. This may be a bit self-centered on his part but the denomination is essentially a locally oriented, international organization.

The importance attached to the task of providing resources for the local church was exemplified in another way.

A non-qualitative, very simple statement was used to get the feeling of pastors about the denomination. "The denomination is important to the local church" brought forth a positive response from 90% of the U.S. pastors. About one-fourth of them strongly agreed with the statement while 10% disagreed and 8% were in the "tend to disagree" category. Only two-tenths of a percent strongly disagreed with the statement.

This quite obviously means that U.S. pastors feel that the denomination does something of value for the local church. The provision of resources and helps appears to be the main value.

WHAT'S A DENOMINATION FOR?

This is best illustrated by the pastors' ranking in order of importance

the items on a list of things that the denomination does for the local church. These are shown in the accompanying table, which indicates the percentage of respondents who gave priorities 1 through 6 to the listed functions. Only six items were chosen for ranking by each pastor. Thus, zero means that that item was not one of the top six choices.

According to those canvassed, then the most important thing a denomination does (the lowest mean score is the most important) is to provide and train ministers. More than 56% of the clergy ranked this first or second. The next most important thing for the denomination to do for the local church is to provide mission support and outreach at home and abroad. This concern with the externally oriented aspect of the church is quite important for the pastor, with 37% of them ranking it first or second. The development of programs and resources, including curriculum for local churches, was ranked first or second by 38% of the pastors. This obviously suggests the essential quality of resource development at the national denominational level from the perspective of pastors. This does not mean an uncritical acceptance of all of these resources, but it does mean that the resources provided to pastors are used selectively in the promotion and development of local programs.

PAROCHIALISM VS. THE WHOLE CHURCH

The fourth most important, denominational job (selected as first or second choice by 25% of the pastors) is to develop awareness of being a part of the whole church. This ranks far above developing awareness of a nation-wide denomination (only 3% ranked this first or second). The difference between these two rankings is the difference between

parochialism and a relatively broad interpretation of the church. Even so, awareness of the whole church is obviously less important than the development of ministers, programs, or mission support and these in the context of one's own denomination.

Providing counsel to the local church is rather important, as 16% ranked it first or second. The administrative assistance of the denomination to the local church is among the six most important tasks to slightly more than half of the pastors. About 13% of the ministers ranked this first or second.

Supporting social witness was chosen as first or second by only 7% of the ministers but 61% of them ranked it among their top six choices. More than half ranked it 4, 5, or 6. Ecumenical activities was ranked first or second by 4% of the pastors.

In terms of assistance from the denomination, therefore, it is obvious that the ministers rated the tasks listed from the point of view of their own needs. Their own training was most important, but the impetus of what the training is about, i.e., mission support, was ranked nearly as high. Program development and resources were quite important as was development of the awareness of the whole church and providing counsel at the local level. Supporting social witness was conceived by 16 percent of the pastors to rank among the three top activities but was in reality ranked seventh out of the nine items listed according to mean scores. It was seen as a less important activity in terms of the local church than providing administrative guidelines.

DOES ANYBODY CARE?

It is at this point of social witness that some of the experiences expressed by interviewers are enlightening. There were reports from in-

“ . . . the denomination is seen by the local pastor as a resource bank. When it fails to provide help for the pastor where he is, it fails completely.”

interviewers that some pastors felt let down by denominational leaders. These feelings centered upon some social witness activities advocated by denominational program developers; when the crunch came, it came at the local church level and not at the denominational executive level. The local pastor had to bear the brunt of whatever feedback there was and often, in being caught in the squeeze, the local pastor did not feel that he received the kind of support that he needed from his denominational leaders. This means that the regional or the national denominational executives did not provide him with the kind of back-up that he needed in facing the music at the local church level.

This sensitivity to being isolated or ignored has evidently created something of a morale problem in some of the denominations. This report came back from various sources not only in this study, but in other contacts with local churches. The obvious need for a support system within the church has been docu-

mented in the studies of Edgar W. Mills (see *Ex-Pastors*). The data from the study just completed underscores this need with the feeling among the interviewers who collected the data that many pastors were really in a lonely business without a viable two-way communication system with denominational leadership. It is a little surprising that the pastors were as positive as they were if the degree of isolation they feel is as great as reported by some of the interviewers.

SOCIAL ACTION

This kind of feeling is very important when it is found that the pastors were generally in favor of the denomination's speaking out on social issues. They were not at all hesitant in agreeing that the denomination should, on the national level, speak to such things as open housing and jobs for minority groups. They also said, quite frankly, that the church should speak out on social issues such as civil rights, the war, and the urban crisis. Nearly four out of 10 also supported the idea that

their denomination should give more money to minority groups with no strings attached. All in all, one gathers from this type of response that the social action stance at the denominational level is supported by the pastors. This means 87% or more of the respondents agreed with the statements about open housing, speaking out on social issues, and jobs.

What the local pastor thinks of the denomination is (1) that the denomination is a resource bank for the local church and a facilitator of training experiences for himself; (2) that the denomination is an agent in the social change category but that this takes place at the national rather than the local level; and (3) that the denomination is sometimes an impersonal nonsupportive group of people who are unreachable when he most needs their help. ●

TABLE

“Which of the following things that a denomination does for a local church are the most important from your experience?”

	Mean score	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
Provide and train ministers	2.85	37.1	19.3	11.8	9.5	7.2	5.5	9.5
Provide mission support and outreach at home & abroad	3.35	18.6	18.2	21.4	15.4	12.5	6.4	7.6
Develop programs and resources (including curriculum) for local churches	3.50	12.2	25.8	20.8	11.5	11.8	6.5	11.3
Develop awareness of being a part of the whole church	4.55	15.0	9.9	9.4	10.2	13.1	11.5	30.9
Provide counsel for local churches and pastors	4.90	7.4	8.8	11.0	12.5	12.9	14.3	33.0
Provide administration and legislation to guide the local church	5.29	6.4	6.7	8.5	12.5	9.0	9.9	47.0
Support social witness	5.40	1.8	5.5	9.2	13.4	14.1	17.1	38.9
Engage in ecumenical activities at regional and national levels	5.76	0.7	3.7	6.2	11.1	12.0	19.3	47.0
Develop awareness of nation-wide denomination	6.46	0.9	1.9	1.9	3.4	6.2	8.5	77.2

How to Say "No!"

by Glenn H. Asquith

"The nominating committee would like to present your name . . ."

"We feel sure that you will want to help with . . ."

"Your outstanding administrative ability is needed . . ."

"A few of the leading citizens of the community are getting together to . . ."

"What do you say to being chairman of . . ."

"Here's a fine opportunity for service . . ."

By telephone, letter, and personal appeal these pleas for involvement in voluntary organizations reach the great majority of pastors. And just as soon as such an invitation comes the pastor is at the crossroads. Yes or no? And, usually, pressure is applied by the petitioner—"I won't take no for an answer!" In most instances there is an added urging toward an immediate (and favorable!) reply. Can we, as pastors, draw up for ourselves some sort of screening device that will protect us from the many calls upon us—and protect us from our own inclination to say yes?

TIME TO CONSIDER

One basic safety measure to be adopted is that of insisting on time to consider the offer that is being made. If the solicitor is not willing to allow time for consideration it is likely that he is motivated by one of two considerations: either he or she, as a member of a nominating or other committee, has been neglecting the job assigned and is desperately trying to make a deadline; or the petitioner fears that if the pastor has time to look at the facts he will say no. Neither of these reasons is legitimate. And both jus-

tify an immediate no from the pastor. Surely we are justified in making this a rule of thumb—if no time is allowed us for careful consideration, then the answer is an absolute no. As a somewhat unlettered man in one of my parishes said to me when I was selecting a rug in his store and had just rejected one that he had offered: "Well, that *illuminates* that one!" We may find that a goodly proportion of the temptations placed before us will be eliminated by this simple rule of always asking for a bit of time for thought.

But, then, how shall we deal with the pleas concerning which our request for time is granted? Can we devise some standard tests that will be applicable to at least nine out of 10 of the invitations to involvement that come our way?

SOME TESTS

Each pastor, of course, must develop his own tests that will be valid in his own circumstances and that will be congenial to his own temperament. I might suggest, however, that whatever tests are drawn up be numbered in order of importance and written on a card for ready and frequent reference. The ones that I am offering in this article and which have been my guide are numbered in order of increasing refinement. The first may prove to be the only test needed, the second will be necessary only if the project passes the first, and so on. Here they are.

1. *What can be accomplished by the committee, group, board, demonstration, league, protest, office, or whatever?*

In assessing probable accomplishment we need not confine ourselves to the tangible realm. Some organizations produce tangible results: food to hungry people, open housing achieved in a community, chaplain

services maintained in a hospital, our national church or denomination represented in strategic spots, etc. Some groups are to be judged by results that can be demonstrated or measured. But not all real accomplishments are tangible. Some organizations or groups have been set up to influence public opinion, to be sources and primers of inspiration or courage, to lay plans for future undertakings, to draw up budgets and recommendations and findings, for exploration in human relationships, for surveys. Judging probable success in such cases requires more sophistication.

However, as we make the test of accomplishment we need to be most severe in demanding that *something*, tangible or intangible, present or planned, is under way with as much definiteness as possible. I have allowed myself to be drawn into some enterprises where the meetings achieved little beyond setting up dates and places of future meetings and discussing complicated agenda.

Briefly, we might look at the stated purpose of the group and decide whether or not it is a worthy one and, if so, how the organization is holding to that purpose and making progress toward its fulfilment.

2. *Is the effort a duplication?*

Even though the project may be accomplishing something, it could be duplicating another group's efforts. This consideration is especially important when the activity is sponsored by a new organization or committee. Has sufficient investigation been made before setting up the group?

As an illustration: when I was a pastor in a town of 10,000 a stranger came to me and introduced himself as a pastor of another denomination (not then represented in the community) who intended to organize

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“We should beware of understatement when we are told that the obligations required by the job being offered to us will not take much of our time. . . . If the thing is so unimportant that it is a veritable breeze, why undertake it at all?”

a church. Though I told him that the place was woefully over-churched already, he was not deterred. He had accepted the invitation of his denominational leaders to open up a work in our town and he was determined to fulfill his mission!

In the same way we may find that the call coming to us is from a group that is working in an area already saturated with the same kind of project. When the idea of Dial-a-Prayer was conceived by a pastor in one community, other pastors climbed on the bandwagon so that a person standing in need of prayer could well be confused when he looked up the listing in the phone book! Or again, on a daily newscast in Philadelphia, one of the commentators interviews a leader of a community project each morning. It is rather appalling to notice how much duplication of effort there is. Often the commentator will notice this and call it to the attention of the person being interviewed. The answer is usually an admission of overlapping, but — our group has this extra slant that none of the others is stressing!

