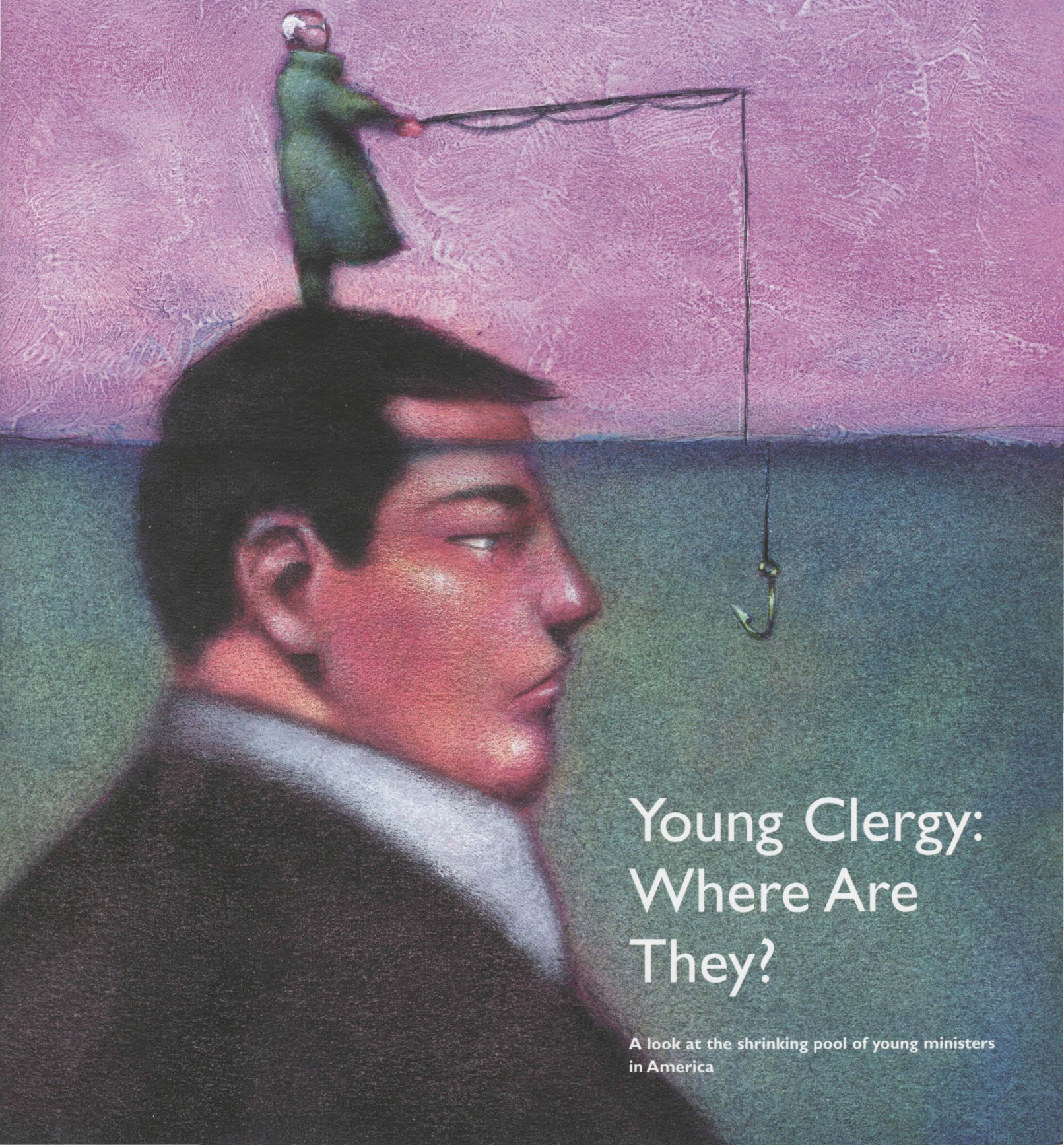


CONGREGATIONS

LEARNING LEADING CHANGING

MAR/APR 2001



Young Clergy: Where Are They?

A look at the shrinking pool of young ministers
in America

A Special Issue on a Timely Subject



This special issue of CONGREGATIONS on young clergy reflects the collaborative efforts of the Alban Institute and the Louisville Institute as we asked some hard questions about the future of the mainline Protestant church: Where are all the young clergy? Do we have a crisis on our hands? If so, what can be done about it?

The Louisville Institute was so concerned with these questions that it gave a grant to the Alban Institute to explore these questions and report on the findings in this special issue. But in addition to being a funding partner, Louisville Institute associate director David Wood was a key thought partner in this process. His reading of the situation can be found in “The Conditions of Call” on page 16. We are grateful to David and to the Louisville Institute for providing us with funding that allowed us to delve so deeply into the questions and to distribute the findings beyond our usual readership to seminaries, middle judicatory offices, and others involved in the formation of clergy.

In this issue we have a mix of voices that include seminary deans and presidents, professional writers, institute executives, and—most important—young clergy themselves. I hope you will find this special issue of CONGREGATIONS illuminating, thought provoking, and challenging. This is not meant to end the conversation, but to jump-start it. With the ever-waning number of young people entering the ministry (see Hillary Wicai’s “Clergy by the Numbers” on page 6), it is not a moment too soon.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa".

Lisa Kinney

lkkinney@alban.org

CONGREGATIONS

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Young Clergy: Where Are They?

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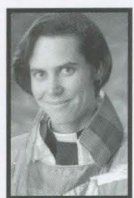
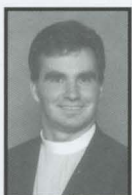
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Rev. S. Chapin Garner was recently called to be the senior pastor of United Church of Christ in Norwell, Massachusetts. He is also a professional playwright who works primarily with faith-based themes and stories. Rev. Garner lives in Norwell with his wife, Tammie, and their two children, Sam and Emmy.



Rev. Bonnie A. Perry is the rector of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Chicago. She was called to All Saints' in 1992 to redevelop the historic 115-year-old congregation. In addition to her congregational work, Rev. Perry is the chair of the diocese's congregational development committee and an adjunct faculty member at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. She also is a professional sea kayak instructor and a recreational tree climber.



Rev. Andrew B. Warner is the associate pastor of Plymouth United Church of Christ in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is a 1996 graduate of Harvard Divinity School. In his ministry, he combines a dedication to God with a love of cooking, something he calls "gastro-evangelism." Rev. Warner lives with his partner, Jay, and their son, Tomas, in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin.

Rev. Joseph B.W. Smith is a pastor in exile who recently finished a call at Our Savior's Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Hartland, Wisconsin. His wife, Melanie, accepted a call as an associate pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He will be seeking a call in the South Dakota Synod.



Rev. David J. Wood is the associate director of the Louisville Institute in Louisville, Kentucky. Before joining the Louisville Institute, he was the associate pastor of the American Church in Paris, France. Rev. Wood also has served congregations in Lewiston, Maine, and in Shelton and West Hartford, Connecticut. A native of Australia, he is an ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches, USA.

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CONGREGATIONS

LEARNING LEADING CHANGING

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Clergy Killers Revisited

WHEN I FIRST SAW SCOTT OLBERT'S "READER'S RESPONSE" to the "clergy killer" phenomenon ("Two Heavyweights and a Ringside Commentator," November/December 2000), I hoped for significant progress in the discussion of this very real problem. I was disappointed. The author criticizes Rediger for a theological adherence to the notion of personal and systemic evil and calls this anachronistic. He then criticizes Leas for an over-reliance on the categories of sociology, which the author claims lie outside the purview of Christian tradition.

While Rediger's theology of evil might not be as thoroughgoing as some would like, to label it as anachronistic is to ignore biblical witness. It is also to ignore the work of Christian psychiatrists like M. Scott Peck (*People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*). Though we must be very cautious about labeling people or systems, we ignore the possible presence of evil at our peril.

While Leas is more optimistic about people and systems than would seem to be warranted, most people familiar with the social gospel movement, itself influenced by sociology, would place his work within recent Christian tradition. That the optimism of the social gospel was refuted by experience does not contradict the fact that it emerged among Christians. The real problem with Leas' work is the one he shares with Scott Olbert. Both deny the adequacy of the biblical notions of sin, repentance, and grace to characterize God's interaction with human beings and the interaction of human beings with each other in God's family, the church. Since Olbert is a Lutheran, this is truly amazing.

Olbert seeks to replace the Bible with a set of psychological theories. The value of these theories is that they allow pastors to more accurately interview parishioners and gauge their potential behavior. The danger is that they feed the current trend toward blaming pastors for the destructive behavior of parishioners. The author takes an example from Rediger's book to show how the pastor caused his own dismissal. Rediger intended the story to illustrate his point that the clergy killer phenomenon is a church problem. "Church" includes members of governing boards who choose to dismiss pastors while leaving destructive dynamics in place. Olbert's most incredible suggestion is that the pastor should have acceded to the demand that he dismiss the religious education director, who was literally there first. It is hard to see how doing this would not have produced the pastor's own dismissal. Olbert maintains that the pastor should never have allowed the volunteer, a wounded woman, carte blanche over a church program. This is true, but situational stupidity is not usually sufficient reason for dismissal. The governing board was spineless, and spinal fusion is part of Rediger's goal.

Neither more psychology nor simple liberal optimism can avoid the implications of Lloyd Rediger's research. The church is a theological institution before it is anything else. It belongs to God, and there really is a force in the world that seeks to destroy what is God's. Part of the work of parish leaders is to be on guard against that force, even as we seek to serve Jesus Christ.

C. Eugene Bryant

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Newton, Iowa

See www.alban.org/periodicals for more on the clergy killer debate.



Wanted: Young Ministers

James P. Wind

Eye to eye across a restaurant table laden with plates of oysters and wine goblets brimming with fine German Riesling, a young candidate for ministry and the more experienced clergyman who had nominated him for a first pastorate met to discuss a just-preached trial sermon. The young pastor waited with foreboding as his patron searched for a way to break the bad news. Then Martin Niemöller, eventual founder of the German Confessing Church, said to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, eventual martyr in Hitler's death camps, "The written evaluation of the search committee states that your preaching style was too demanding, and your message depressing."

Niemöller went on to tell Bonhoeffer that his message was too challenging for most congregations in Germany, leaving

the young pastor with dwindling hopes for a first call. Then Niemöller turned the topic to church politics, proposing a strategy of accommodation with Hitler and his new-to-power Nazis. Bonhoeffer replied, "You can't be serious." Niemöller, after attempting to persuade his inexperienced but immovable conversational partner, concluded, "Let me warn you, no church in Germany will have you with your present opinions. There is a vacancy in London which has been open for more than a year, because it's a dreary low-paying position and few clergymen want to leave the country now, not with the excitement here. But if you persist in isolating yourself, it's the only type of position you'll be able to find, now or in the future."¹

The riveting historical novel this conversation is taken from reconstructs

Bonhoeffer's life for our imaginations. As part of a work of fiction, the conversation may or may not have happened the way Giardina tells it. But regardless of its historical accuracy, it tells the truth. It tells the truth about Bonhoeffer's lonely resistance to the Nazis, about what that resistance cost him over more than a decade of protest, and about how an encounter with this young minister shaped the future of the eventually imprisoned Niemöller. In addition, it tells an important truth about our need for young ministers. Twenty-seven years of age when he was exiled to London, Bonhoeffer spoke truth to power, first as he opposed the church body he depended upon for employment, then later in his life when he was involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler.