3. *How much of my time will be required?*

We should beware of understatement when we are told that the obligations required by the job being offered to us will not take much of our time. We have the right to ask for specific estimates of the number of meetings, the average length of a meeting, and the assignments that may grow out of the meetings. I think we may say that the majority of pastors are conscientious in wanting to do well any job undertaken. If the thing is so unimportant that it is a veritable breeze, why undertake it at all?

There may well be the temptation on the part of those whom we term (for want of a better word) “laymen”

to think that the pastor has “all the time in the world” because he is not a nine to five person — doesn’t a pastor have all day at his own disposal? We know how wrong the lay person is in this, so we must protect ourselves. The nibbling of time, if only an hour here and there, will mean real sacrifice eventually. The things which can be done simultaneously are few; if I decide to chair a meeting for two hours, then I must sacrifice everything else that I might have chosen to do in those two hours. Which brings us to:

4. *Where do I place this activity on my scale of priorities?*

Knowing that I can do only a time-limited number of things this week, month, or year, do I consider the offered opportunity for service important enough to cancel out something else? And which thing will I cancel out? Even if it is only an hour of leisure that I must forego, the decision must be made as to whether or not the new project is a better investment for me than that hour for recreation, meditation, or reading. Some chances that come to us, of course, smack of urgency — such as *ad hoc* committees to organize relief for victims of floods or earthquakes; these are high-priority affairs. On the other hand, the re-writing of a constitution for a church or other group might rate a low priority. Each pastor must evaluate for himself what he has on the fire and decide what, if any, adjustments can be made to permit him to take on a new responsibility.

Perhaps one of our chief weaknesses as pastors is the inability to order our schedules with a true sense of value priority. I heard a man say, in some frustration, after he had tried in vain to locate his pastor: “He is always a hard man to find.” That pastor, by the way, was highly regarded by people outside of his own parish; he was thought of as a man

always available for community projects. Early in my ministerial career I was taught a rather harsh lesson in priorities. In the parish was an elderly man with a terminal illness. I called on him daily. But one day I had an invitation to play golf, and I thought that I well deserved a day off. However, the patient took a turn for the worse and was thought to be dying. A search party was sent to find me on the links, but without success. They could have located me easily in the rough on one side or other of the fairway!) Happily, the man lived for several more days, but I was led to look at my future scheduling and to avoid haphazardness. Just as with a television station, a pastor may be wise to block his “prime” time and utility time with care. If the voluntary organization presently asking for his participation has a prime-time sort of project under way it deserves more serious consideration.

5. *How will this new obligation affect my family?*

A pastor with a wife or husband and children has some built-in priorities that must enter into the picture whenever scheduling of time is the task at hand. The challenge and call of the fields “white unto the harvest” must be tempered by the knowledge that a person who has taken family status has accepted planting obligations as well. The soil must be prepared to receive the seed of another generation in order that there may be harvesters in days to come.

I once read a sad thing after the death of a greatly admired activist pastor. The newspapers and the denominational journals listed his contributions to church and community with high praise. But when his wife was asked how it felt to have been so intimately related to this “shining light” she replied, “But if only he had let some of that light shine at

"We need the courage to care for ourselves at least as well as we care for our cars!"

the base of the lighthouse!"

Perhaps this test we are making as we work toward a decision in reference to some new effort should lead us to recognize that included in a pastor's work are the functions of spouse and parent. Indeed, are not these duties prime-time parts of the total ministry? Now that I am older I look back on some of the "high endeavors" of my career which called for family sacrifices and wonder if I did not err now and again in my estimation of what were the highest endeavors. And one of our best known authorities on pastoral counseling has admitted in a recent book that he was brought, finally, to the truth of what his scheduling meant to his family when one of his sons asked for an appointment to see him in his office — "just like the other people who come to you with their problems."

There is no doubt that the essential work of a pastor calls for great understanding on the part of his family, and he cannot control the ebb and flow of parish demands that keep him on constant call. But he can do something about the voluntary extras.

Before we leave this point, we might remind ourselves that some of the voluntary work may profit a family. For several years I conducted a conference held in July in Wisconsin and this meant that the family could go along and have a vacation that would otherwise have been too expensive to consider.

6. *What will this new job do to me?*

Now that I am speaking as a pastor to pastors I may share a conclusion. When lay persons speak of the freedom of a pastor's work, and of how he does not have to conform

to a rigid work day, I think that these critics are not taking into consideration the almost uniform intensity of the pastoral task. There are some relaxed parts of the job, but for the major portion of the work great concentration and emotional stress are routine. And because this is so, a pastor needs to look at the invitation to take on one more obligation in the light of his reserve strength and energy.

Physicians and pastors are inclined to get so involved in healing the ills of persons and the world that they burn themselves out. No doubt we all neglect some of the teachings found in the Bible, but it may be that the one example we ignore consistently is that of taking time out for renewal. The balance between thrust and retreat is found with great frequency in both Old and New Testaments. Even Jesus went away for long or short periods between public appearances. Perhaps we should not be so fearful of "laziness" that we drive ourselves incessantly. A suburban churchman once described his pastor as "a hard-driving executive." Somehow, that does not seem to me to fit the ideal pastoral image. We need the courage to care for ourselves at least as well as we care for our cars!

7. *Can I do this thing with honesty toward those who are supporting me financially?*

Sometimes we have the notion that the church in supporting us is giving us *carte blanche* with unrestricted discretion as to how we are to employ our time. This is true to a certain extent, but our very liberty calls for more care than if we had a definite job description — we are being trusted rather implicitly. Our scheduling and setting of priorities,

then, includes an element of honesty. We are moved to inquire if the offered task is well within the areas of witness and involvement worthy of the church being served. By assuming the new responsibility shall we be neglecting some basic ministry to which we have been called?

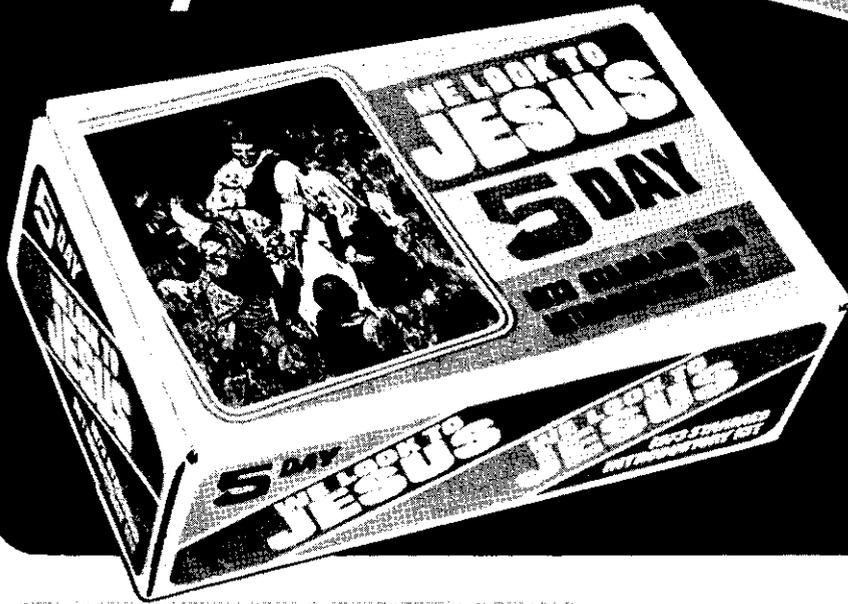
I read recently of a proposed new organization which was rather vague as to purpose, and the promoter said, "Let's start, anyway, and see what happens; and we can always get a 'church person' to come to the first meeting and bless us." No doubt there is a somewhat general impression that pastors are easily available and not too discriminating. In the "day off" or time off periods that are our own, we may do as we please except that, fairly or unfairly, our pastoral identity goes with us. Not only is honesty concerned with giving a fair return for the salary and benefits, but honesty of image is involved. To be known as the pastor of a certain church and to be so publicized when serving in voluntary functions means that that church is being connected with that particular activity.

8. *Am I accepting this job for status?*

Even the humblest of us has his weak spot when it comes to answering an invitation to accept a post that will bring prestige and public recognition. In one of my parishes a particular charity had become "the" group in the community. Only the best people were given an opportunity to be on the governing board. The meetings were held in lovely homes usually inaccessible to the rank and file — even of the clergy. After three years in that small city I was invited to join this elite band. Some people in my

"Can we, as pastors, draw up for ourselves some sort of screening device that will protect us from the many calls upon us — and protect us from our own inclination to say yes?"

'That they
which
see not
may see...'



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church rejoiced and thought that church and pastor had finally arrived! When, after two meetings, I could see more status than charity and resigned I lost my new "friends" and got the cold shoulder from a few in my church. Perhaps the simplest question when we are applying this eighth test is: "Am I going into this for honor or hard work?"

And, finally, my ninth test:

9. *If I take on the responsibility will it be an effort to escape some professional tasks that I find irksome?*

I well remember a man in my first parish. He kept a mom-and-pop store in the front room of his home. Customers were rather few and far between. When I called on him one day he was in a happy mood. When I inquired what good thing had come to him he said, "Two salesmen came in and helped *put the day away*." I can think of many times when I was glad that time did not permit my calling on a certain person or getting right down to a difficult bit of administration. How

wonderful to be able to say, "I have a committee meeting to chair this afternoon!" There are ways of putting the pastor's day away without expending too much effort, and these can be real temptations. And it is easy to rationalize these escapist pursuits — surely, we are engaged in a good and necessary work?

These, then, are the tests I have developed and to which I submit all calls from volunteer organizations — either without or within the ecclesiastical set up. Many opportunities have passed all tests and I have said yes. But many other enticements have failed a test before coming to the ninth one and I have said no. And some, which I have been too ready to clear, have been, as I now see, a waste of time. I have sometimes been less than faithful to larger claims on my time and efforts. When the time of decision comes, a pastor must make his own, lonely choice and hope that he is giving himself to a worthy thing.

Before ending our consideration of saying yes or no, it might be well

to look again at the magic word "involvement." Great pressure is brought to bear on a pastor to "get out into the world," to be "where it's at." There is enough truth in this urging to sway a pastor, and sometimes to sway him unduly. Too many picaque movements claim "involvement" as an excuse for being and to enlist churches and pastors in their endeavors.

Each new generation has its own special challenges, its own special "catch" words. Ours are peace, ecology, integration (now becoming a bit old fashioned), anti-Anti-Semitism, open housing, day-care centers, and others. All are good avenues for involvement, but good pastors have always been involved with these issues by the very nature of their work. How much specialization a pastor can afford is an individual question. If a pastor is doing a first-rate job of keeping his own store, then, and only then, he is ready to look at opportunities for branching out. ●

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Pastoral Partners or Puppets?

by Kenneth Wray Connors

The big conference table was totally encircled by the 22 men seated at it, some chatting animatedly, some idly leafing through papers, others staring pensively into space. The youngest appeared to be in his late 20's, while the oldest might have been 55 or 56. Their dress ran the gamut from flashy sport coats and gay neckties to ultra-conservative Oxford-gray business suits. In fact, so different were they in appearance and attitude, they might have been a random selection of salesmen, teachers, businessmen, and physicians. Actually, all had in common just one thing: their vocation. They were parish ministers.