Transformative Leaders

As I considered the shrinking pool of young ministers in America (the special focus of this issue of CONGREGATIONS), I found myself returning to this portrait of Bonhoeffer, the troubled, lonely prophet who, while still in his thirties, dared to participate in the immoral act of an assassination attempt because of the danger of the greater evil of the Holocaust. The young, flawed, but unflinchingly moral cleric challenged the Christian community of his time to grapple with its complicity in the processes of death and destruction. That youthful challenge became the raw material of an argument that spanned the world for several generations, an argument that called many to think about the meaning—and the cost!—of discipleship in the modern world.

Remembering Bonhoeffer led me to recall other young Turks, inexperienced but often transformative leaders who led their religious communities into controversies that changed reality. Staying for a moment on German soil, I remembered Martin Luther, who posted his 95 Theses at age 34 and rocked the Roman Catholic world. As I mused about this, my colleagues at the Institute joined me in a parlor game. Who were the leaders who changed their religious communities and the world around them, and how old were they? We developed quite a list.

John Calvin published the first edition of his *Institutes* when he was 27. Ignatius of Loyola started to write his *Spiritual Exercises* at 31. Julian of Norwich wrote the first account of her mystical experiences at age 30. Jonathan Edwards, the first great American theologian, was 31 when he led his first revival. George Whitfield led the Great Awakening while in his twenties. Angelina Grimke began to radicalize women of the South against slavery at age 31. Elizabeth Bailey Seton founded the Sisters of Charity in

Baltimore at age 35.

Jane Addams opened Hull House at age 29.

Billy Graham preached his first great revival at age 30. Martin Luther King, Jr., was 28 when he helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and gave his "I Have a Dream" speech at 34. And of course there are Moses, Jesus, Muhammed, and Buddha, all traditionally understood to have been in their thirties when they moved to their foundational leadership roles.

I do not recount that list because I want to practice a reverse ageism, which assumes that all great leaders are young when they make their marks. Nor do I assume that all leadership should be measured against those who have made large historical contributions. A closer look at the list will quickly disabuse us of many generalizations about leadership. Some of those mentioned defied nations and empires. Others wrote great books. Still others built institutions. Some mesmerized crowds as preachers. Others frequently stood alone or led with the power of quiet suffering or contemplation. Moreover, the list spans centuries and wide differences in social circumstances, so we should be careful about sweeping assertions. But the tantalizing fact remains: young leaders play an indispensable role in the unfolding and reforming of our faith traditions.

Losing Our Edge?

I ponder the list because during this time when many of our faith communities seem to be unable to attract the younger generation or call young people into leadership roles, something very important is at stake. If the statisticians are correct that the average age of entering seminary students is over 34—past the age when most of the folks on my list had made their first

The wisdom of the elders needs the stirring, shaking questions of the younger to stretch beyond smugness, weariness, or limited imagination.

major waves—and if they are correct when they point to the small (and shrinking) percentages of clergy under the age of 40 in our denominations, then we are running the risk of losing our edge. To stay vital, religious communities and traditions need the pressure of the next generation. They need the moral challenge of conviction that comes with the idealism of youth and the lack of countless qualifications that come with middle and old age. They need the outrage at hypocrisy, the naïve questions, and the freshness of not having done it that way before. The wisdom of the elders needs the stirring, shaking questions of the younger to stretch beyond smugness, weariness, or limited imagination.

There are many reasons for concern when we are confronted by declining numbers of young clergy. We can worry about filling all the pulpits that will empty as the boomers retire. We can wonder who will staff the youth groups or what will happen to our pension plans as the pool of clergy dwindles. But for me the greater concern has to do with the dynamism of our traditions themselves. There is something about the young person asking the old person why, about the challenge of emerging leaders, that quickens our faith communities. Even more, there is the new power of a rising generation that dares to believe in fresh ways—the marvel of new faith—that lifts our vision and inspires new commitments. Our failure to recruit people who, to find their treasure, will challenge us and test our traditions is a warning sign. To let this failure continue is to risk losing our vitality and our future. ❁

Notes

1. Denise Giardina, *Saints and Villains* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), pp. 152–53.



Clergy by the Numbers

STATISTICS SHOW IT'S NOT A YOUTHFUL PICTURE

Hillary Wicai

The numbers of young mainline clergy have declined dramatically in recent decades. The table on page 9 provides a snapshot of age distributions of today's mainline clergy, and it's not a youthful picture.

The numbers can't be explained away by demographic trends. A comparison of the rate of decline of young clergy with that of young members of other professions makes it clear that what's happening in the church is unique.

In 1970, according to the American Bar Association, 26% of the country's practicing attorneys were under 36. In the mid-1970s, about 24% of Presbyterian ministers and more than 19% of Episcopal priests were in this age

group. This is not a huge difference—the legal profession and two Protestant churches had close to the same proportion of young leaders.

After 25 years, the relative number of young attorneys had changed little: 23% were under 35. However, in roughly the same time period the number of young Presbyterian ministers fell to just 7% of the denomination's total, a 71.4% drop. The number of young Episcopalians dropped to just under 4% of the denomination's active clergy.

The same pattern is evident when clergy and doctors are compared. The American Medical Association reports that doctors under 35 made up 27% of practicing physicians in 1975 and 17% in

1998. This 37% loss, while significant, still does not compare to those suffered by the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches.

For many churches, the amount of the loss is unknown. In this "Information Age," coming up with data on the ages of clergy 25 years ago is no simple matter. Some denominations report that such information either was not collected or is not now retrievable. Others note that it simply wasn't important in the early and mid-70s and so wasn't tracked.

Although the United Methodist Church could not provide data on pastors' ages except for the current year, Rev. Robert Kohler, assistant general secretary for the Section of Elders and Local Pastors



Matthew Baek

at the General Board of Higher Education Ministry, speculates that 25 years ago 80% of seminary graduates were under 35. Now, he estimates, 80% are second- or even third-career types—people over 35 looking for a major life change.

Kohler is not that far off. According to the Association of Theological Schools' 1999-2000 Profile of Participants, to which 3,964 students at 103 seminaries responded, 30% of seminary graduates were under 30.

Economics and Prestige

It's clear that fewer young people are considering a professional career leading mainline churches. Church ministers and researchers have their own ideas about why this is happening.

"When someone is young and is thinking about entering into a field as a professional, and they compare being a pastor with being a school teacher or even other modest paying occupations, it just doesn't stack up very well," says Cynthia Woolever, associate for congregational research with the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. "People can't raise a family on that kind of money."

After 25 years, the relative number of young attorneys had changed little: 23% were under 35. However, in roughly the same time period the number of young Presbyterian ministers fell to just 7% of the denomination's total, a 71.4% drop.

David Cushman, director of the National Ministries' Office of Information Services for the American Baptist Church, was a pastor of a congregation for nearly 20 years. However, he makes more money in his current position—Web site development and library work for the church—than he did leading a congregation. His wife is currently a full-time pastor.

"We wouldn't be able to live on what she makes," he explains. "We're in a situation of subsidizing the ministry. I've told people if we had to do it over, I'd go into my research position first."

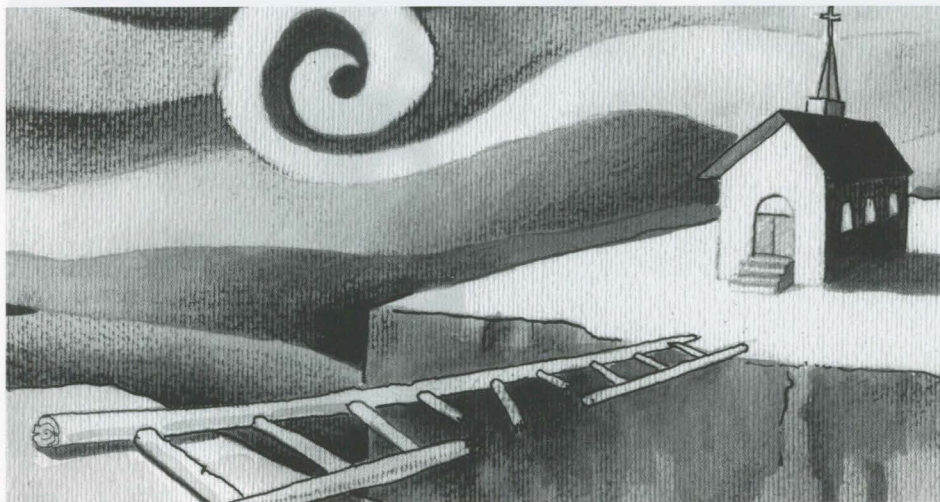
Economics aside, the prestige of the position has also taken a hit. "The past generation used to talk to mayors; we've never had mayors give us the time of day," Cushman says. Woolever concurs:

"There's not the regard for clergy there once was. They used to be influential in shaping the life of a community."

"People aren't encouraging their children to go into ministry, particularly people who are clergy themselves," says John O'Hara, research analyst for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

A Painful Trend

According to the book *Full Pews and Empty Altars*, by Richard Schoenherr and Larry Young, 32% of Catholic clergy in 1975 were 55 or older. Currently that age group makes up more than 69% of Catholic clergy.¹ This trend is significant in that many feel it's the path mainline Protestant churches are walking. "Catholics are about 20 years ahead of Protestants in their numbers," says O'Hara.



Young people don't sense that the church is somewhere to go to find meaning and community. They're not going to church and thus not going into the clergy as well.

"Beginning in the middle 1970s the Episcopal Church became suspicious of young adults going directly from college into the ministry," says Rev. William Sachs, Ph.D., director of research for the Episcopal Church Foundation. "There was a feeling that second-career people came with greater experience. Many dioceses required applicants take a few more years of work before they'd be considered. Only now is that beginning to shift."

Rev. Christopher Martin, 32, is a minister at All Saints in Beverly Hills, California. "Almost universally, those of us who are younger found [the church] to be deaf and uncomprehending of what it's like to be in your twenties and dealing with a call," he says. About the numbers, he remarks, "It's just painful."

Pushing for Change

After reading an article in 1996 about the clergy shortage, Martin called the

Episcopal Pension Fund for information about the number of young priests in the church. He and two other priests got the addresses for all of them. "We sent them a letter saying if you're getting this you're one of 297 priests under 35."

That letter led to meetings, and the meetings generated ongoing e-mail conversations and debates about church policy. Eventually, Gathering the NeXt Generation (GTNG) was formed. It is one of the few organizations within the main-line church devoted to young clergy issues.

GTNG members push for changes in the ordination process. "People like the bishop here in LA are showing some willingness to work around the [rules] and get young people into the process," Martin says. "When I went up to be ordained, I was 24 years old and canon law said you had to be 25. The bishop made an exception."

While GTNG continues to lobby for an updated ordination process, Martin wonders if fewer young people consider ministry because fewer of them attend church.

Getting Young People to Church

"There is the larger problem of young people just not being in the Episcopal Church in great numbers," Martin says. "My full-time ministry is to people in their twenties and thirties."

Some denominations, realizing that it takes young people to attract young people, are making the most of what they have now. For example, Rev. Marlin Lavanhar, 32, is the senior pastor in his denomination's largest church. All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, has more than 2,000 members. "It was a surprising move," Lavanhar says of his call.

Just down the road from All Souls is an equally large Southern Baptist church that recently called a 29-year-old senior minister. "I thought," Lavanhar laughed while being interviewed, "you were calling to find out why there's such a trend for large churches to call ministers under 35."

"My sense," he continued, "of why All Souls would call someone my age is that they're really trying to reach out to young adults. Maybe the reason there aren't more young people in ministry is that there aren't more young people in church. Young people don't sense that the church is somewhere to go to find meaning and community. They're not going to church and thus not going into the clergy as well."

Lavanhar is working to redesign his church's Web site and to develop a contemporary service by next fall. Of a similar service he created in Boston, he says that it regularly draws more people than the traditional one.

Looking at the Age Gap: Now and Then

Evangelicals May Have an Edge

The Willow Creek Association, formed in Illinois in 1992, is a body of 3,513 U.S. contemporary evangelical churches. Since the churches are not required to report data, the association has no age information about its pastors. However, Willow Creek regularly holds conferences for church leaders, and Jerry Butler, vice president for membership and communications, notes that at least half the faces he sees appear to be under 40.

"We cater to the risk-taking, change-agent kind of pastor," Butler said. "We're actively trying to touch the younger leader."

The strategy appears to be working. Butler notes that in 2000, Willow Creek sponsored 30 training events for young pastors or people considering a career as a pastor. More than 2,600 young seminary and college students attended these conferences. That number is up from just a few hundred who attended the year before.

"They know we're about innovation and creativity," he said. "We haven't discovered a new theology, we're just trying to go back and bring it into this millennium."

It would be easy to blame the younger generation for a lack of willingness to step up to the plate when it's clearly their turn to lead. But how to explain the fact that Willow Creek has seen such impressive growth in the numbers of young people attending its conferences? It may be that dynamics internal to mainline Protestantism, not the culture at large, hold the key to a more "youthful picture." The church needs to look at itself first. ☛

Notes

1. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993, pp. 29-31.

DENOMINATION	NOW			THEN	
United Methodist	year: 2000				
	total	21,847		not available	
	35 & under	1,467	7%		
	55+	7,128	33%		
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America	year: 2000				
	total	12,061		not available	
	35 & under	740	6%		
	55+	3,749	31%		
United Church of Christ	year: 2000				
	81% reporting:	5,141		not available	
	35 & under	207	4%		
	55+	1,877	37%		
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	year: 1999			year: 1975	
	total	8,667 (estimated)		9,151	
	35 & under	607	7%	2,241	24%
	55+	2,600	30%	1,769	19%
Episcopal	year: 2000			year: 1974	
	total	7,721		8,532	
	35 & under	303	3.92%	1,655	19.39%
	55+	3,072	39.78%	1,918	22.48%
Disciples of Christ	year: 1999			year: 1979	
	total	7,113		6,724	
	35 & under	260	4%	227	3%
	55+	1,071	15%	931	14%
Southern Baptist Convention	year: 2000				
	total (700 churches sampled)			not available	
	35 & under	11%			
	55+	29%			
Roman Catholic	year: 1999			year: 1975	
	total	27,000		30,785	
	35 & under	1,650	6%	4,926	16%
	55+	18,681	69%	9,851	32%
American Baptist	year: 1997			year: 1982	
	64.5% reporting:	4,000			
	35 & under	230	6%	14%	
	55+	1,519	38%	36%	
Lutheran Church Missouri Synod	year: 2000			year: 1981	
	95% reporting:	5,783		5,702	
	35 & under	446	8%	1,009	18%
	55+	1,775	31%	1,287	23%
Unitarian Universalist Association	year: 2000			year: 1975	
	total	1,171		521	
	35 & under	95	8%	95	18%
	55+	419	36%	108	20%

Finding the Alternative

CONFESSIONS OF A GENX PASTOR

Joseph B.W. Smith

Being a member of Generation X and serving as a pastor earns some recognition these days in church circles. Is this a good thing?

I have apprehensions about this recognition which are very typical of Generation X. The mainstream is a danger zone for my generation. We championed alternative music in our teen and young adult years, dancing and moshing to bands like Pearl Jam and Nirvana, and an alternative life seems to be a goal for many of us, regardless of our vocational pursuits.

Mainline Protestantism is suffering a clergy shortage, and judging from the number of clergy representing Generation X—I am one of 740 in the ELCA—the shortage will probably get worse before it gets better. According to Neil Howe and William Strauss, authors of *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), the Millennial generation (born 1982–2002) may someday save the world from institutional decay. I am thankful, however, for this opportunity to share my perspective and experience as a GenX pastor regarding the current situation.

Because I Was Asked

Several groups of people concerned with the future of the Christian church have engaged in dialogue with me about my experience as a GenX pastor. To further personalize a very general question: Why would someone from a generation that generally shuns institutions want to be a part of such an established, slow-to-change, often entrenched institution as the Christian church?

I have a simple answer: because I was asked.

There is more to this answer, but when I look back on my life, I see that I was never earnestly invited to do anything else but take the path of ordained ministry. I was invited to serve Christ in the ministry by people who took the time to know me as a person. Those who invited me to the ministry walked with me and saw me (me!) as valuable.

I never received that invitation in my first two chosen vocations, journalism and Soviet/East European studies. I saw great

opportunity for impact with those two vocational paths, and I enjoyed what they had to offer. No one chose to articulate my value to the mission of those vocational pursuits, though I desired (and still desire) to be a part of something that would make a difference in the world with my unique, God-given talents. This yearning for difference-making for God has put me where I am today—serving as a pastor in a Lutheran-Christian congregation.

The sense of being called to make a difference sends me back to the invitations to discipleship in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus offered his disciples a simple, personal invitation to make a difference—to fish for people. His disciples brought me into the ministry boat—hook, line, and sinker.

A Round Peg in a Square Hole

In some ways, seminary was a great place to explore the ways I could serve the Church in alternative ways, as I continually reflected on my unique gifts in the context of theological and vocational training. The numerous classes in Bible, history, theology, church and society, and missiology intrigued me and helped me ask critical questions about my desire to serve. Seminary was also a horrible place for seeking alternative service, for I was shoved like a round peg in a square hole into my present role.

The Holy Spirit and I had some choices in that process—I do not claim to be a victim. The square hole of which I speak was the seminary's propensity to focus on the serving of pastoral-size congregations (50–150 average worship attendance). The seminary administers this kind of education well. However, the demands and expectations of a pastoral-sized congregation do not make use of most of my unique gifts as a child of God. Nor does pastoral-size congregation ministry represent a majority of opportunities for professional or ordained ministry.

My struggle with my vocational path began as I prepared for examination and interviews my final year in seminary. I saw the denomination I serve investing more resources in institutional and cultural Lutheranism than in the mission of making disciples

of all nations. So what did I do with this struggle? With the encouragement of mentors and colleagues to find an alternative way to serve Christ, I took the call to serve Our Savior's Lutheran Church, and became one of 740 in my cohort.

I still face the struggle every day. Do I go to weekly institutional meetings? Do I attend every potluck dinner? How many pastoral care visits are appropriate? Why do Bible studies flounder without a pastor involved? Why do people say worship is not Lutheran unless we are holding a green book in our hands? Why do some members think I should be sitting in my office 30 hours per week? Help! There has to be an alternative.

Entering the Master's Joy

Though I may be an idealist, I believe the parable of the talents conveys the expectation that good and faithful servants use all of their God-given talents, take the risks necessary, and dedicate those gifts to serving the Master. I seek to enter the Master's joy by serving Jesus first and foremost. I am not interested in serving a denomination, nor a synod, nor any institution for its own sake. I seek to serve Christ. There is no other entity that gives life.

I think there may be a commonality in how those of Generation X might see the parable of the talents and approach the Church in general. Alternative attitudes are not about being different for the sake of being different. Rather, I see that service for Generation X is about positive impact in their own lives and the lives of others. If there is a lack of impact, it is time to change. Once alternative music was embraced by the mainstream, GenX lost interest and found other ways to express what was in their hearts.

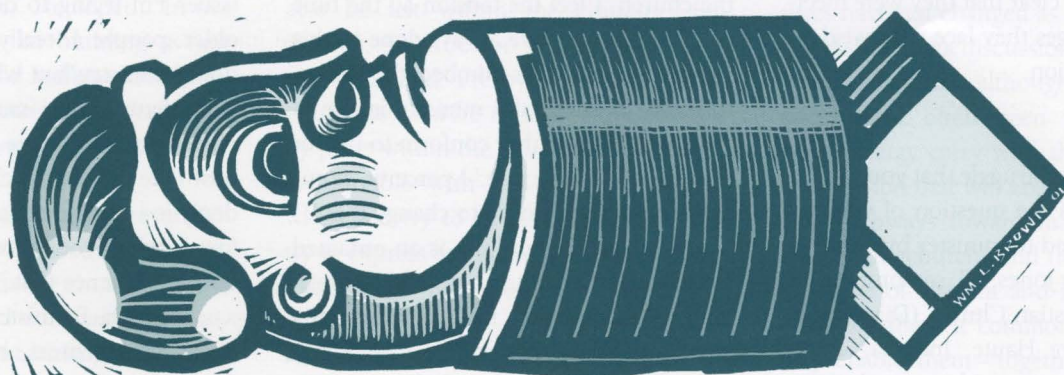
For GenXers, there is no time to mourn over institutional failure. According to Howe and Strauss, my generation had to

I see that service for Generation X is about positive impact in their own lives and the lives of others. If there is a lack of impact, it is time to change.

learn pragmatic behavior as we grew up in a society that did not value children. The church may be attractive, but if a congregation's impact drops below a certain level, the GenXer will be off to find another cause.

I have found great joy in using some of my gifts in the congregation I now serve. They have walked with me and supported me in developing many of those gifts. However, I feel a compromise in authenticity. This congregation needs and expects certain aspects of ministry that I cannot give. I do not believe I should waste resources by attempting to use gifts I do not have. I do not believe my congregation seeks a perfect pastor, but I wonder if I am the pastor they need. I wonder if there is a setting that will value my God-given talents. In the meantime, the congregation and I dance together with Christ—worshiping, studying, praying, laughing, crying, and hoping together.

I have many hopes for my life as a servant of Christ. I hope the Church can learn to value the gifts and perspectives of Generation X, Millennials, and generations to come. In the meantime, I am listening for some kind of alternative invitation from Christ to serve using all my talents, so I can enter into my Master's joy. ☼



On the Front Lines

YOUNG CLERGY DESCRIBE THEIR STRUGGLES IN THE CHURCH

Lisa Kinney

The 14 young people gathered around the table last October were bright, articulate, intense, enthusiastic, and passionate about their work. They also represented a disappearing breed—people under age 35 who chose ministry in the mainline Protestant church as their first career. As Hillary Wicai's "Clergy by the Numbers" (page 6) starkly illustrates, fewer young people are choosing the ministry with every passing decade.

Concerned about this trend, the Alban Institute and the Louisville Institute brought together young clergy from around the country for a day-long meeting in Louisville to ask them to talk about their experiences. These young people—nine men and five women—came from the Midwest, the Northeast, and the Southeast, and they represented six mainline denominations. While it was clear from the discussion that many of these young clergy were feeling embattled, it was also clear that they were meeting the challenges they face with wisdom and determination.

Ageism

The first point of struggle that young clergy often face is the question of whether they are qualified to minister by virtue of their age. Verity Jones, 33, senior minister of Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Terre Haute, Indiana, writes about her exchange with a search committee in "Bridging the Age Gap" on page 14. And her experience is not unique.

Andrew Warner, 29, pastor at Plymouth United Church of Christ in Milwaukee, told of an older judicatory executive who informed him that people shouldn't be allowed to be ordained until they are 28—knowing that he was 26 at the time. "I wasn't sure where that left me," he said jokingly. "But I think her comments were a part of how they see us. These are the stories the church tells itself to make it seem all right if it doesn't have young people in its ministry."