The man at the head of the table cleared his throat noisily. "Gentlemen, let's get underway." Reluctantly, the last conversation tapered off. "We are here this morning, as you know, to hold a seminar on team ministry, its potential and its problems. You have come either because you are presently in a team

ministry, or because you contemplate starting or joining one."

He paused and looked around the circle of faces. "If this session is to pay off, we need to be completely frank and honest with one another. With that as a preamble, I'd like to throw open this meeting for your comments on the team ministry . . . your expectations for it . . . some of the obstacles and problems you may have encountered, or heard about from others. Let's explore all aspects, brethren."

APPRENTICE WORK

There was only a brief pause before the first halting comment came from a ruddy-faced minister of 50 or so.

"I've needed an assistant for some time," he said slowly. "My church has reached the size — almost 600 members — where I'm just not able to keep pace with the preparation of sermons and prayers, hospital and nursing-home calls, marriage counseling, administrative duties and paperwork, attending committee meetings, conducting wedding and funeral services, handling community contacts . . . well, you know what we're all up against. But

frankly, I hesitate to take on an assistant. I've heard of so many blow-ups that I'm wary. Am I right in this? Or simply chicken?"

"I think you're overly cautious, George," boomed out a portly man, removing a pipe from his mouth and vigorously brushing ashes from his gay plaid jacket. "I've had assistants for the past eight years, and they've saved me a lot of drudgery. Don't stay long . . . maybe two years at the most . . . but they learn something about the parish ministry, then move on. I couldn't get along without 'em."

One of the younger men at the table frowned. "Maybe I'm one of those fellows you couldn't get along without! I've only been out of seminary two years, and I'm an assistant in a suburban church. But I'm not happy. I'm simply marking time, doing menial jobs. Office work. Taking the young people on outings. Calling on shut-ins. Recruiting new members. Except for the summer, when the senior minister is on vacation, I don't get to preach one Sunday in 10." He shook his head sadly. "Do you call that getting experience?"

Kenneth Wray Connors is a freelance writer and a member of the First United Methodist Church of Philadelphia, Pa.

"Yes, but if you preached every other Sunday, what would the congregation say?" demanded another of the older men.

"I'll tell you," someone volunteered. "They'd say, 'Why isn't the senior minister preaching every Sunday? Look what we're paying him! Yet we're having to listen to a young guy re-work his seminary sermons.'"

"The trouble with young ministers is they want to get to the top without serving their apprenticeship," put in another older man, almost petulantly. "They should take a little church in some small parish, and learn what it's all about. Then after a few years of struggling with all the duties involved, they'd be glad to get into a team ministry. And they'd have more to offer."

A PLACE IN THE SUN

There was a pause as someone started to pass a coffee pot around the table. Then a man with a mustache and closely-cropped beard spoke up. "You've been talking about *young men* in a team ministry. Usually they've got problems, I agree. But so do older, more experienced men. Take my case, for example. I've been out of seminary 14 years, and I've had my own churches during eight of those years. For the past three years I've been an associate on the staff of a large church. And I've had it" — he raised his hand to his throat — "up to here!"

"What seems to be the trouble?" asked the man who had opened the meeting.

"Basically, the senior minister. He treats me like a young assistant. My professional competence isn't recognized. The boss man makes all the

decisions. Unilaterally. Seldom is my advice sought. Yet I'm expected to carry a heavy load of pastoral counseling, sick calls, adult education, new member training, and the like. In fact, I do just about everything in the parish but preach at the main service on Sunday. Instead, I'm permitted to conduct the early-bird service. Big deal!"

"That's not good," someone muttered. "Separate services tend to divide a congregation into two churches."

"You say your advice isn't sought," put in another. "Maybe you should develop plans on your own initiative, then present them to the senior minister. Something tangible he can buy."

The bearded man shook his head. "I've done that. But he won't buy anything he hasn't created himself. He's a prima donna. They call the church 'Dr. Smith's church' because he preaches all the time, and is always in the limelight."

"That's a rough situation," commented one of the younger men.

"Many in the congregation see my side of it," he went on. "They tell me they want to help me. They feel I'm not getting a fair shake."

"And maybe you aren't," agreed a man at the end of the table. "But there's usually another side to these stories, too. Oh, I'm a senior minister myself, and you'll accuse me of being biased, and maybe I am. But this I know, and from long experience: the associate or assistant minister invariably wins a lot of sympathy from many in the congregation because they identify with him as the underdog. But every

time some major problem or crisis arises, it's considered the fault of the senior minister. And, in a sense, it's exactly that. He's the man who carries the responsibility, and he's the man who gets the blame. So don't picture him as knee-deep in clover."

"I wish there were some way of avoiding all this controversy and bad feeling," mused one of the younger ministers thoughtfully. "When I decided to enroll in seminary, it was because I felt called to be a disciple of Christ, to the best of my ability. I dreamed of working creatively with like-minded men to help equip lay people for a life of Christian service. It sounded exciting. But where is that *agape love* we learned about at seminary? Is the ministry just another business? Are we partners or puppets? I'm confused!"

AN AMBIGUOUS ROLE

And well might our young friend feel confused. For seldom do we bear in mind that ministers are the earthen vessels in which the wine of the spirit must be carried and dispensed. Like lay people they, too, have feet of clay!

In certain respects the ministry resembles the medical profession. Like a physician, the pastor works with many people on an intensely personal, often emotional basis. But unlike most physicians, he is also exposed to people "in the mass" (as our Roman Catholic friends might put it). His pulpit role inevitably takes on some of the aspects of the theater, as people judge him according to his ability to articulate abstract ideas, to speak forcefully, to use colorful language, to interpret through modern parable and illustra-

" . . . churches with a team ministry face an ever-present danger. Any flare-up in the professional staff serious enough to leak out into the congregation can intensify . . . to a point where members begin choosing sides, forming opposing factions intent on damning or deifying the minister who has become the center of the controversy."

"How important it is that the team ministry become . . . a microcosm of the church, demonstrating to the laity by example how this *koinonia*—this fellowship in Christ—can be attained!"

tion . . . yes, and even to entertain.

But beyond this, as ministers strive to impress upon their congregations the relevance of the Christian gospel, ethically and morally and in humanitarian terms, challenging their parishioners' complacent attitude toward the issues confronting them daily, those in the pews soon find their pet phobias and prejudices being exposed. Few teachers become popular by striving to correct a student's shortcomings. Yet here is a teacher who not only strives to do just that, but consciously or subconsciously identifies himself with God. How *dare* he do such a thing! After all, he's merely a man . . . a modest mortal who drives a four-year-old Chevy and is paid a paltry nine thousand a year and lives in a house which he doesn't even own!

Thus develops in the minds and hearts of many church members an ambivalent attitude toward their ministers: affection for the one who socializes with them, holds their hand in times of stress, sees them through the crises of life . . . but irritation toward the one who stands before them as a surrogate for God himself. For although we find it easy to love God, whom we cannot see, we find it infinitely more difficult to love a God symbol whom we *can* see, especially when he is shaking a finger and chiding us from the throne-like eminence of a lofty pulpit. As a result, churches with a team ministry face an ever-present danger. Any flare-up in the professional staff serious enough to leak out into the congregation can intensify this ambivalence to a point where members begin choosing sides, forming opposing factions intent on damning or deifying the minister who has become the center of

the controversy. Such a situation can develop into a parish-wide tug-of-war which invariably hurts the ministers, both factions, and the entire church family.

PARTNERS OR PUPPETS?

Can anything be done to minimize or prevent such distressing situations? Can a measure of unity and cooperation be fostered in a group ministry? Can the pastors become partners, and not mere puppets? Can the laity be educated to play a responsible, constructive role in helping to maintain pastoral health?

Let's look at a few of the "hazards" which may prove dangerous to ministerial health, along with some simple precautions to circumvent the danger.

First, no minister should join the "team" unless he is *compatible, theologically and philosophically*, with the others. This does not imply that he should be a carbon copy of the others. A contrast in age, in academic training, in experience, in fields of expertise, will usually enhance the creativity and versatility of any staff. Similarly, the addition of an ordained woman, or someone of different ethnic background, may strengthen the total ministry, depending upon the nature of the church and its mission. But in any case, the ministers must agree theologically on the foundations of the Christian faith, philosophically on the type of ministry needed, and on the role of a team ministry in meeting that need.

Second, each minister must be *team oriented, emotionally as well as intellectually*. He must feel secure enough in his own self-knowledge to enjoy seeing a colleague excel, yet must never permit the team

ministry to become an excuse for not striving to excel in his assigned area of responsibility. Like a good football player he should run interference when another carries the ball, displaying the same spirit he expects from others when he is the ball carrier. If he is a "loner" who insists on having his own way, he should stay away from team ministries (and probably from *any* ministry!). Above all, the team minister should not be concerned about status to a point where he craves the adulation of the congregation. Although he will understandably want to feel their interest, their appreciation, their affection, he must not require the *exclusive* support of lay people in order to fulfill his emotional needs.

Third, all members of the team ministry must have a *clear understanding of their duties, responsibilities, and authority*, as developed in conjunction with the proper committee of lay people. Assignments should recognize the expertise of each minister, the areas for which he has a particular affinity, his need for challenges and growth-potential, as well as an equitable distribution of the work load. Authority vested in the senior minister, or in the co-ministers (where such a structure exists) should be specific. All this, along with procedures and practices relating to personnel, should be embodied in a manual given to each staff member. By reviewing annually all assignments, the changing interests and professional development of each minister can become the basis of shifts in assignments, thus introducing variety, rotational training, and changes in interface with lay people on various committees . . . all important for guarding against "going stale." At the same time, of

course, compensation and prerequisites should be reassessed.

Fourth, *free and frank communication among ministers* is essential. At regular staff meetings, specific assignments for the week will be made by the senior minister, or negotiated by the co-ministers. Newly activated projects will be discussed. Problems and opportunities will be shared, and advice pooled so that the best thinking of the group can be brought to bear. Ideally, each staff member then will understand how his duties will supplement or complement the activities of the others. At the same time, through the interchange of creative ideas and experiences, each member of the staff will benefit professionally, and the work of the church become more effective.

Fifth, *any minister must have free access to a sympathetic and friendly "court of appeal"* — normally, the pastor-parish committee. He should be able to bring to this group any personal problem not satisfactorily handled through the normal administrative channels. Throughout the year, the ministers should attend committee meetings on a programmed basis — singly and "en masse" — to share with the group reports on the progress of their ministries. All discussions should be held in strict confidence, with no minutes kept on sensitive issues, but simply a personal note of confirmation provided as to the conclusions reached.

EDUCATING THE LAITY

While all of these precautions are being taken to help the ministers operate as pastoral partners, what of the laity? How can we educate the members of the church who never serve on a pastoral relations committee, and who have little comprehension of what is involved in ministering to a large parish? Can lay people really play a significant role in promoting harmony?