Suffocation in the Church

Once these young pastors find themselves in traditional roles within the church structure, they often feel suffocated by it. Kathryn Bannister, 32, is senior pastor of the Rush County United Methodist Parish in rural Kansas. She says, "Our structures are defeating us in a big way, in terms of how we are getting people into leadership and administering the church. I feel the tension all the time of 'This is how we've always done it, this is how we've always climbed the ladder, this is what successful ministry is like in the church. You either conform to that or you go somewhere else.' I perceive in our generation a real desire to change that."

William Wagon, 36, is an ordained Episcopal priest who is now vice president for e-commerce in a manufacturing company. When his wife, Verity Jones, was called to a Disciples of Christ church in Terre Haute, Indiana, Wagon found that he had a difficult time getting a sec-

ond call because the churches found him too liberal. "The church was always about making me fit into their identity, their mold of what I should be," he said. "The business world was much more willing to let me be who I am and asked 'What can you bring us?' 'Where can you take us?' I'm not complaining about the path I took, but I'd like to think it was a loss to the church that I was not able to continue in parish ministry."

Mentors

Another roadblock to these young clergy feeling successful in their ministries is a perceived lack of mentors. Jud Hendrix, 32, is a co-organizing pastor for New Church Development in Louisville. He explained that the problem is finding mentors who can relate to his specific issues as a young pastor: "There are not people who I would choose as mentors who can actually give me guidance on the issues I'm trying to deal with. There are older people I really respect who are doing ministry, but when I begin talking with them about issues I struggle with related to my culture and my peers and how I see the church changing, there suddenly is a disconnect and they say 'I don't know what you're talking about' or 'I don't experience that.'"

Kathryn Bannister related that she does have mentors, but they are clergy from other denominations. She said that there is such a sense of competition among clergy within her own denomina-

tion that the older clergy women keep the younger women at arm's length. "It's less threatening to have a relationship with somebody who is outside the denomination, who never feels threatened by you. And this isn't just a gender issue; this would also be true with male colleagues." Jennifer Thomas, 28, pastor of Lake Park Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, also recognized that the young clergy themselves need to take responsibility for their own mentoring: "I think as one another's colleagues, when we hear someone expressing their own imagination or their own vision for what they want to be doing, then we have the responsibility to ask them periodically, 'Is that still your goal? What have you been doing to work toward it? How can I be of assistance?'"

There is another way that these young ministers are finding inspiration and mentoring—and it's not in the church at all. Jud Hendrix, William Wagon, and Darren Elin said that they get their exciting ideas and mentoring from people in the business world who are doing innovative things, people like venture capitalists and entrepreneurs. Elin, 30, vicar of St. David's Episcopal Church in Halifax, Massachusetts, said, "A lot of the mentoring that I found occurred in the business world. Tom Peters showed me how to be a good leader in the church." He added, "In five years I'm going to be building a new building. Who should I talk to about venture capital? I almost have a feeling of guilt because I have to go outside the church to do it."

The news isn't all bad, however. Bill Lamar, a pastor in Tallahassee, Florida, said that he stayed in the church because of a mentor. "When I was having difficulty and thinking about leaving, a denominational leader called me and told me that he needed me, and I appreciated that." He added, "Not only have they

The main crisis of the church is that we're in exile . . . We just assume a context for our faith and our church that isn't there anymore. We're no longer the main cultural center.

helped me along, but because there are not a lot of young people coming in, the career track is wide open. I have a lot of opportunities."

Isolation

Often, these young clergy have also experienced a profound sense of isolation—from their peer group outside the church, from others in their denominations, and from each other. Liz Trexler, 36, minister-at-large working with New Church Development in Louisville, poignantly described a neighborhood party she attended with her husband. All of the people at the party were in her age group, but she felt completely set apart: "They seemed so cool. They had the right things on, their hair was different, and they were different. They were excited about life and they were inventing things and writing things, and I felt like 'Where have I been?'" Verity Jones added that her peers outside the church can't relate to her: "It's as if I had chosen something they just don't understand."

The sense of isolation from peers can also be felt within the church. Chip Andrus, 33, director of alternative worship for 2nd Presbyterian Church in Louisville, said he is doubly discouraged by peers within the church who "are very comfortable with the old church and, when you try to be visionary, when you try to express new ideas, they fade off just like people who are older."

A Crisis?

When the discussion moved to whether the dearth of young clergy—and the experiences they had been describing—

should be considered a crisis, several members of the group suggested that this was part of a larger contextual issue of the church's place in our culture. Darren Elin noted, "The main crisis of the church is that we're in exile . . . We just assume a context for our faith and our church that isn't there anymore. We're no longer the main cultural center."

William Wagon tackled a related problem when he said, "Part of the reason that we see ourselves in crisis may be attributable to the fact that, as much as we are uncomfortable with the old structures of the church, we have inherited the previous generations' definition of what it means to be a successful church—growing numbers, sufficient pledges, things like that." There is a need, he said, to imagine new definitions of success that move beyond these structures to embrace new concepts of church. Jud Hendrix added, "Our institutions need to find ways to open up to creativity and freedom. The theological concepts on which our institutional structures have been based are being questioned, but the structures have not changed as a result."

As the day's discussion concluded, it was evident that although their experiences have often been painful, these young clergy carry with them an energy and passion that will enable them to find new pathways toward making a difference in the church. And their location in this time of ferment and in this generation give them a common identity that may enable them—together—to strengthen their voice in the larger church. Perhaps this is, after all, a good time to be a young pastor. ☛

Bridging the Age Gap

A POSTMODERNIST TESTIMONY

Verity A. Jones

On my thirtieth birthday, I interviewed by conference call for my current position as minister of Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Terre Haute, Indiana. The interview went well, I thought. They asked good questions about my theological perspective and my biblical training. They wanted to know about my recent experience developing Christian education programs in a medium-size church. Then one brave soul finally asked the question I had been dreading: How would I respond to the objection that I was too young to pastor a church of 400-plus members?

The muscles in my jaw tightened. Defensiveness and fear ran through me. Doubt soon followed. "Can I do the job? Who am I fooling?" I thought. "How WILL I minister at such a young age?" In seminary, I may have aced my Bible and theology classes, may have completely understood systems theory, may have studied the polity of three different denominations. But I lacked experience—life experience and church experience—and the maturity that comes with it. At that time, I especially lacked experience ministering to people who were much older than I.

In the few moments after the dreaded question, memories of my grandfather flashed before my eyes. He was one of the few elders in my childhood with whom I had a significant relationship, and he was not a very nice man. Part of me still despised him for his abusive behavior. Another part of me continued to fear him, even though he had died years before. I often worried that my feelings about him might threaten my relationships with older people in the congregations I would serve. What if I couldn't minister to these people? What if I found myself afraid of them? Worse, what if I couldn't bring myself to like them?

Suddenly, out popped my answer to the search committee's question. I felt like a comic strip character looking at the bubble above his head and wondering how those words got there. I said, "Remember that Jesus was only 30 when he began his public ministry. I'm certainly not Jesus, and I understand your concern about my credibility as a young pastor. But I hope the church won't dismiss a candidate for ministry just because she happens to be Jesus' age." The silence on the other end of the line lasted

only a few seconds. Then the chuckles began, and a few "amens" drifted over the line. By the end of the interview, the search committee was singing "Happy Birthday" to me.

All Kinds of People

After four years of serving this Indiana church and six years in ordained ministry, I have come to understand that pews are filled with all kinds of people—old and young, gentle and strident, hurtful and kindhearted. Not surprisingly, I have found that the most challenging people do not all come from one generation. I have also discovered ways to minister genuinely and compassionately to those with difficult and even abusive personalities. In Christ, God heals wounds. God mends relationships and brings together new families in Christ. I have seen God's reconciliation at work in my life through my ministry.

I have learned to be humble in ministry, especially with regard to my elders. I have learned to honor their experience and yet not let their perspective govern everything I do. Many people in my church expected that because I was so young, I would make numerous changes. Of course, many hoped for the changes I could bring—a new perspective, fresh ideas, and the kind of energy that might spark renewal. But most people, I think, feared that the church and I would simply leave them behind, along with the old way of doing things.

Certainly, I do things differently than my predecessor—everything from administration to worship to mission to my personal involvement in the church. When I began my maternity leave this past year (a completely new experience for all involved!) I remember Jack, a gentleman in his seventies, gently testing me on my ability to care for him once the baby was born. "I wonder who will bury me now," he said wistfully one morning. My response, I hope, honored his fear and his importance in my life and yet challenged him to accept a little change, too. I said, "Jack, I am your pastor. I love this church. I may be a new mother with new responsibilities, but that doesn't mean I leave behind all my former relationships. God has called me to be a pastor and a mother, and I do not believe that God calls people

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the experience of my
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to ministries that are in conflict with each other. I need to find the balance, and you can bet I will look to experienced grandparents like you to help me figure it out!"

Raised in a Postmodern World

One of the joys in ministry for me has been the discovery of my affinity with those in older generations, especially with people over 70. I believe that this affinity has its roots in certain influences that my generation has experienced.

As a member of Generation X, I have been raised in a postmodern world. Like many others my age, I do not hold as sacred the tenets of modernity—the centrality of the individual; the superiority of objective, verifiable truth claims; the finality of absolute standards of moral and ethical behavior; and the uncertainty of subjective belief systems. I came of age during a period of radical deconstruction of language and meaning. I was taught that nothing was objectively verifiable, given the subjectivity of all thought. In fact, I learned to be skeptical of absolutes of any kind, for absolute standards tend to benefit those with enough social power to establish the standards in the first place.

The individual, therefore, has become a questionable source of enduring truth for me—he's much too subjective and self-interested to be trusted on his own. A character in the movie *The Last Days of Disco* summarized the waning of modernity when he responded to the old truism, "To thine own self be true." He wondered out loud to his friends how this could be good advice if he didn't really like himself. What if his self is a cheat, a jerk, someone who would hurt a friend just for a buck? Who wants to be true to that?

Also, the rising dominance of television and film in the last half century, the development of the World Wide Web, and the increase of global travel have all exposed my generation to a diversity of cultures and belief systems at a young age. Unlike many of our elders, we tend to take this diversity for granted.

I find that GenXers tend to be more comfortable with paradox than many of our predecessors. We often seek truth outside the realm of science and research, and yet we are more technologically savvy than older generations. We yearn for the rituals, stories, and songs that tell us who we are and whence we come, yet we are tolerant of a surprisingly wide range of behaviors and belief systems. We like traditions and history, and yet, I find, we are generally more liberal on social issues than older Americans.

All this has led some people my age to look for truth and meaning in decidedly unmodern places. Like many GenXers, I search for communities and relationships that can give meaning and accountability to my life and help me set standards for

behavior and morality. Many GenXers have looked for this kind of support in gangs or Internet chat rooms. But young people are also finding their way to churches and service organizations in record numbers these days.

The return of young professionals to urban neighborhoods is yet another sign of my generation's yearning for community.