Let's consider three ways in which their help can be enlisted.

First, *seminars can be held on the ministry of the church*, at which each minister in turn explains his rationale, how he operates, the types of services he performs. This can provide an answer for the member who frequently asks, often petulantly,

"What do the ministers really do to earn their salaries?" In addition to combating this "iceberg syndrome" — in which only the tip of the minister's work is visible — these seminars can provide a forum for discussing new directions, new ministries, new forms of mission. Out of such meetings might come agreement, for example, on the need for a street ministry, or a ministry to drug addicts, to unmarried mothers, to alcoholics, to prison parolees. Through questions and answers, the ministers can strive to sensitize the members to the deeper role they can play in Christian service. For if a church ever is to become truly effective, every lay person must find his personal form of ministry to others.

Second, *items in the parish paper and occasional letters to the members* from the chairman of the pastoral relations committee can explain to the entire parish, in advance, any new direction in the church's ministry being contemplated. By avoiding surprises, by letting the members in on plans still in a formative stage, future objections and antagonism can often be minimized.

Third, *the members can be urged to support* their ministers, and to appreciate their various unique talents. Stress can be placed on the church as a family in Christ, in which responsible Christians recognize that gossip, the spreading of ill-founded rumors, and indulgence in petty criticism, simply are not worthy of men and women who are seeking to live together in trust and faith. Reconciliation, clearly, must be fostered at home before any member tries to carry it beyond the confines of the parish. In other words, the church must be a place where Christians learn not to sulk when their every wish is not acted upon, not to strike back when they feel that a person or an idea has offended them, not to chortle with glee when a form of ministry they opposed meets with failure.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Having endeavored to help the ministers to a realization of their high calling, and the congregation to a new sensitivity to their role in the family of Christ, is anything

left to be said?

Only this!

If the church of Jesus Christ should function as a microcosm of society, embracing a diversity of people who serve as a laboratory to work out, perfect, demonstrate, and spread to others the good news of God's love, forgiveness, and reconciliation, how important it is that the team ministry become, in turn, a microcosm of the church family, demonstrating to the laity by example how this *koinonia* — this fellowship in Christ — can be attained! Doesn't this call for a ministerial staff which prays together, studies together, affirms one another, and celebrates with joy the unity of the faith? And includes in its fellowship the minister's wives? ●

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"For many of us, organizations substituted for some of the caste and class systems of older countries. We often seemed to join organizations just to keep other people out!"

The Joiners--Americans and Their Organizations

by Cynthia Wedel

From the early days of our nation, Americans have been known as "joiners." Foreign observers have laughed at us, or — with de Toqueville — have wondered at our propensity for gathering to promote causes or to help our neighbors. "Where two or three Americans gather together, they elect officers and set up an organization," is a familiar taunt.

It is not hard to figure out why this should be so. Our forefathers came to this country from the organized society of the Old World, where there had been both government and an established social or caste system. That was so often rigid and oppressive was the reason why many of them left. Life was so highly structured and stratified that an ambitious person had little hope of moving out of the geographical location or economic and occupa-

tional box into which he was born. While this could be frustrating, it offered some level of security and assurance. Even those of us who were kidnapped in Africa and brought here unwillingly as slaves came from societies which over the centuries had developed structures and governmental forms, as recent studies of African history are making clear. While the slaves' opportunities to form organizations in this country were severely limited, they did find ways of banding together for mutual help. The vitality and cohesiveness of the Black churches testify to this.

GATHERING FOR SURVIVAL

The early white settlers, finding themselves in a new land, with no established government, no traditions, no organized services, had no choice but to gather together to accomplish their purposes — raising barns, establishing churches, punishing criminals, or educating children. Until the time when formal government began to take shape these were all voluntary associations. Of

course, there was usually a colonial governor appointed by the ruler of whichever European country claimed the territory, but they were ill equipped to meet the needs of people, or even to enforce the laws.

Even when government became established along the Atlantic seaboard, adventurers soon began moving west into new pioneering situations where they depended again on voluntary associations to meet their needs. In some parts of our nation, this was true until the middle of the last century. Even under a federal government, with emerging state and local authorities, the immense size of the country and the predominantly rural and small-town life of most Americans made voluntary self-help association necessary and desirable through most of our history.

Our founding fathers were profoundly influenced by this way of life. One of the Constitution's most novel aspects is its injunction against the establishment of a state religion — making the churches in the United States entirely voluntary. In the Bill

Dr. Wedel is the Associate Director of the Center for a Voluntary Society in Washington, D.C.

of Rights, citizens were guaranteed the right of voluntary assembly and association. Such organizations, when established for the common welfare, were further encouraged by being freed from taxation.

CLASS, CASTE, AND FELLOWSHIP

Historically, therefore, the American experience has been almost unique in making us a nation of joiners. Psychologically, too, our experience has been different from that of most older nations. Many of our forebears came from western and southern Europe — old and densely populated areas, where people lived close together, and where privacy or loneliness were almost non-existent. People out of this background, thrown suddenly into a vast land, where it was often possible to live miles from one's nearest neighbor, must often have felt too much privacy and a real loneliness which impelled them to seek congenial friends and to find some excuse to meet at regular intervals. For many

of us, organizations substituted for some of the caste and class systems of older countries. We often seemed to join organizations just to keep other people out!

Through much of our history, therefore, we have joined together in a variety of organizations — to worship God, to meet human needs, for self-protection, and for sheer sociability. Until fairly recently, Americans could be counted on to join organizations readily and enthusiastically. Much of the welfare, health, recreational, and educational activity in our communities was generated by a wide variety of general or specialized organizations. It was not always necessary for an organization to have a very clear purpose. People would join for a variety of reasons and then could be called upon for service. In a very real sense the churches in this country have been one form of voluntary association among many. This fact, and the American habit of joining,

have been partially responsible for this country's extremely high church attendance and participation, in contrast with many lands where there was a dominant established church. Most of us who are active, believing Christians would, of course, deny that the church is just another human, voluntary association. But we may have to admit that the majority of people have so regarded it, and have behaved as though it were.

For this reason, it behooves us to consider what is happening in the world of voluntary associations today. It may help to explain what is happening in the churches, and may give us clues for the future.

THE MADDENING CROWD

We have, in the past 50 years, and very sharply in the past 25 years, moved into a greatly changed world. Population growth, industrialization, mobility, and urbanization have inverted many of the old patterns. We are in some ways in the kind of situation which has long

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“ . . . The immense size of the country and the predominantly rural and small-town life of most Americans made voluntary self-help association necessary and desirable through most of our history.”

existed in other nations. The size and complexity of social problems in a technological, urban society have made it necessary for government to take over and pay for many of the services to people that used to be provided by private organizations. Rising standards of health care and other professional services have escalated both costs and demand.

At the same time, the need for companionship and the desire to belong to organizations have been met for the majority of people. Indeed, in modern urban and suburban society, the pressures on people to join and participate in a rapidly growing number of groups is becoming a real problem. More and more of us find ourselves wanting to resign from, rather than join, organizations. It is not difficult, today, to gather evidence to demonstrate that people no longer want to join voluntary associations which expect them to participate in programs of voluntary action.

However, this conclusion is too easy. It is true that many traditional organizations, including many of the traditional “mainline” churches, are experiencing a falling off in membership and participation. At the same time, new groups – and new religious bodies – are springing up every day which are able to attract people and often win them to enthusiastic and active participation. These include fundamentalist or conservative religious groups such as the Jesus Movement, liberal “underground” churches, and “cause” groups dedicated to peace, ecology, new life-styles, or various kinds of liberation.

TIME, MORE OR LESS

While there has not as yet been enough solid research to give us definite answers as to why this shift in attitudes and actions has occurred, it is possible to suggest some ex-

planations which may provide guidelines for action. One element is certainly the increased tempo and pressure of urban life. While shortened work days and weeks and the availability of many services and labor-saving devices have increased the “discretionary” time of most people (that is, the time not required for earning a living or maintaining a home), many new developments have arisen to occupy the time thus made available. Commuting has, for many, become a way of life, sometimes requiring three or four hours a day. Chauffeuring children to and from school and to a host of scattered activities consumes a major block of time for many modern mothers. Pressure upon youth and adults to participate in a growing number of organizations in urban and suburban communities is very great. It even takes a good deal of time just to refuse to participate!

We are beginning to understand that the continuing education so necessary for professional men and women, or those who aspire to professional or skilled occupations, take time. Even recreation tends to be more time-consuming today. In an earlier era, much recreation was informal and took place in the home or in the immediate neighborhood, while today, much of our recreation is commercialized and requires going somewhere to participate, or simply to watch. Cultural activities – music, art, drama – also demand time, as does the ever-present television.

Modern men and women can choose what to do with much more of their time than could their grandparents, but they often feel a kind of time pressure which is new. And these same men and women are, in general, far more highly educated than their forebears, and very much better informed about the world.

Education and the great amount of information which the mass media make available to us have made people of today more critical and more skeptical – less willing to follow a leader or to accept as true a solution or course of action proposed by an individual or an organization. (If the most recent national elections seem to suggest the opposite of this, we need to remember that many millions of people did *not* vote for the winning side.)

BELONGING, OR . . .

One result of increasing pressure and growing skepticism or independent thinking is that many people today are less interested in belonging to organizations just for the sake of belonging. Many long-established groups – fraternities and sororities, masonic groups, women’s clubs, and others – report declines in membership similar to the declines in church membership. This may reflect a popular view that belonging to a church is very much the same as belonging to any kind of organization which has rather vague and generalized “good” purposes.

At the same time, and in spite of the many pressures on them, a large number of modern, well-informed people are astonishingly ready to join in when there is a clear and obvious need. This can be seen in many recent experiences. When young people were really outraged by the war in Indo-China, hundreds of thousands gave a great deal of time and energy to organizing and participating in marches and demonstrations. An ecological crisis or a disaster brings a great out-pouring of voluntary time and activity. People today are “cause-oriented.” They will respond quite readily with time, talent, and money if they can see that it is going to do some good for someone, or make a difference

in the community or the world.

As we study modern organizations which depend on and utilize volunteers it is increasingly apparent that those with a clear, sharp focus on a real need can still rally substantial support. Some which are more general in their programs can succeed

study of trend-setting religious communities indicated clearly that many of these new — and often very vital — groups are marked by a deep sense of community. Great emphasis is placed on open communication, honesty about feelings, acceptance, and expressions of warmth and affection.

willing to accept biblical fundamentalism, we may be able to learn from the conservative churches that a clear statement of the basic Christian gospel is important. Modern people are often confused. Their religious education at home and in Sunday School was probably very

"More and more of us find ourselves wanting to resign from, rather than join, organizations."

if they emphasize specific activities in which members can participate. Those in trouble are the ones which still try to enlist members, assuming that once a person "joins," he or she will then be available for service. A succinct way to say this is "who needs another meeting these days?" The old pattern of regular meetings with all the dreariness of parliamentary procedure and routine "programs" simply does not appeal to a great many busy, intelligent people today.

... "BE-LONGING"?

However, there is another element in modern life which seems almost to contradict what I have just said. There is growing among many people a feeling of alienation, loneliness, estrangement. It is the terrifying kind of loneliness in the midst of a crowd, which is different from the loneliness of the frontiersman. Probably some people have always felt alienated from those around them. But for most Americans in earlier generations, security and a sense of belonging could be found in the family, the neighborhood, a familiar community. We lived largely among people like ourselves, and warm human contact was readily available. People knew us well, and accepted us as we were. There was no need constantly to wear masks or to keep up appearances.

But our highly mobile society, and the anonymity of life in big cities, have robbed many people today of a group within which they feel comfortable and accepted. A recent

The same is true, also, of the human relations, human potential and growth movement which is expanding so rapidly. This seems to say that, in addition to responding to causes and real needs, modern people can often be led to participate in groups or organizations which offer fellowship and community at a depth level.

If all these things are true, surely they have a great deal to say to the churches. When the church was almost the only group readily accessible to most people, and when people found in the church an opportunity for fellowship and a chance to share in "good works" which nothing else offered, they tended to join and participate with considerable enthusiasm. Perhaps the leaders of the churches assumed too readily that people really understood the theological implications of church membership, and were not as rigorous as might have been wise in requiring more study and more commitment.

As Dean Kelley points out in his recent book, *Why the Conservative Churches Are Growing*, it is those religious bodies which require strict doctrinal adherence, a distinctive style of life, and a costly commitment which are attracting and holding members today. And in all of them there seems to be a very close-knit feeling of fellowship and deep concern for one another.

AN OPTION

While most of us in the "mainline" churches would be unable or un-

inadequate. They are intelligent and well-educated. Clergy and lay leadership might well experiment with new forms of adult education which would help thoughtful but uncertain people discover the meaning of the Christian faith for their own lives. This cannot be done today in the traditional classroom style, with lectures and minimal discussion. It will require a new form of adult education — beginning probably with the actual experiences of individuals, discussing and reflecting on these, and only as a final step looking for the resources of the Bible and theology which may illuminate their meaning. If such an opportunity were made available probably no great crowds would come, and this is good, because such a learning experience can best take place in a small group. It would be best, of course, in as heterogeneous a group as possible — men and women of various ages and different racial and social backgrounds — because only in such a mix can many different resources be found.

There are many seeking, hungry people today. The churches will not win many of them with formal services, or formal organizations. But if the churches can begin to offer fellowship at a deep level; answers to very real questions; a place where there is a chance to join with others in meeting real needs in the community and the world; then perhaps modern, over-busy, lonely, skeptical people may once again want to "join" Christ in his Church. ●

"What do we mean when we say 'volunteers are not free'? We mean that while they may not expect to be paid in money for their efforts, they do seek and expect to receive many different sorts of compensation . . . "

Recruiting Volunteers

by Lawrence I. Kramer, Jr.

Everyone from de Tocqueville to President Nixon has commented on the uniqueness and importance of volunteers in getting things done in American society.

Volunteers are involved in countless constructive activities that enrich their lives and the lives of others. Alone, or in tandem with trained professionals, they set policy, augment programs, and raise money for churches, schools and colleges, voluntary health agencies, child and youth-serving agencies, and groups concerned with the life of the poor, the suicidal, and the mentally troubled. Volunteers make possible our political campaigns. They insure the continued existence of our symphony orchestras, opera companies, and museums. They fight to preserve our natural heritage, as well as historic manmade monuments. Volunteers are into practically everything.

Volunteers are a more important and dynamic resource for most non-profit organizations than money! Nevertheless, very few volunteer-using organizations spend as much time, thought, or energy on the identification, recruitment, and construc-

Lawrence Kramer is associated with Kramer, Miller & Associates, a management consulting firm which specializes in helping public and private non-profit organizations take advantage of their opportunities and solve their problems.

tive employment of volunteers as they do on fund-raising.

All right, we agree that volunteers are important and wonderful—how can we recruit and hold them more successfully than we have? Here is an experience-born axiom that we use in our work with all kinds of voluntary organizations: Volunteers are not free!

THE COST

Building from the important premise that organizations that want to use volunteers incur some obligations, we have identified five basic requirements for successful volunteer recruiting:

1. *Know clearly what you want the volunteer to do.*
2. *Know why it is important.*
3. *Know where to look for volunteers.*
4. *Recruit the volunteer you want and need.*
5. *Help the volunteer to be successful.*

What do we mean when we say "Volunteers are not free"? We mean that while they may not expect to be paid in money for their efforts, they do seek and expect to receive many different sorts of compensation: companionship, status, a sense of achievement, *the feeling of having made a difference*, new knowledge, new experiences, and a new dimension to their lives. It is safe to say that most volunteers genuinely

want to contribute something of themselves, but at the same time, consciously or subconsciously, they seek some compensating reward for themselves. The volunteer-recruiter who understands this fact and analyzes the satisfaction that his prospect may seek can recruit more successfully for two reasons: (1) he can appeal to the prospective volunteer in a more attractive, specific manner; and (2) he can make sure that his organization makes every effort to fulfill its implicit "satisfaction contract" with recruits.

Let's examine a few case studies of different types of volunteers whom we have all known. These vignettes illustrate the varied reasons and combinations of reasons that motivate volunteers and also show the five basic requirements as set forth above.

A PLACE TO BE NEEDED

Frances B., 63 and a widow of 18 months, lives in a single small room in an inexpensive hotel. Her means are modest but adequate for her needs. She does not need to work for money. Before her children were born, she had been employed as a file clerk for several years in an insurance company office. She had enjoyed the work and had been good at it because of her orderly methodical approach.

Now, with the first acute pain of widowhood receding, but feeling

lonely and useless, she learns from a radio "spot" that the Volunteer Bureau is looking for volunteers to work in the office of the local Heart Association. Since her husband had died of a heart attack the thought of being of service to the Heart Association is particularly attractive to Frances. On a visit to the Heart Association Frances finds out that their special need is for someone to keep current the Association's mailing list of donors who receive the quarterly newsletter describing the research and community service programs their contributions support.

Over a cup of coffee Frances hears about the job requirements from the volunteer who has been doing the work, but who's moving out of the area, and from the Association's office manager. The office manager points out that a mailing list is only useful if it is current, and, with city people moving about as much as they do, lists tend to become outdated quickly. Frances learns from the departing volunteer that with the list at its present size the job takes about five or six hours a week, and entails typing labels, making cards for each new donor, changing addresses of donors who've moved, and removing addresses no longer current. The office manager, pleased that Frances had had filing experience which she had obviously enjoyed, promises additional help as the list grows and points out that Frances will be able to schedule her work time to her own convenience. Frances agrees to try the job for one month.

That was six years ago. Since then the list has tripled and Frances spends more than 15 hours a week, often working with other volunteers, in the Heart Association office.

VALUE RECEIVED

Why is Frances' experience a success story for her and for the Heart Association that recruited her? Frances has a place where she is needed

and wanted. In the companionship of the office setting she found an antidote for her loneliness and useful work that fits her skills and personality. For the Heart Association, Frances' work requires only that they maintain a congenial work environment, provide additional help when needed, recognize the value of Frances' contribution, and outline a precise, well-defined job to be done. No money has changed hands, but value has certainly been received on both sides. The Heart Association "pays" Frances by giving her a sense of purpose and accomplishment. In return, Frances gives time and skills worth several thousand dollars a year.

Frances' story is an example of one of the most typical uses of volunteers. The job to be done was simple and concrete. The Volunteer Bureau was the recruiting vehicle which brought Frances and the job together. But the lesson to be learned for volunteer-recruiters is the same as in the more complex situations we'll look at in a minute.

To recruit and retain volunteers it is important to know what you want done. Know how and where to look for people who can do the job. Meet the human needs of the volunteer.

In the case of Frances B. we started with her needs and motives and showed how they were met successfully by a volunteer-recruiting organization. In the next situation we are going to start with a need, an idea, and a volunteer-recruiter.

RECRUITING EXPERTISE

Reverend Matthew K. was concerned because his city lacked retirement housing for middle-income retirees. While his congregation shared his concern they felt that the magnitude of the problem was too great for them to handle. However, because of the great need they did authorize Rev. K. to see if he could put together an ecumenical committee to get a project started.

Then Rev. K. made an important move: He stopped to analyze the kinds of expertise and community muscle he'd need to deal with the complex problems of finance, construction, governmental relations, and politics which stood between him and his goal. Simply not able to identify all the help needed and ready to throw in the towel, he remembered that while "it's impossible to pick a rug up from the middle — it's easy to pick it up from any edge." He stopped trying to anticipate every problem and every necessary resource. Instead, he tried to identify one key person to whom he could turn for help.

Rev. K. picked out a tough, veteran City Councilwoman with a long-standing interest in public housing as his key person. Taking his courage in both hands, he met with the Councilwoman, told her about the project he and his congregation had in mind. He explained why he thought it was important and what it might involve, and asked if she would help.

She was convinced by his strong arguments and agreed to chair a small committee to work out a feasible plan. Then the two of them began to list the kinds of help required and the resulting list contained the names of some of the busiest and most prestigious people in town. Rev. K. was aghast. "They can't possibly make the time for our project."

The Councilwoman had not won her political spurs by being bashful: "Reverend, is this project really important?"

"Of course it is," he said, "but . . ."

"But, nothing," said his first volunteer recruit. "I agreed to help because you sold me on the idea and on the importance of my help. Others will help too if we tell them why we need them to join us!" And they did.

A MATTER OF COMPETENCE

Just like the Councilwoman they

"The volunteer who feels that he has wasted his time or who feels exploited or used only as a money-saving expedient is a lost friend and a new enemy."

recognized that such a large, complex housing project couldn't be done by just anyone. Special experience and know-how were required and they responded to the challenge. From this beginning Rev. K's concern eventually grew into a soundly financed, well-constructed, seven million dollar retirement facility for middle-income retirees.

To get his first recruit Rev. K. had to know what he wanted done and why it was important. He knew that if he couldn't explain it clearly, then it wasn't clear enough in his own mind. The Councilwoman forced him to recognize that specially qualified people would be required to get the job done.

Very often volunteers are chosen, not because they are necessary, but because they are available. For important jobs availability is often not enough. In our experience the successful volunteer-recruiter is the one who remembers that volunteers are people, has a clear, explicit picture of what the volunteer is to do, why it's important; and why the target volunteer is a good choice for the job. When the recruiter has all these requirements in mind he still has to figure out where to look for volunteer help. For many types of volunteers, the Volunteer Bureau, if your community is blessed with one, is an excellent place to start.

The Volunteer Bureau serves as a broker between organizations seeking volunteer help and prospective volunteers looking for rewarding assignments. While it is successful in many different volunteer-search situations, it is generally most effective in finding volunteers for routine helping roles. The organization seeking special skills, technical expertise, or community "clout" will have to develop other resource banks.