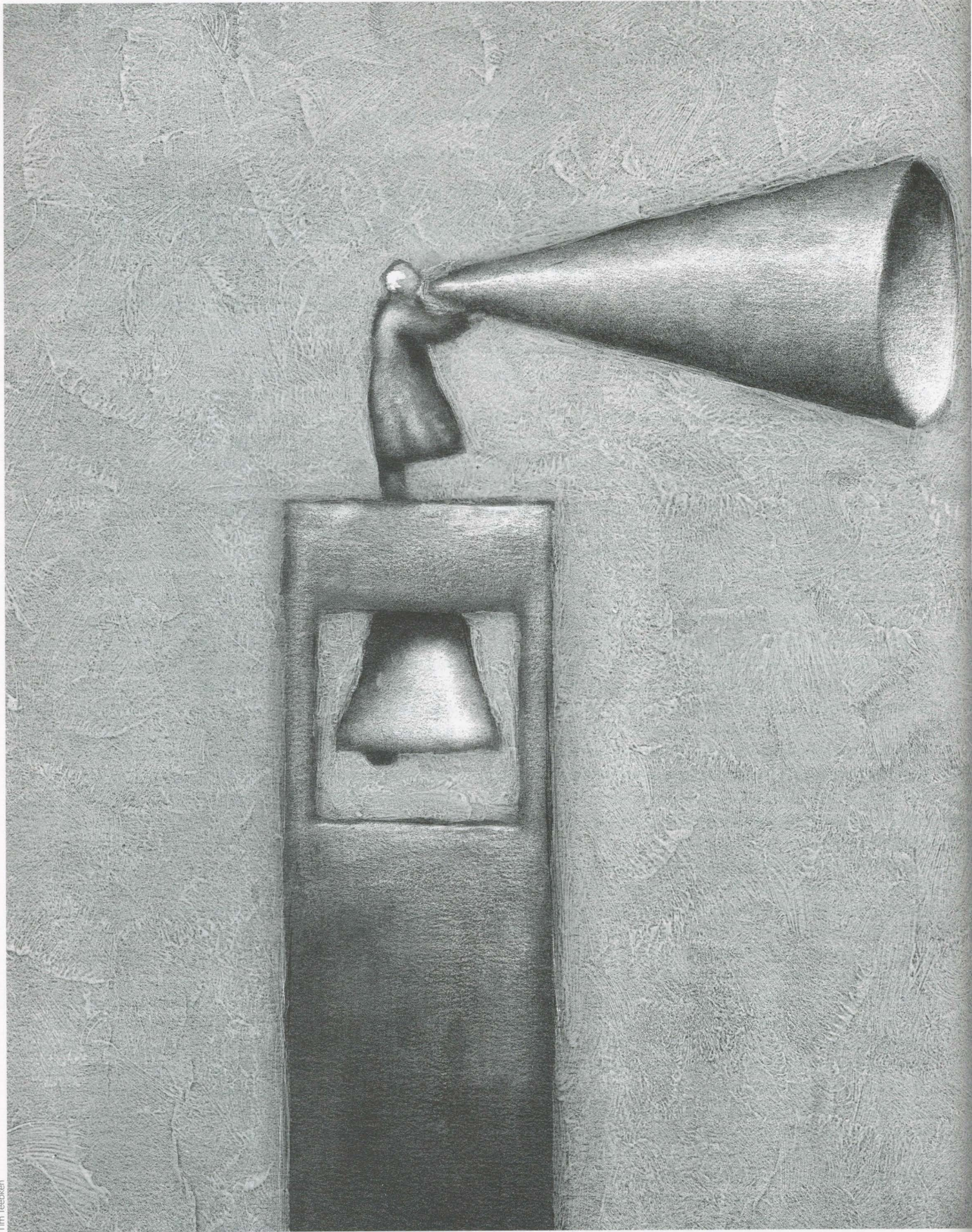
Connected to the Past

So what is it about my postmodern perspective that fosters the affinity I feel with people over 70? Many GenXers yearn for the connections to the past that their Baby Boomer parents may have abandoned as too old-fashioned. I yearn, for example, for the kind of communities built in the post-World War II years—neighborhoods with sidewalks and common fences, not suburban subdivisions with acres between houses. I like ritual. I find it illuminating, not confining. I love stories of the old days; they tell us who we are, shape our identity. I have discovered that many people my age want to know the Bible stories they failed to learn as children. They want to search the pages of the Bible for some kind of truth that matters to them. They find the mysteries of faith interesting and inspiring, not superstitious and empty.

Two of my favorite people in the world are over 85 years of age. Martha and Ted welcomed me into my new church with the kind of gracious hospitality that would put anyone at ease. But it is not just their kindness I admire. It's their ability to live faithfully with contradictions. Ted and Martha fought the civil rights battle in predominately white Midwestern churches. They've recently learned how to e-mail their granddaughter, who is on mission in South Africa. They invite openly gay men and lesbians into the church. And yet they are sticklers for the old ways—the old hymns, the King James Version of the Bible, grape juice instead of wine in the cup! Their witness has been a bridge between young and old; it has healed wounds, built new relationships, and helped to break the hold of my grandfather's memory over me.

One Sunday, a visitor introduced himself to Martha: "My name is Terry and I'm new." Martha answered, "Well, I'm new, too! We'll get along just fine!" When the fellow eventually joined the church, he discovered that Martha was not new at all. She was everyone's grandmother, loved by all, the unofficial matriarch of the church. He asked Martha one day why she lied to him when she told him she was new. "I didn't lie," she said. "I AM new. Every day, just like you, I am made new in Christ."

No matter what our age, young or old, we are made new in Christ. Perhaps young and old can learn a new or perhaps very old truth from this testimony of faith. ☛



Tim Teebken

The Conditions of Call

LOUISVILLE INSTITUTE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
DAVID J. WOOD SOUNDS A WAKE-UP CALL TO
THE CHURCH

It was a little over a year ago that my good friend Martin Copenhaver, a United Church of Christ pastor in Massachusetts, shared with me the remarkably low number of ordained clergy in his denomination under the age of 35: 207 out of a total number of 5,141 ordained clergy. That conversation sparked an inquiry at the Louisville Institute into the facts and figures pertaining to young clergy across the mainline. The results of that initial inquiry, which was shaped in collaboration with Jim Wind and his staff at the Alban Institute, are reported in this publication.

At a minimum, this issue of CONGREGATIONS is intended to lay the groundwork for a much broader and longer-term inquiry into the question of why so few young clergy exist in the mainline and what can be done to address this situation. When confronted with this reality, the institutions of the church (seminaries and denominational offices) are tempted to point in the direction of congregations ("If only they would send us younger candidates!"); the congregations point in the direction of the institutions ("If only they would send us competent pastors!"); and everyone

All of us have our explanations as to why the young are not joining the ranks of ordained ministry in significant numbers. The real question is this: "Do we have clear and sufficient reasons as to why they should?"

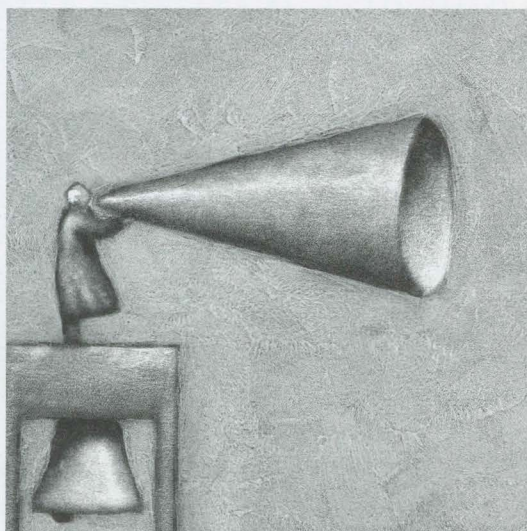
points to the culture as a primary cause for the loss of the younger generation from the ranks of the ordained. I think those of us in congregations (lay and clergy), in theological education, and in denominational offices would do well to assume that the declining numbers of young clergy present us all with an opportunity for response.

If we await recovery of the status of pastoral ministry as a profession within our culture, we are probably in for a very long wait indeed. Recently, a young clergyperson who graduated from a well-regarded liberal arts college was told by his classmates when he mentioned he was going to become a pastor, "That's social suicide!" The good news is that there is ample evidence to suggest that the young are more than capable of making choices that are determined by rationalities other than those provided by the dominant culture. However, young people will not discern an alternative calling out of the morally thin air of our culture—it requires the thick context of vital ecclesial reality to shape a vocational imagination sufficient to the pastoral life.

Asking the Real Question

All of us have our explanations as to why the young are not joining the ranks of ordained ministry in significant numbers. The real question—and the one that remains largely unanswered at the institu-

tional, congregational, and pastoral levels—is this: "Do we have clear and sufficient reasons as to why they should?" I once heard it said of those in their early twenties that they are not searching for meaning per se, but for participation in a struggle that is meaningful. We are convinced that pastoral ministry is a struggle—what remains undecided by too many of us is, "Is it a meaningful struggle?" As a case in point, in response to an earlier draft of this article, I received the following note from a good friend who is also a pastor—a good pastor, well loved by his congregation. He writes:



The reason that young people do not want to be pastors is that they see all too clearly the limitations of the pastoral life, not its opportunities. Its opportunities may in fact exist for some people

who have the personality and desire for it . . . those who are truly called. But why in the world would a talented young person commit to a life of low salary, low prestige, long hours, no weekends, and little room for advancement?

The call to this vocation does not sound forth in a vacuum—it requires the vocal chords of congregational life and culture. Such a calling is mediated through a matrix of ecclesial relationships and experiences—it requires the apprenticeship of faithful lives in the context of faithful communities. This is a calling discerned face to face, life to life. I have often wondered if the significant increase of second- and third-career men and women into ordained ministry (at the same time the ministry as a first career choice is declining) may represent, in part, the failure of the church to provide the context within which such a first call could be discerned. Was the question of pastoral ministry as a first and lifelong vocation being posed to these men and women who are now, later in life, answering that question affirmatively?

Call Them Forth

It is my personal conviction that the dearth of younger clergy sounds a wake-up call to the already called. Pastors have a crucial role to play in stimulating the vocational imagination of the youth in their congregations. A look at the numbers in Hillary Wicai's article on page 6 will reveal that if even 10 percent of current clergy committed themselves to apprenticing one young person into the ministry, the tide would begin to turn. However, as indicated by my friend's comments above, I fear that too few clergy experience the pastoral life as a good and rewarding life. It is not uncommon to hear pastors and denominational officials

express serious reservations, if not outright resistance, to the idea of ordained ministry being the vocation of choice for one of their own children. This reality warrants renewed and sustained attention by congregations and judicatories. The question of clergy morale is directly relevant to the question of calling forth a new generation of leaders for the church.

Without for a moment taking away from the benefit the church has received from the influx of older men and women into the ranks of pastoral ministry, we must agree that a profession that fails to capture the imagination of a younger generation is in great danger of losing its

every denominational official we spoke with was convinced that the low number of young clergy was a critical concern. At the same time, however, these officials could not share with us a developed programmatic agenda designed to address this critical concern. Surely such a programmatic emphasis would not be a hard sell to any denomination's constituency. A good place to start is to attend, closely and carefully, to those young adults who, against the prevailing winds of the culture, have responded to the call to ordained ministry.

Denominations need to attend to these young clergy in a way that demon-

need to do for young clergy. It is something that denominations could provide the means for young pastors to do for themselves.

It is my hope that this issue of CONGREGATIONS will contribute to a dynamic and hopeful engagement—at all levels of the church—with the young in relation to the vocation of ordained ministry. They are not the future of the Church—they are the present by which its future will be shaped. ❀

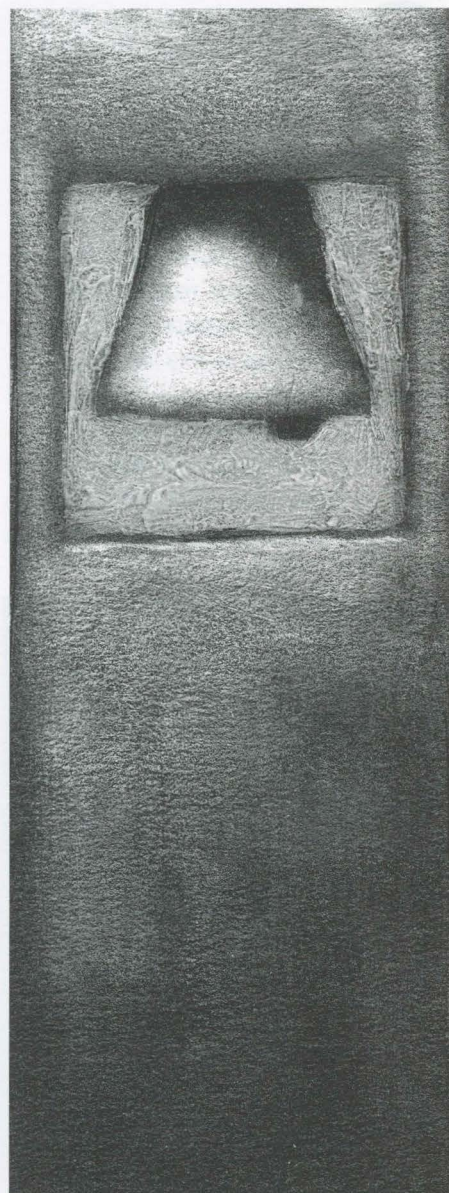
A profession that fails to capture the imagination of a younger generation is in great danger of losing its capacity to inspire a new generation, period.

capacity to inspire a new generation, period. We live in a time when all cultural institutions engaged in the task of interpretation must possess an expanding capacity for adaptation to rapidly changing cultural forms, meanings, and symbols. The kind of cultural change we are undergoing is by and large mediated by the youngest generations. While this reality does not in and of itself authorize young voices, it ought to cause us to recognize how ill equipped we will be to reach a new generation if we are unable to inspire the young to identify the pastoral ministry as their first and lifelong calling.

Time to Act

One of the discoveries we made in the course of gathering the facts and figures for this issue of CONGREGATIONS was that

strates a real commitment to generating the conditions in which their vocational commitments will be taken seriously. So many of the youngest pastors I talk with observe their peers in other professional contexts receiving appropriate recognition and validation for their new ideas and innovative contributions while they themselves feel a strong sense of marginalization—not only in relation to the culture at large but in relation to their own congregational and institutional cultures as well. For example, providing the funds for young pastors to gather together on a regular basis for disciplined conversation and collaboration with one another about the practice of pastoral leadership might be a good place to start. Networking is a highly prized activity of this generation. This is not something denominations



Views from the Seminary

WHY THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION NEEDS YOUNG PASTORS

Alexandra Greeley

One of the greatest challenges facing religious institutions today is solving the looming clergy shortage. This means finding ways to attract—and keep—theological students who will make a lasting commitment to serve their denomination. As educators and institutions continue in their recruiting efforts, should they focus on attracting younger people, or look for a mix of older and younger students?

Both recent college graduates and second-career theological students bring to the seminary their own strengths and assets. But younger students introduce a certain vitality that the theological classroom often needs. Observes L. Gregory Jones, dean of the Divinity School at Duke University, “They bring a certain academic rigor, because they are coming right out of undergraduate schools and are used to asking broad and deep questions. And they tend to be intellectually curious. I wouldn’t say that second-career students don’t bring this, but it is a strength with younger students.”

While it is not universally true, Susan Thistlethwaite, president of the Chicago Theological Seminary, adds that young people also bring a level of energy and openness to the classroom that older students may lack. On a spiritual journey, younger students are often eager for and seeking out new ideas and they want the

answers fast. On the other hand, more mature students have lived longer and had more experiences. Thus, she adds, they know that life is complex and its answers are found more in nuances than in simple “yes” or “no” responses.

The young’s very energy can revitalize church communities and educational institutions, and often young students offer fresh insights into the nature of changes in society and culture as these affect the church. “Young people see it [the church] from a grassroots setting, and see where the church is going” says

William Pannell, special assistant to the president at Fuller Theological Seminary, noting that second-career students’ attitudes are already strongly influenced by the careers they’ve had. “It is an important generational difference.” This underscores the need for young clergy who can understand the Generation X culture and make a connection with it.

More Time on Their Hands

Because they are generally free from the family or financial ties or career involvement that may tie down a second-career student, younger students have more time to commit to studies and to community activities. Thistlethwaite notes that in her experience, beginning second-career students often don’t realize how time-consuming theological studies can be. “Just taking notes is only about one-third of what you are doing,” she says. “The rest is your own exploration and taking advantage of experiences.” She remembers one student in particular who worked extra hours to earn enough to get through seminary debt free. He was often so tired that he would fall asleep during class, thus cheating himself of the value of the education. Says Thistlethwaite, “We had to intervene to give him financial aid.”

Having fewer demands on their time also allows younger students to form



Younger students bring a certain academic rigor, because they are coming right out of undergraduate schools and are used to asking broad and deep questions.

L. Gregory Jones, Dean
Divinity School, Duke University
Durham, North Carolina



Mainline theology has undergone seismic shifts and the form of expression it takes is

changing. It takes tremendous creativity and energy to work with these trends creatively.

Susan Thistlethwaite, President
Chicago Theological Seminary
Chicago, Illinois

stronger community involvements and deeper relationships outside the classroom. "This enhances the formation of their ministerial character," says Jones. "A lot of education and character formation happens outside the classroom."

And after seminary, those with the least encumbrances are the most mobile to go where community needs are greatest, says Martha Horne, president and dean of the Virginia Theological Seminary. "Younger people don't have the financial commitments or obligations, and are more able to go into different kinds of situations," she says. "The older ones, especially if they are married, find it much more difficult to go into rural areas, especially with a spouse [who may have a job]."

Return on Investment

Because a theological education is expensive, investing in educating younger people may yield greater long-time rewards. "If the education is funded, it is very expensive and met by private donations and the work of the church," Thistlethwaite says. "At the age of 40, a pastor may have a 15-year career left; at the age of 30, a pastor may have a 25-year-long career. It's the same education, the same cost."

But sometimes, she cautions, investing in youth does not always pay off. Although Thistlethwaite can only draw conclusions from anecdotal experiences, she thinks the burnout rate among younger pastors can be very high. She tells of a young academician who recently turned 30 and told Thistlethwaite that all of her peers from a prominent East Coast divinity school had burned out. "And think of what those educations cost," Thistlethwaite says, adding that while younger students may be unprepared for the stresses of modern-day ministry, mature students have a greater

chance of staying the course and not burning out. "Mainline theology has undergone seismic shifts and the form of expression it takes is changing. It takes tremendous creativity and energy to work with these trends creatively," she says. And with few life experiences to draw upon, adds Jones, the younger students are often naively optimistic about their capacity to make a difference and to change the world, factors he believes account for a higher attrition rate.

And Jones feels that younger people face a greater challenge in trying to understand what the ministerial ideal and life will mean for them. "Their being a minister carries with it perceptions by others," he says, "and a second-career student comes in as already being an active adult in a community and a congregation . . . The younger people at Duke are perceived by colleagues and others as [already] being ministers, and that carries a certain expectation . . . and causes them to struggle a lot about what the ministry means."

Age Mix Is Important

As schools and churches look to attract younger people, no one discounts the contributions made to the ministry by second-career pastors. "They bring a tremendous amount of experience and a level of maturity to the ministry," Thistlethwaite says. And an age mix in the theological classroom can be positive. She remembers her years in the seminary,

during the Vietnam War, when she and her classmates had just graduated from college and, in general, were all of a similar age and background. Today, however, the typical student body is much more diverse in terms of class, race, and gender. The mix and the age differences are two ways to help educate people, she says, noting that intergenerational contact greatly enriches everyone's education and social interactions. Besides, an age mix in the classroom reflects what life is really like. "If you are a younger pastor, you need to relate to older parishioners. How can you minister to them if you don't know what they are thinking?" she says. On the other hand, the older students get to know what people in their twenties are thinking and can then have much more of a peer relationship.

Another asset older students bring is how enriched they are by life experiences, Horne believes. Second-career pastors have already dealt with the hard knocks of life so they have a different perspective and can deal with life problems more effectively. "They have the ability to relate to, to work with, and to understand the



Young people see the church from a grassroots setting,

and they see where it is going.

William Pannell, Special Assistant
to the President
Fuller Theological Seminary
Pasadena, California



There is a real lack of people in the 35- to 50-year-old category who are ready to take on important jobs in the church.

Martha Horne, President and Dean
Virginia Theological Seminary
Alexandria, Virginia

lives of parishioners, which is a focus that sometimes people straight out of college lack. We need to emphasize a mix [in ages]," she says.

However, even though youth should not be the sole criterion for pastoral selection, religious institutions do need an infusion of younger people to fill the generational gaps many congregations are facing as older pastors retire. That's an underlying concern, says Thistlethwaite, who describes the recent 50-year anniversary of her school, and the school's minister-in-residence, a member of the 50-year-out class. "These long ministries are spanning huge crises in American culture . . . and the loss of these people is huge. There is no one to replace them," she says. "They represent a generation of longevity in the ministry that you just don't see happening anymore."

Not only that, church administrations are also facing a real leadership deficit, worries Horne. "There is a real lack of people in the 35- to 50-year-old category who are ready to take on important jobs in the church," she says. "The

older ones may not have the energy or the incentive to take on a big leadership role. So we need to train young people who will not only speak to the young, but who will also move into more challenging leadership positions in 10 to 15 years."

But Thistlethwaite feels the most important task of the church and the seminary lies beyond attracting new pastors: Both need to find ways to keep them involved. "That's where the challenge really lies," she says. ☛

Different Ages, Different Everything

NEW STUDY COMPARES ENTERING SEMINARY STUDENTS

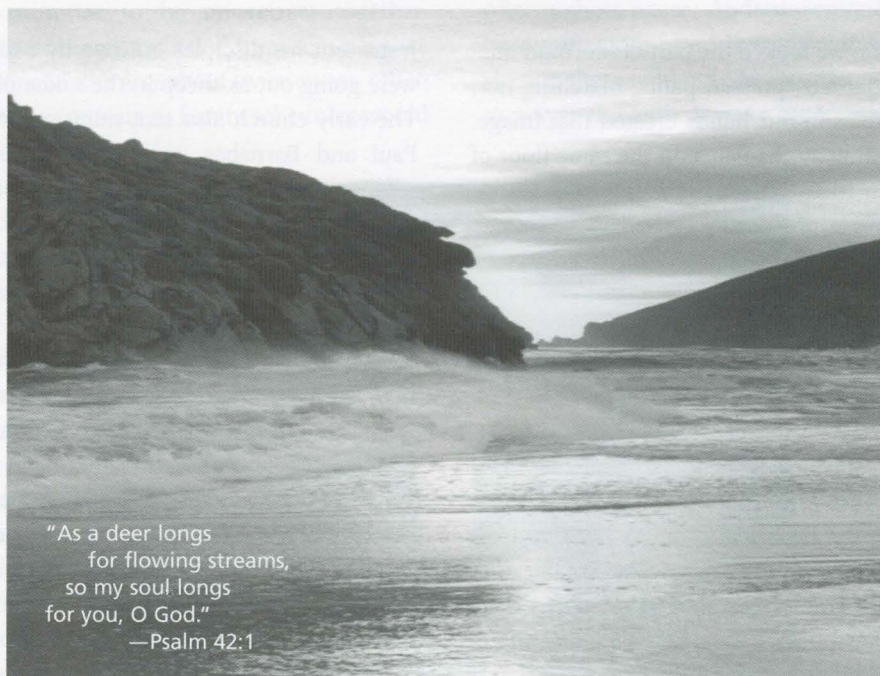
How do seminary students under the age of 30 differ from older, "second-career" students? Some intriguing answers can be found in a recent study commissioned by the Fund for Theological Education and conducted by the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education. The study, under the co-direction of Barbara G. Wheeler, Director of the Center, and Dr. Denna Sanchez, surveyed 2,512 students entering seminary in the fall of 1998. Their discoveries included the following:

- ❖ Younger students are more likely than older students to have made the dean's list in college and to have received graduation honors.
- ❖ Younger students decided to study for a religious vocation at an earlier age than did older students and were more likely to have been leaders in church youth groups and campus religious organizations. However, younger students are less likely overall to have been active in a worship community or a small group ministry.
- ❖ Older students are more likely than their younger colleagues to have ordination and congregational ministry as their vocational goals, while younger students express more interest in vocations such as campus ministry, missions, college and seminary teaching, and graduate study.
- ❖ In choosing seminary studies, older students are more likely to say that they are motivated by a sense of call from God and a desire to lead worship; younger students are more likely than older ones to say that they are driven more by a desire to bring about change and to please others.
- ❖ Younger students show markers of a higher social class status than older students: for instance, college-educated parents in "white collar" professions (such as medicine or law), suburban church backgrounds, and private schooling.
- ❖ Race and gender diversity is more pronounced among older students than among younger students; women and African Americans in particular are less likely to enter seminary directly out of college.