The good Volunteer Bureau executive will force the volunteer-recruiter to develop a precise picture of the volunteer job he's trying to fill. This in itself contributes greatly to successful volunteer recruiting, because volunteers, being people, like to know what's expected of them.

USING WHAT'S AT HAND

Sometimes, as in the case of Rev. K., the complex nature of the job dictates that one must use the entire

community as resource pool if the diverse talents required are to be found. More often the primary volunteer resource pool is right under the recruiter's nose, taken for granted, unclearly perceived, and poorly used.

Consider the plight of Bob S., Chairman of the Church Extension Committee of a denominational judicatory in Hawaii. Bob's organization was a client of our management consultant firm. We were helping them develop a reorganization plan. Their membership included a heavy representation from the establishment power structure.

In the course of our work, Bob asked me to recommend a mainland real estate firm to advise on disposal of some church-owned property. I started to make a suggestion, but then realized where the best answer really lay. I asked Bob if he could name six bank, loan-office, or real-estate executives from within his own constituency right there in Hawaii.

Bob paused a moment, nonplussed. Then he ticked off nine names—people he knew in such positions. He agreed that any one of them could give expert advice on the problem confronting his committee. I suggested that he call on the person he and his committee felt to be the best qualified of the nine possibilities. Bob was to tell the nominee, truthfully, that careful study of the membership resources of the church indicated that he was the one best qualified to help with the specific, critical job at hand. "Then ask for his help," I said.

Several weeks later Bob called me at my San Francisco office. He told me that they had followed my suggestion. Much to their amazement, the prospective volunteer had appeared delighted at being approached and had responded generously. He had not only agreed to help personally, but made his company's plane available for an inspection of the properties under consideration!

"WE NEED YOU!"

Was his very positive and generous response surprising? It shouldn't have been. After all, the request was a compliment of high order. There

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"Don't be too quick to label people because of their occupations. If it is true that inside every fat person there is a thin person trying to get out, it is also true that a banker may not want to be on the finance committee."

was a specific job to be done. The target volunteer had been identified as the best qualified person for the job. He was told: "Here's what has to be done. We think you are the best person to do it. We need you."

Know clearly what you want to do. Look for help first from among the human resources closest to your own organization — within the constituency. Carefully select the qualified volunteer you want and go after him or her.

The case of Bob S. clearly shows the importance of knowing the capabilities of the individuals who make up your membership. It is relatively simple to start an information bank on interests and skills of members — professions, interests, hobbies — so that when you have a specific job that needs to be done your group has a detailed talent bank to draw from. Furthermore, most organizations only talk to their members when they want money. Building a talent information bank gives organizational leadership and staff a chance to talk together as concerned people, not as solicitor and prospective donor. It's an opportunity not to be missed.

BUILDING YOUR VOLUNTEER BANK

If you want to start building and organizing your own information bank of volunteers, here are some pointers: Start with a few assumptions. First, you can't hurt most persons' feelings by asking him or her to talk about himself. Second, many members of your constituency will be grateful for the opportunity to make a unique contribution of themselves if they can be shown that their input can make a difference. Third, your organization will be more effective in its work if it purposely harnesses the energies of its members to the accomplishment of worthwhile, mutually agreed upon goals.

Finally, you have a reservoir of skills and interests hidden in your membership waiting to be tapped.

Always remembering that volunteers are people, put together a simple questionnaire that will enable membership teams to uncover useful hidden resources buried in your constituency.

You want to find out what your members think they do well and what they like to do, which is not always the same thing. Do they prefer to be part of a group or to work alone? Do they prefer to lead or to follow? Do they like routine, or would they rather come to grips with finite "one shot" projects? Are they gregarious, choosing to work with people rather than with things or ideas?

You will also want to know about their professional or occupational training and experience, but don't be too quick to label people because of their occupations. If it is true that inside every fat person there is a thin person trying to get out, it is also true that a banker may not want to be on the finance committee. Some teachers like to teach avocationally but others would rather do something totally different. When we make a major career decision in our lives we foreclose some alternatives because we can only tread one path at a time. Volunteer activity can reopen some of those doors we have had to close in the past. We can enjoy and exercise old skills and interests which have been laid aside as our career interest preempts our time and energy. As a volunteer the banker can be a teacher, the housewife a camp program planner, the carpenter a fund-raiser, the teacher a policy-maker.

The recruiting of volunteers is the beginning of a new relationship between the volunteer and the organization to which he or she brings his

time, energy, and skills. The very act of recruitment carries with it opportunities and obligations to both parties. The volunteer is given the opportunity to serve, expand his horizons, and enrich his experience. The organization, particularly its professional staff, has the obligation to use the talents of the volunteers wisely and constructively. The volunteer must earn his successes and satisfactions, but the paid professional has the responsibility for seeing that everything is done to make possible the volunteer's success.

The volunteer who feels that he has wasted his time or who feels exploited or used only as a money-saving expedient is a lost friend and a new enemy. Staff support for volunteer efforts is an essential: setting up meetings, distributing notices and minutes, and follow-up on details between meetings are all usually staff responsibilities. They may seem insignificant, but they are crucial. Anyone who doubts this need only look around at the numerous failures among unstaffed volunteer groups. They start out with a burst of enthusiasm but they are soon dragged down because volunteers are loath to get involved with the day-to-day detail provisions of organizational continuity that staff members are paid to provide.

CONCLUSION

Recruiting volunteers should be fun. It opens up new horizons for the volunteer and it expands the capabilities of the recruiting organization. It does require that the recruiting agency know what it wants to do, why it is important, and where its volunteer resources are. The organization that does this homework conscientiously and then recruits the people it needs and helps them to achieve success and satisfaction will never have to resort to conscription. ●

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The Church and Its Dual Status System

by James C. Hodgetts

Business leaders have known for more than two decades that status plays a major role in the motivation of subordinates. It may possibly be a factor in the leadership of church volunteers as well. A look at the case of Henry Jones, potential church leader, may be of value in this connection.

Henry was an electrical engineer who had been able to retire at age 50 because of a successful invention that provided him with financial independence. Soon after his retirement, Henry and his wife decided to return to the place of their birth, a southern town of about 50,000, after an absence of 30 years. Henry had always belonged to a church, and had attended whenever the weather was too bad for golf; so, after about a year, the Jones family looked over the local churches and selected the one which had the most liberal minister, the nicest building, the lowest debt, and the most comfortable pews. Henry discovered that he hadn't the proper connection to obtain a membership in the local country club, so he started attending church regularly. He even began to be interested in what was going on.

AN OFFER OF SERVICE

One morning the minister preached an inspiring sermon on the distinction between those who participated in the work of the church and those who were merely spectators. Touched, Henry decided to rededicate his life to Christ and to become a vital part of the church.

He began the very next morning by attending the men's Monday breakfast. The discussion turned to integration. Henry had come to believe that blacks should at least have an equality of opportunity, and he was surprised and angered at some of the views expressed during the conversation. He nevertheless managed to keep his mouth closed until one of the church elders expressed the opinion that "they should send them all back to Africa." At this point Henry spoke up. The minister said nothing, and soon afterwards the meeting broke up.

On the following Sunday there was a request for volunteers to teach in the Sunday school. What better way to participate in the life of the church? Henry notified the superintendent that he would be willing to teach one of the older youth groups. But no one ever responded to Henry's offer. No one ever contacted him.

A request went out for ushers. Once more Henry volunteered, and once more his offer went unheeded. Henry decided that his services had not been wanted because of his racial views. Deciding that these same views might make his full-fledged participation in the general community difficult, Henry yielded to his wife's urging and accepted a teaching post in a state technical school in one of the border states.

ANOTHER OFFER

Henry and his wife canvassed the churches of their new town, this time looking for a church in which Henry believed he might be of service. They found a small church with a

young minister that seemed just right. Most of the members of the congregation were middle-aged, had belonged to the church for a number of years, and seemed dedicated to its work. After the Joneses had been accepted into the membership, Henry told a group of the church leaders of his desire to be a participant rather than a spectator. Everyone applauded Henry's commitment warmly.

The Joneses attended virtually every church service and most of the social functions. But the only thing Henry was ever asked to contribute was money, which he did. A call went out for an adult Sunday school teacher. Henry was told that he hadn't attended the training school and therefore wasn't qualified. One Sunday morning the members were asked to check a list of church activities and functions in which they would be willing to serve. Henry indicated that he would serve as a deacon, an elder, or in any capacity where he might be needed.

After waiting a year, nothing had happened.

When he discussed the question with the minister, Henry was informed that he must be patient. After all, he had been a member of the church for only two years.

A QUESTION OF STATUS

Henry had been "in the church" for two years. But he had never penetrated the inner circles of the church community. He concluded that, as in most institutions, the church had its own peculiar status system. He decided that while he had too little status in the church to

“ . . . while he had too little status in the church to be offered important jobs, he had too much status in the community at large to be offered lesser jobs.”

be offered important jobs, he had too much status in the community at large to be offered lesser jobs.

According to Peter Weissenberg, “status involves the idea of vertical differentiation in a social system. Status may be inherited (ascribed) or earned (acquired). In our society, generally, status is acquired rather than ascribed” (*Introduction to Organizational Behavior* [Scranton: Intext Educational Publishers], 1971, p. 193). Another recent commentator, Keith Davis, argues that status is simply the social rank of a person in comparison with others in a given social system. He goes on to say that status is represented by status symbols which are the visible, external trappings which attach to a man’s person or position and serve as evidence of his social rank. (*Human Behavior at Work*, 4th ed. [New York: McGraw Hill], 1972, pp. 29-36.)

Henry Jones was socially unacceptable in the first church, and hadn’t enough inherited or earned status in the second. In both he was cut off from making a meaningful contribution.

SYMBOLS AND MOTIVATION

The importance of status congruence, as it is called, has long been recognized by business organizations. By this is meant that proper motivation involves a congruence between the job and the symbols which are attached to it. Two vice

presidents with equal status within the company must be given equal symbols of that status — if one has a carpeted office, so must the other.

However much it may differ in other ways, the church organization involves some of the same sorts of difficulties. But the problem within the church is complicated by the fact that there seems to be a dual status system at work. One can give important jobs only to those who have in some way earned them (acquired status); but one must also consider the status which church members have in the larger community and therefore bring with them to the church (“inherited” or ascribed status). It is difficult to give low-status jobs to persons with high community status. With few exceptions, for example, M.D.’s would prefer not to wait on tables at the annual pancake breakfast.

“THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST . . .”

In a mobile society such as we have today, many young business executives are transferred every few

years. They seldom remain in one place long enough to gain status in a church sufficient for important jobs. Yet they have too much status in the larger community to be offered lesser opportunities to serve. They cannot participate and are therefore lost to the church.

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Your yearly life insurance costs can average \$94.50*

* Perhaps you've already heard of the recent study conducted by the State of Pennsylvania's Insurance Department. It's a comparative analysis of insurance rates entitled "A Shopper's Guide to Life Insurance", and it has attracted national attention by showing which of the largest companies have the lowest cost and which have the highest cost for straight life insurance (i.e., Whole Life or Ordinary Life).

Based on the 166 *largest* life insurance companies doing business in Pennsylvania (according to amount of insurance in force), the study was confined to a single plan of insurance (Ordinary Life), of a specific size (\$10,000), for one projected duration (20 years) and 3 ages at issue (20, 35 and 50). The cost at these 3 ages is a good index of relative cost of these policies at other ages.

The study shows that the consumer may effect significant saving by shopping for insurance! Although one company's yearly premiums may be less than another's, the true cost of its insurance may be much higher.

The Pennsylvania Insurance Department comparison is based on the widely accepted "interest adjusted method" which takes into account such factors as cash values and the amount the policyholder could have earned on his money if he had invested at 4% interest. The comparisons incorporate dividends (if any) on currently effective scales, which are not guaranteed, and are subject to change. This method produces an *average yearly cost* for each policy which reflects the cost of the insurance protection element of the policy.

Here's what the study's 10 highest-cost companies charge you for a \$10,000 Ordinary Life insurance policy if you are a 35 year old man:

Company (Names on request)	Annual Premium	Average Yearly Cost of Insurance
"A"	\$192.20	\$94.50
"B"	237.00	88.70
"C"	195.70	87.80
"D"	196.30	85.90
"E"	183.60	86.40
"F"	188.00	86.90
"G"	250.40	88.30
"H"	190.90	84.70
"I"	190.50	85.50
"J"	237.60	87.10
MINISTERS LIFE	194.60	34.80

Ministers Life can provide you with the same policy at \$194.60 annually and just \$34.80 average yearly cost!

...but we'll give you the same coverage at an average yearly cost of only \$34.80*

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Company (Names on request)	Annual Premium	Average Yearly Cost of Insurance
"Q"	\$229.10	\$42.00
"R"	228.40	43.10
"S"	230.30	46.30
"T"	218.50	46.70
"U"	233.60	48.60
"V"	234.80	45.50
"W"	235.70	46.10
"X"	231.60	49.00
"Y"	214.10	48.90
"Z"	226.10	49.50
MINISTERS LIFE	194.60	34.80

Ministers Life rates are still lower! Annual premium: \$194.60. Average yearly cost \$34.80.

Similarly, comparing the same insurance coverage for males who are 50 years old, Ministers Life rates are the lowest: the average annual cost revealed by the study varies from \$119.20 to as high as \$202.40, depending on the company. *With Ministers Life, the cost is only \$106.70.*

What about costs for younger policyholders? The lowest average annual cost of the same \$10,000 life insurance from one of the 166 companies for a 20 year old man was \$22.40, the highest \$61.00. *With Ministers Life, it would be \$22.70!*

Although cost is only one of many factors you should think about when you buy life insurance, the Pennsylvania study points up the wisdom of shopping before you make your decision . . . and don't base your decision solely on premium costs! Remember too that the study does not cover *all* life insurance (such as term insurance), and that it is based on a \$10,000 straight life policy for a 20-year period. Don't recklessly cancel any straight life insurance you may already have, as the study indicates switching companies can be an expensive error.

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A Sermon: Bridging the Dialogue Gap

by William J. Vamos

A man with his eyes swollen and his face bandaged was asked by a friend what the trouble was. "Nothing," he said, "except that at a party last night I was standing up talking when I ought to have been sitting down listening."

Many of us are afflicted with the same problem. We need to learn how to listen to other people and to appreciate their ideas and feelings as much as we do our own. Paul seemed to feel that such an attempt at human understanding was a major ingredient of the Christian life. He said it very forthrightly: "Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance . . .," and "Don't become set in your own opinions."

The danger of giving too much credit to your own ideas and attitudes is that you will miss the larger picture and insulate yourself from truth. The fact is that no one ever begins to grasp the truth of any concept or issue without entering into tension with other ideas and attitudes, many of which may be in opposition to one's own position.

George V. Denny, Jr., in an issue of *This Week Magazine*, gave an illustration of this which is helpful. He said:

During my post-broadcast talks when "America's Town Meeting of the Air" is on tour, I often tell this anecdote and hold up a ball which, from the audience's point of view is black.

"What color is this ball, please" I ask.

Invariably someone shouts, "Black!"

"Right," I admit. "From your point of view the ball is black."

William Vamos is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Elkhart, Indiana.

Yet from the point of view of those of us here on the platform, it is white. If you insist that what you see is right and we insist that what we see is right, we can get nowhere.

"You might overcome us with the power of ballots or bullets, but" — and at this moment I turn the ball around — "as we see now, the ball is both black and white."

What does this mean in terms of human relations? The tragedy is that we cannot turn our social, economic, and political problems around for each other as readily as we turn a black-and-white ball.

You are bound by your heredity, your environment, and your habits of thinking, and I am bound by the same limitations. The only way for us to settle our differences and arrive at sensible conclusions is through honest discussion, with integrity of purpose and mutual respect. . . .

All this has special meaning for us right now. If we expect to find the right answers to the grave problems we face today, we must give our minds a chance by exposing them to all valid points of view. In short, we must dedicate our hearts, minds, and spirits to the search for truth, not only as citizens of our nation, but as citizens of the world and members of the human race. Then, and only then, can we reach the kind of decisions that will make us truly free.

ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS

The church has an even greater responsibility to function in dialogue, since we Christians are already deeply related to each other through Christ. Paul inspires this dialogical

perspective when he says: "For just as you have many members in one physical body and those members differ in their functions, so we, though many in number, compose one body in Christ and are all members of one another." (Rom. 12:4, 5)

If we are honest with ourselves, however, we must readily admit that there is a significant dialogue gap within the contemporary church. Our situation is very much like that of Thomas Carlyle, who said after visiting with his close friend John Sterling: "I spent nearly the whole day with Sterling, and in everything except opinions we agreed perfectly."

Today's church is experiencing an intense struggle between theological and ideological positions, and often the left and the right hands of the body of Christ find themselves pulling away from and against each other.

A CHALLENGE . . .

On the one hand, there is a new breed of thinkers and doers within the church who are highly critical of what the church has been in the past. Their position is put quite precisely by Archie Hargraves in his booklet on church renewal entitled, "Stop Pussyfooting Through a Revolution." He lists eight criticisms of the church which are typical of the thinking of the new breed of Christians:

1. The church too frequently worships the false God of the *status quo* — the church as it is, the community as it is, and the world as it is. The local church, it is charged, won't change and, consequently, is unable to bring about changes in the society that surrounds it.

2. The church has entered a period Gibson Winter calls its "suburban captivity." Residential churches have fled the deteriorated areas of the inner city and have become contemporary temples for the glorification of the middle class. Church members are accused of being more interested in architecture than in the gospel and in maintaining the edifice than in extending God's Good News.

3. While the church seeks to be popular, taking the Christian gospel seriously would require, or at least render likely, its unpopularity. To be a Christian today is to be respectable and well-received in the community, a far different state of affairs (say its critics) from that of New Testament times, in which a "parish" was a "body of aliens in the midst of any community."

4. The church exists primarily for its own members instead of for the outside world. Congregations that quickly approve the purchase of an organ costing thousands of dollars may argue for hours over whether or not some local community-action projects should be supported. This introversion antagonizes the youth of today, who turn to the Peace Corps or Civil Rights activities for a sense of mission.

5. Most members of most churches use their places of worship as they would a filling station — a place to go occasionally in order to refuel. The contemporary church, say many among the new breed, is only a place where one learns how to think positively and finds "peace of mind."

6. Church members regard God as the "Great Psychiatrist," a resource in times of Crisis and a worthy friend if a loved one dies, but a convenient absentee at other times. The local church is thus accused of running a spiritual ambulance service, treating suffering when it arises but rarely trying to influence the power structure that might have caused the suffering in

the first place.

7. The church as an agent of Christian education fails to nurture the spiritual growth of its members. For the vast majority of the church members, Christian existence begins and ends with their participation in the Sunday-morning worship service.

8. The local church allows its life to be governed by traditions that are long out of date. Persons who suggest changing the time of worship from 11:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. encounter strong resistance, as the members of the church overlook the fact that the eleven o'clock hour was set up originally by an agrarian society to avoid conflicting with the time for milking cows.

Armed with these criticisms, the new breed have committed themselves to a new kind of Christian life-style. They have given themselves to social and political action designed to change the conditions in the world that oppress and isolate men, all in the name of bearing witness to Christ in the world. They spearhead attempts to overcome racism and end the war in Vietnam. In all of this they want the church to be as flexible and ready for change as this world-transforming mission may require.

... AND A RESPONSE

On the other hand there are many in the church today who feel that the position of the new breed is an over-reaction. These Christians agree that the church should not stand still, but they are, for the most part, ready to defend many of the church's accomplishments and methods of operation. They feel that a few minor modifications may be needed to make for greater effectiveness, but, in their way of thinking, the church's traditional life style rests squarely on Christian theology.

These Christians are concerned about the lack of personal faith which seems to accompany the new emphasis on social action. They feel

that Jesus worked primarily with individual people and sought to change society by changing persons. If the church would only dedicate itself to extending this ministry of Jesus to individuals, these individuals would in turn change the world. Those who take this position come to worship on Sunday seeking spiritual strength and a personal challenge so that they can fulfill their Christian discipleship in the world, and they have great difficulty responding to calls for corporate social and political action in areas where they feel the church as a corporate body may not be knowledgeable or capable.

These Christians also sense what they call a dramatic lack of biblical theology in the current social activism, as though the church were becoming just another social-service agency. They fault the emphasis of the new breed on action to relieve social and political problems at the point where such action seems to lack any appeal to win new people to Christ, which they feel is the central responsibility of Christians. If we are trying to help people without converting them, if our goal is something other than bringing people to Christ, then it is not of the gospel. They point to the youth who are turning from drugs to Christ and becoming "Jesus people," and say, "that is what young people really want and need, a savior to whom they can give their lives. That's what our ministry should be doing." They concentrate heavily on prayer as a way of joining men and God in dynamic communion. They also contend on biblical grounds that it is the church's vocation to reconcile men to God, not to attempt to create a perfect society.

A DIALECTICAL DIALOGUE

While there are many people who stand somewhere between these two positions, the fact remains that today's body of Christ is significantly

"... we shall all have to transform our wish for self-justification, our insatiable hunger to be 'right,' into a commitment to making the process of relating to each other our major life-style."

polarized. It seems, further, that such polarity will be a fact of church life for some time. If we allow this polarity to divide us, if we indulge ourselves in the kind of tunnel vision which sees only our own viewpoint, then the polarity will be destructive. If, however, we recognize polarity as an essential ingredient of dialogue and work at really hearing each other, our differences will be a dynamic means of bringing us together in a very powerful mission for Jesus Christ.