A report on the study will be available this spring from the Center for the Study of Theological Education, Auburn Theological Seminary, 3041 Broadway, NY, NY 10027. Single copies of Auburn reports are free and can be downloaded from www.auburnsem.org.

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Two by Two

A FRIENDSHIP BOUND IN CHRIST

S. Chapin Garner and Andrew B. Warner

Stepping off the elevator, we looked the part of Mormon missionaries. Dark blue jackets, pressed pants, matching ties, close-cropped hair, and Bibles in our hands created that image. We were seminarians, working as chaplains on the same floor of the Deaconess Hospital; our friendship had begun during a summer unit of clinical pastoral education. What started as a joke, that funny sense that we were like Mormon missionaries, became a call to servant friendship and part of a holy vocation. Our friendship grew and developed as we entered into ordained ministry and realized that our vocations were linked.

A Common Vision

We may have looked like Mormon missionaries, but we could not have fit that model because Andrew is an openly gay man. As we worked side by side in the hospital, Andrew's sexuality was never an issue. Moreover, as the summer progressed we began to recognize that we shared a common vision for the gathered life of faith and that our gifts for ministry were surprisingly complementary. It was as if we were two sides of a coin.

We realized we were being drawn together in a very powerful way. It wasn't long before we began to talk casually about what it might be like to work together in a parish setting. Casual conversation turned into serious planning. We began to sense the makings of a call, and we started to pray about whether we were being called into parish ministry together.

During this period of discernment, Andrew's sexuality became a curious issue. Churches in our denomination that can afford two pastors tend to be in suburban settings, and it is rare to find a suburban church that feels comfortable having a gay man as pastor. As our sense of call grew, we began to wonder why the Lord would be pairing us up if it were unlikely we would ever serve a church together. Chapin wondered, "Why couldn't Andrew be an attractive straight woman? That would greatly enhance our marketability!" We both struggled to discern the kind of vocation our Lord was shaping for us.

Over the course of several months, we studied Scripture to gain some guidance. We noticed that early on in his ministry

Jesus sent his disciples out two by two because he realized they were going out as sheep in the midst of wolves (Luke 10: 1–20). The early church also sent ministers into the world in this way. Paul and Barnabas were called together. When a rift arose between the two, they split, but then paired up with others: Paul with Timothy and Barnabas with Mark. There is something holy at the root of this ministerial unit. Messengers of the Word need the strength and support only companionship and binding friendship can provide.

But a friendship dedicated to serving the Lord is about more than support. Such a friendship is the most basic gathering where Jesus Christ himself can be present. Essentially, we could go it alone or by pairing together be in the company of three. We experience Christ not in isolation but in community. We are accountable to God and one another not in isolation but in community. We cultivate our prayer lives and are prayed for not in isolation but in community. The holy bond of support and friendship that arises in this form of paired ministry is essential to our health, honesty, and faithfulness as servants in a hostile world.

When we first recognized our joint calling, we expected our Lord to send us into ministry together. We were called, however, to different places: Chapin to Massachusetts and Andrew to Wisconsin. The Lord called us, not to the same congregation, but to a holy friendship that would renew us for service in our individual congregations.

What Can I Hold In Prayer For You?

It is difficult to maintain a friendship across a great geographical distance. This is particularly true of a friendship that seeks to transform and deepen one's spiritual life. Aristotle, writing about friendship, said that friends must be bound together by common practices. Our friendship lasted beyond seminary and into our vocations because we developed a regular discipline of prayer and seasonal retreats.

Like most good friends, we talk a couple of times a week. Our conversations always include one person asking the other,

"What can I hold in prayer for you?" This simple question is more than an idle ritual. It elicits vulnerability and honesty. It expresses concern and commitment to the other person. We ask each other to pray for our families and our congregations. In the most difficult times we can each say, "A friend is praying for me."

We seek out opportunities to be on retreat together. Throughout the four years since we graduated from seminary, we have managed to spend time in this way about twice a year. Often this meant designing our own retreats as family schedules would allow. One summer Andrew visited Chapin in Boston on his way to Milwaukee. We spent two days studying Scripture, praying together, and sharing meals. This past year we participated in two pastoral consultation retreats held by the Louisville Institute.

Once, during a conference for young clergy held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, we separated from the group to walk together. As we made our way to what can be described as a holy hill, a sacred and painful moment occurred. Over the last few months we had been engaged in our second pastoral search processes, and had applied to many of the same churches. On paper we looked nearly identical: young white men characterized by thoughtful and solid theological reflection, a common vision for the future of the church, orthodox Christologies, and progressive social stances. There was only one significant difference—our sexuality. Each of us spoke of our families in our ministerial profiles, which meant congregations knew from the outset that Andrew is gay. Our search results were strikingly dissimilar. Chapin received countless invitations to interview, while Andrew received hardly any.

Throughout our respective processes we had stayed in constant contact. We prayed for each other and shared our hopes

The Lord called us, not to the same congregation, but to a holy friendship that would renew us for service in our individual congregations.

and dreams, as well as our anxieties and disappointments. As our searches played out, an unspoken tension began to emerge between us.

On that hill in Santa Fe, after a time of silence, Chapin softly shared that it had grown difficult to talk with Andrew about the opportunities that lay before

him, knowing that Andrew was not having a similar experience. After a short pause, Andrew responded even more quietly, "It's been difficult to hear." It was a moment of truth, a time of sacred sharing that could only be experienced in a friendship grounded in prayer and faith. It was a bittersweet moment because we were

able to open our aching hearts to one another with the realization that we were not going to stop talking about our search processes; we knew that at least on this particular note there was going to be more pain and discomfort to be had—and we were committed to experiencing it together as friends in Christ.

Friends and Brothers

So often, parish ministry is an isolating enterprise. In the midst of an entire community of faith, profound loneliness can be experienced. Even with the support of parishioners, secular friends, spouses, and Jesus Christ himself, we can sense a void. That is why covenanted friendships be-

tween clergy are so vital. Denominations often support the mentor/mentored relationship, but we suggest a friendship bound in Christ.

We have been called into a relationship where we share our hearts with one another, gather for times of retreat, spur each other's spiritual growth, and continually hold each other in prayer, and we find that this relationship is an essential component to our vocational wholeness. We believe to this day that Jesus Christ calls us two by two. Even if we are separated by hundreds of miles, we are still one in Christ. Friends. Brothers. Servants of our living Lord. ☛



Matthew Baek

ESSAY

Gathering the NeXt Generation

ESSAYS ON THE FORMATION AND MINISTRY OF GENX PRIESTS

Nathan Humphrey, ed.
Harrisburg, Penn.: Morehouse Publishing, 2000

The prophet Jeremiah said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the Lord said to me,

"Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them . . ." (Jer. 1:6-8a).

I remember the triumphant vindication that washed over my study partners and me as we read these words. Maybe it was okay after all for us, a handful of 23-year-olds, to be in seminary in 1985.

We didn't look like our classmates, the vast majority of whom were old enough to have been our mothers, our fathers, or our much older cousins. Also, our interests sometimes varied. They talked about their kids and the careers they'd left behind; we looked for spouses and reminisced about the fabulous parties we'd had in college. Together, we talked about theology, the ordination process, and what sort of jobs we were heading toward after seminary. Invariably, when we arrived at this last subject, our older classmates began wondering, realistically, if we who had been in diapers or in utero when JFK was shot had enough life experience to be priests, leaders, and servants of the Lord.

During those early conversations I remember being vaguely embarrassed by my age and hoping that by sitting quietly

and smiling I would look older than I was. Then came that fateful day in Hebrew Bible class when we read the call of Jeremiah—*Hey, age doesn't matter! The Bible tells us so.* After that I no longer sat quietly at the refectory table. Instead I began to wonder aloud why it took some people two careers and 20 years to discern a vocation, whereas other people, Jeremiah included, managed to hear God's call early on.

As I read *Gathering the NeXt Generation*, this story and several others like it filled my head. Finally, a book about ministry that addresses the issues encountered by someone who was born in 1962 and finished seminary in 1988! As a GenX Episcopal priest, I know exactly how Scott Barker feels when he says in his essay, "Of eighty-nine priests in Nebraska, three are under forty. Of eight ordinations since I arrived here in 1992, one—mine—was of a person with a lifetime to commit to the priestly ministry" (p. 133).

I have had similar experiences in my ministry. In the diocese in which I serve, the average age of ordained clergy is 53. In the last 10 years I have supervised six seminarians, only one of whom was younger than me.

During the 1997 General Convention of the Episcopal Church, an interesting statistic began to float through the Philadelphia convention hall. The church pension fund reported that of the 8,000 ordained clergy in the Episcopal church, fewer than 300 were under the age of 35. Conversations stopped and, momentarily, sexuality ceased to be the issue du jour. I remember thinking to myself, well, no wonder I am almost always the youngest person at diocesan gatherings—we're practically an endangered species.

With that startling statistic began the recognition of a new group in the Episcopal Church—clergy born between

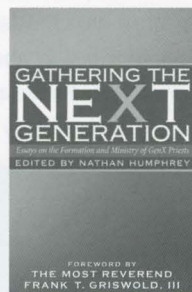
1961 and 1982. Several of these GenXers put on a conference at Virginia Theological Seminary entitled "Gathering the NeXt Generation." More than half of the 300 ordained GenXers attended that conference. From it came a flood of activities, conferences, think tanks, list-serves, and friendships, and this collection of essays.

Gathering the NeXt Generation should be required reading for all bishops, deployment officers, and commissions on ministry who have any concern for the future of the Episcopal Church. While specifically a book about the Episcopal Church in the United

States, it also offers valuable insights to other denominations struggling to define vision, ministry, and mission for the twenty-first century. It seeks to flesh out that original, isolated statistic and begins to answer questions such as: Who are these GenX priests? Why are there so few? What does it mean for the Episcopal Church that more than three-quarters of its clergy are scheduled to retire in the next 20 years? The book also lays out quite convincingly the gifts, hopes, and questions this group of priests brings to the Episcopal Church.

In his preface, Nathan Humphrey points out that the authors of this book hope their essays will

cut across many divides in the Episcopal Church: women and men, young and old, lay and ordained, liberal and conservative, gay and straight, Anglo-Catholic and evangelical, and everywhere in between . . . [to] begin a mutually converting conversation on mission and ministry in the next millennium (p. xi).