Have you ever stopped to think that without differences there could be no unity? If everyone had the same ideas, there would be no need to come together whatsoever. If we all agreed, then our encounters with each other would all be monologues, even when we listened to one another, for there would be nothing to which we could relate ourselves. It is part of God's plan that men should approach issues from various positions, for it is out of the necessary interreaction that our differences cause that unity emerges. Truth always emerges from a creative tension.

For this reason we should gratefully accept the controversy which now flows throughout the church and let God use it to draw us all closer to Him.

If this is to happen, we shall all have to transform our wish for self-justification, our insatiable hunger to be "right," into a commitment to making the process of relating to each other our major life-style. Sometimes our insecurity makes us feel that we simply have to be the one who has the right answer, and any other possibility threatens our whole being. We need to realize that our real affirmation as human beings comes from other people and our relationship with them, for this is where we really meet God.

Dr. Reuel Howe tells a story of two young men who were participants in one of his conferences at the Institute for Advanced Pastoral Studies, and who became very close friends during the first half of the conference. Then one day, at lunch, one of them asked the other what he thought of the movie *Patton*. Immediately they were caught up in

an effort to obliterate each other with verbal blows. They became involved in a discussion of the war in Vietnam and each gave every fibre of his being to overcoming the opinion of the other. It developed into a literal barrage of ideas with each man beating the other over the head with the "right position." Finally, one of them came up for air for a moment, and he stopped talking. He looked very carefully across the table and then said, "You know, I've forgotten completely who you are, and you've forgotten who I am. I've been so bent on being one up on you that I lost sight of you as a person, and you did the same thing. Let's start over, only this time let's have a meeting of persons instead of a bombardment of prejudices. Let me try to understand your position and you try to identify with mine. Then we can have some dialogue."

LISTENING VS. HEARING

People do not need to win an argument in order to have a secure sense of being. They need to relate to and listen to each other. It is in this encounter that truth really happens.

This puts a very high premium on the ability to be open to the other side. Today's dialogue gap may well be caused by a situation similar to that of an excited little boy who was telling his father a story. "Slow up, son, you're talking too fast," the father said. "Oh, no, Daddy, I don't talk too fast. You just listen too slow."

It may be that you and I listen too slow. If we are to bring our polarities into relation to each other, we will have to stimulate a more attentive listening, the kind which does more than hear the words another person speaks.

The dialogical person immerses himself as deeply in the meanings of his partner as he does in his own. The kind of dialogue we need demands that we be open enough to say:

It just may be that God is coming into my life through this person whose ideas are so different from my own. It just may be that he is right and I am wrong, that his ideas are what I need in order to find the truth. Maybe God

wants me to grow in my thinking, to change my viewpoint to another, a more open and more Christian position than the one I now hold.

One thing is certain. To be a Christian is to be constantly growing in one's thinking from one's present position to another that is closer to God's truth, the totality of which one never reaches by himself.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

One way to bridge the dialogue gap is to stay with, to stay in touch with, people who hold different theological views. For example, several suggestions have been made to the effect that our church hold two separate worship services on Sundays: one completely contemporary service for the new breed in our midst and one strictly traditional service for those whose chief concern is the preservation of the church's historical forms of worship. I have consistently resisted this approach on the basis that people who support either of these positions need to be exposed to the other position for the sake of their spiritual health. It may be that in the future we will have two kinds of worship on occasion in order fully to express the range of man's response to God. But if we do, we should expose all our membership to both kinds of services.

The new breed and those who take the opposite view need each other. The book, *The Dialogue Gap*, by Thomas Mullen, puts this in a penetrating way:

"The new breed needs to be understood, but it also needs to understand the [traditional] church. Both camps have been making a common mistake: They have been turning each other off and tuning each other out. Both have made a basic error: They have forgotten that today's revolutions are tomorrow's orthodoxies.

. . . The local church no longer can afford the luxury of simply being on the defensive. It has to listen to what the new breed is saying or it will very likely lose its growing edge and quietly fade away into a stained-glass sunset. . . . It needs to be more selective in its rejection of radical ideas and radical proponents of ideas,

choosing carefully on the basis of considered judgment and not in terms of angry frustration. It needs to listen with its hearing aid turned up so as to discern fairly whether it is God or man speaking.

Radical Christians share the responsibility for dialogue too, and they have seemed at times to be throwing the baby out with the bath water. . . . The new breed needs to be as carefully critical of itself as it has been critical of the traditional Church, for in the fantastic outpouring of ideas and practices which have come forth in the name of "Christian relevance," common sense assures us that truth and faddism are undoubtedly intertwined.

The new breed needs the perspective of history. One of its most serious dangers is its suspicion of tradition and its too-easy embrace of that which seems contemporary and, therefore, acceptable.

An unwillingness on the part of either the local church or its radical critics to dialogue with the other is arrogance that can only divide the church of Jesus Christ. A stereotyping of the new breed as wild-eyed heretics or pinkish

radicals is no more helpful than the tendency of the new breed of Christians to cross off the local church as nothing more than the religious arm of the country club.

. . . Seeking for a new and fresh understanding of God in new and fresh ways is vital, but even now we must learn from the past, which created yesterday's radicals who are today's old [guard]."

If we are to really hear each other, we must really listen. We cannot force upon others our own attitudes.

We must allow them the freedom to be what they are. The purpose of dialogue is not to get other people to agree with our opinions, but to openly relate to others, to hear them into being, to call forth the Spirit of God that is already within them.

And remember Paul's challenging advice: "Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance . . ." and "Don't become set in your own opinions." It's the only way we will ever find God and His truth.

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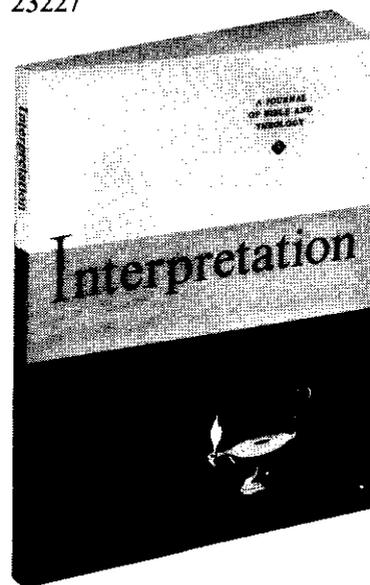
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Two Sample Case Studies

CASE STUDY NO. 6

BACKGROUND: Inner-city church with 400 members who live all across the city. Very few people in the membership live within the parish area of the church. The ones who do are mainly widows. The church is in the midst of a housing project which has been integrated since June 1, 1968, and some older homes which are deteriorating. The area is heavily populated with children and youth.

With concern for the children I suggested the need for tutoring to the social concerns commission of our church. It was discussed and approved with the understanding that we would have to depend upon outside volunteer help for tutors since most of our people work. It was hoped that some college students would be willing to help. The commission saw its function as offering

a building and agreed to supply any teaching aid materials needed.

DESCRIPTION: At the official Board meeting a week after the commission meeting a report was given with a recommendation that the Board approve this service to the community. Someone made this remark: "You know they have some niggers at the school and we don't want any niggers in our church." Someone else spoke up and echoed the same sentiment. At this time, to prevent the destruction of the whole idea, I told them I would be administering the project and for them not to worry about any Negroes being part of the tutoring at this time. There was no more discussion and the project was approved.

ANALYSIS: I realized before the Board meeting that the race factor might be brought up but was hoping that it would not be mentioned. The

people are somewhat frightened that Negroes will be coming to the church and they don't want to do anything to encourage them to do so. In fact, some are talking about moving the congregation out of the neighborhood; therefore, I did not feel it would be best to make a hard stand on integrating the tutoring sessions. My reactions to those who raised the question about the Negroes was to appease them and to let them know I would not integrate these sessions so they would not kill the whole tutoring session.

EVALUATION: I kept the program but I failed to make a stand. The matter of tutoring Negroes will have to be faced sometime because I cannot refuse to offer help to the Negro children and still live with myself.

The question now is how I can use the time that I have before the question will be brought up again.

CASE STUDY NO. 7

BACKGROUND: The youth program in our church was seemingly ineffective. It was a concern of the pastor, youth workers, and many parents. The attendance and interest of the young people was steadily declining. This was more evident in the evening sessions than in the morning sessions. Planned programs and parties were doing little to revive the interest and support of the youth. The climate of concern demanded that some innovation be made in our approach. A part-time youth director, a ministerial student at a near-by college, was hired. This did little to affect the situation, other than that some of the senior high school girls were more regular in their attendance. I was beginning to feel that I had to accept the situation as one that we had to live with and one we could do very little about.

DESCRIPTION: My youth director and I were discussing the situation one day and he suggested that we begin a "coffee house." This was not a new idea in our community as the local YMCA had one going that was attracting a large number of young people. We talked with the director of the YMCA about the possibilities of our church establishing a coffee

house. He is a member of our church. We did not wish to conflict with his program but felt that we could complement each other in our programs. The immediate problem was one of space. And there was the problem of getting the idea approved by the Administrative Board and congregation. An undeveloped area of the third floor of our educational building was a possibility for developing our "coffee house." The youth workers and certain key officials of the Board were contacted and presented with this plan.

ANALYSIS: The reactions to this program ranged from acceptance with reservation to full accord. We were aware that there were those who would not like to accept the fact that dancing was going on in the church. Some of these very adults were those who were having difficulty getting their children to support the church. They faced a dilemma. They could either see these young people lose all interest in the church, or they could make what was to them a new and radical approach to keep the interest of their children.

Plans were made to proceed and develop this area of the church into a "coffee house." The young people did all the work, cleaning and paint-

ing. The painting took a psychedelic theme. The walls were painted in varied colors with words like "love," "peace," "one way," "plan ahead," and "soul man." A large flower was painted in the middle of the floor. The participation and enthusiasm of the young people were tremendous. A new spirit of interest was emerging.

EVALUATION: There is no doubt that the "coffee house" has attracted the youth. There is now little opposition to it on the part of the adults. The Administrative Board has been invited to look it over, as have all the members of the church. It has caused much comment but no outward opposition. But I confess I have ambivalent feelings toward it.

It has served to bring the youth into the church, not just into the "coffee house," but to Sunday morning services and evening study and discussion groups as well. I feel that there is better rapport between the young people and the adults now because they believe we are trying to minister to them. I feel that a balanced approach is being made to meet the needs of our youth both socially and spiritually. It has helped our church to sense that our ministry to youth has to take on different forms than those we are used to or always feel most comfortable in.



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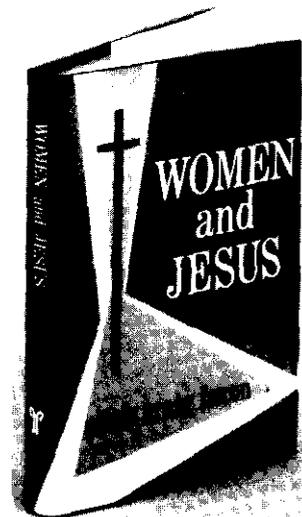
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