As Christopher Martin points out in the book's introduction, this is a group of priests who have less of an interest in doctrine, polity, or denominations and more of a passion for ministry, community, and the love of Jesus Christ. He says,

It is not our intention to complain about the state of the church and do nothing. Neither is it our desire to form our own network and go about our business, heedless of the larger church. Rather, we want to work with the whole church to help prepare her to meet the challenges of the coming decades (p. xxiii).

The next two sections of the book relate formation first to ordination and then to ministry. These sections begin to answer the question as to why there are so few GenX priests in the Episcopal Church. In her essay, Jamie L'Enfant poses the quintessential question: Which comes first, ordination or formation? In my own experience, I have seen more than one commission on ministry turn down a young applicant, remarking, "Well, she's awfully young, and we're not really sure that her spiritual identity has fully formed." In response to this line of thinking, L'Enfant wonders if we ought to broaden our definition and understanding of spiritual maturity and vocational clarity so that we begin to experience formation as a lifelong process. She writes,

As the bible and our calendar of saints clearly show us, God repeatedly calls forth young—and otherwise unlikely—candidates for special kinds of ministry . . . But we in the church have grown suspicious of anyone who is young or different in some way. Interestingly, we trust young people to grow into an understanding of what it means

I have seen more than one commission on ministry turn down a young applicant, remarking, "Well, she's awfully young, and we're not really sure that her spiritual identity has fully formed."

to be a doctor or lawyer or teacher or parent—and we trust them to acquire the necessary job skills—but we don't trust them to be similarly formed by the process of becoming a priest (p. 22).

Margaret Schwarzer continues in a similar vein in her essay, "Youth's Authority: A Spiritual Revolution." She notes that today's congregations frequently equate age with spiritual maturity. But then Schwarzer adroitly points out that God has seemed quite comfortable using young adults to unfold God's holy purpose in our world. After all, King David, the Blessed Mother, and Jesus of Nazareth all seemed to have succeeded in spite of their youth. One wonders if any of these young adults would have been granted postulancy in today's system.

After introducing the notion that formation is a lifelong process, Benjamin Shambaugh proposes several of its key elements in his essay, "A Call for Curacy: Following a Residency Model by Getting Congregations Involved as 'Teaching Parishes.'" Shambaugh makes a strong case for the institutional church to be proactive in mentoring young priests, perhaps even going so far as to establish teaching congregations, similar to teaching hospitals for young doctors. He also makes the radically practical suggestion that congregations with significant endowments use some of this money to make a flesh-and-blood investment in the congregation's future. Too often the institutional church has, Shambaugh asserts, "Gotten so caught up in storing up treas-

ure for tomorrow that we run the risk of dying as a denomination before ever getting a chance to use it" (p. 49).

The last two sections of the book focus on who some of these GenX priests are and what sort of mission and ministry they propose for the new millennium. Jennifer Baskerville, in her essay, "To be Young, Priested and Black: Raising Up the NeXt Generation of Black Clergy," offers two more stunning statistics. On the day after she graduated from seminary in 1997, only 30 of the 8,000 Episcopal clergy were African American women serving full-time in parish ministry. And of the 300 GenX priests, less than 10 were of African descent. Given these facts, Jennifer Baskerville is well past being on the endangered species list and quickly moving toward the burial ground of extinction. As she points out, "After serving long and distinguished tenures, bishops and priests of African descent are retiring at a rapid rate" (p. 96). She causes us to wonder from where the next generation of African American leadership will emerge. And what does this mean for the Episcopal Church? Baskerville writes,

Having few clergy of African descent not only deprives the Black community of a richly diverse clerical leadership, it deprives the entire church of that gift. Without people of color, or the deaf, or Latinos, or any of the others often pushed to the margins of society, we lose the complexity of voices longing to share stories that have gone untold. And when the stories go

untold we, as a church, never fully understand who we are (p. 98).

Baskerville offers possible solutions to the ever-shrinking pool of young African American clergy: What about the national church offering no-interest loans to all young clergy to defray the cost of a seminary education? Also, she says, the church as a whole must cease to assume that black clergy will be raised up by and serve only historically black congregations. Clergy of African descent come from and can serve congregations that are predominantly black, multiracial, or predominantly white.

In "Conversion and Community," Nancy Vogeles offers her experience as a

GenX priest who has served as a missionary in Zaire and who also happens to be a lesbian. Vogeles makes a wonderful case for the power of relationships over doctrine. She cites her ongoing friendship with her mentor, the Rt. Rev. E.M. Kolini, bishop of the diocese of Shaba, Zaire, in spite of his outspoken opposition to practicing homosexuals in the ministry. She invites all of us to consider the position that "unity does not depend on uniformity" and that we are each called to be in relationship with each other because "Jesus has first chosen to be in relationship with each of us."

Vogeles asks, "Can we commit to finding ways to live together—to be a viable and authentic community of faith that

can disagree and debate, even passionately, but without demonizing the other or without threatening schism?" (p. 116). She clearly believes and acts as if this were possible, and she credits this flexibility and resiliency to being a GenXer. GenXers' gift to the church, Vogeles believes, is to model an openness to the world, an insistence on the primacy of relationships—over and against ideologies—and an acceptance of provisionality. She sees these three characteristics as a means for the Episcopal Church to move through and past its current debates and begin to address mission and ministry in this millennium.

What might this ministry look like? Rock Shuler offers several insights in the

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final essay of the book, "A Living Church Serving a Living Lord: Mission and Ministry in the Twenty-first Century." Shuler is quite clear that God is calling the church and all of us to "live mission." One of the ways that we do this is through our worship services. In order for our worship services to touch the lives of people living in our communities (and not just the lives of the people who are already in our pews), they must reflect the "culture or cultures of a neighborhood or area—even to the point... of having a large variety of worship services within one parish" (p. 150). I suspect that Rite I at 8:00 a.m. and Rite II at 10:00 a.m. is not what Schuler has in mind. He mentions user-friendly services for children and guests, arguing that

we should also be willing as a church to use professional multimedia capabilities, incorporating pictures, video, and computer graphics into our services, even as we use the Internet and other modern technology to convey our vision of Christ (p. 151).

Gathering the NeXt Generation seeks to convey the experiences of the few GenX clergy in the Episcopal Church. It also gently invites older members of the church to consider some of the ideas and insights that this generation brings to ministry.

These insights deserve to be read, discussed, and in many cases implemented. This is particularly crucial for the Episcopal Church, as well as for other mainline Protestant denominations that want to be more than cultural skeletons or postmodern museums in the twenty-first century.

Bonnie A. Perry

All Saints' Episcopal Church
Chicago, Illinois

BOOK REVIEW

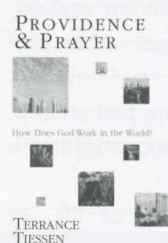
Providence & Prayer

HOW DOES GOD WORK IN THE WORLD?

Terrance L. Tiessen

Downer's Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2000

Does prayer change God's mind or only our feelings? Does he do things because we ask him to or does he make decisions independent of our efforts? Does he prompt us to pray or is it completely



spontaneous on our part? How much control does God have in the world? Can God guarantee that certain things will occur despite our having free will? How concerned is

he with the everyday affairs of our lives versus issues like genocide or nuclear war? If God has already made up his mind, what is the use of praying? By now you get a sense of the diverse and very real questions that this excellent book addresses.

Prayer has been called "the Christian's vital breath." That very large numbers of Americans pray on a daily basis has been confirmed over many decades by polling organizations. Churches everywhere encourage people to pray, and clerics and others routinely lead entire congregations in prayer. *Providence & Prayer*, one of the more stimulating books I have read in practical theology, is easily the best I have ever encountered on this topic.

Tiessen, a professor of theology and ethics at Providence Theological Seminary in Manitoba, Canada, organizes his discussion into 10 different models, or views, of providence and prayer and then

adds his own model in conclusion. A comparative chart of the 11 models, copious footnotes leading to specific sources for each viewpoint, and a pointed series of questions interspersed along the way make for engaging reading and provocative thinking. The book's organization lends itself particularly well to a study group, an adult Sunday school class, or a wider engagement with thinking people outside of the organized church, many of whom, we know from survey data, also pray on a daily basis.

Tiessen's goal is not to persuade us to accept his view of prayer but to get us thinking about our own and to help us make this view more consistent with our theology, our beliefs, and our practice. Along the way, we shall have to wrestle with some key philosophical questions about free will, omniscience, the roles of actions and actors, and a host of other worthy issues that are long overdue for consideration. Whether or not this book will improve our individual or corporate prayer life, it will certainly sharpen our thinking about prayer and its role in our lives. Surely that alone makes *Providence & Prayer* a worthwhile investment.

Rev. Dennis W. Cheek

New Beginnings Christian Fellowship
Mansfield, Massachusetts

BOOK REVIEW

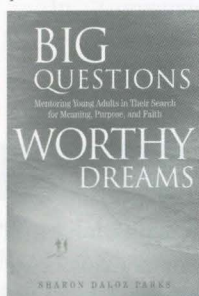
Big Questions, Worthy Dreams

MENTORING YOUNG ADULTS
IN THEIR SEARCH FOR
MEANING, PURPOSE, AND
FAITH

Sharon Daloz Parks

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000

This youth-respecting, practical book deserves a serious read by youth directors, youth committees, and pastors. Readers



will gain more than just the methodology of mentoring. They will see youth again as young people do—and be less afraid of it. Basing her work on a kid's comment that his life goal was

to be able to laugh without cynicism, Daloz Parks approaches youth with a tenderness that is quite moving. Arguing that young people today don't have a good picture of what it means to be an adult, she defines their key task as meaning-making: asking big questions and discovering worthy dreams. How well they progress through the four stages of what she terms post-adolescence—conventional adolescence, young adult, tested adult, and mature adult—will depend on how well they make meaning along the way.

Why big questions? Since faith, according to Daloz Parks, is the dynamic composing of meaning in the most comprehensive dimensions, questions of little consequence or those that only skim the surface can distract and preoccupy us while a larger field of potential consciousness remains assumed, unexamined, or

neglected. Over time, that consciousness can become stagnant and insufficient, even begin to disintegrate. In contrast, big questions stretch us.

Mentoring communities that foster meaning and faith in the young adult years are particularly powerful, says Daloz Parks, in their ability to extend hospitality to big questions such as these:

- ❖ Who do I really want to become?
- ❖ Am I lovable?
- ❖ Why is suffering so pervasive?
- ❖ What are the values and limitations of my culture?
- ❖ Who am I as a sexual being?
- ❖ Do my actions make any real difference in the bigger scheme of things?
- ❖ Do I want friendship, partnership, and marriage? If so, why? With whom?
- ❖ What is my society, or life, or God, asking of me?
- ❖ What is the meaning of money? How much is enough?
- ❖ What constitutes meaningful work?
- ❖ What do I want the future to look like for me, for those who come after me, for my planet?
- ❖ What is my religion? Do I need one?
- ❖ What are my real talents, preferences, skills, and longings?
- ❖ When do I feel most alive?
- ❖ Where can I be creative?
- ❖ What are my fears?
- ❖ How am I complicit in patterns of injustice?

Conversations within and across generations that ask these questions create maturity—in more than one direction!

Rev. Donna Schaper

Coral Gables Congregational Church
Coral Gables, Florida

BOOK REVIEW

Better Than Success

8 PRINCIPLES OF FAITHFUL
LEADERSHIP

C. Jeff Woods

Valley Forge, Penn.: Judson Press, 2001

Leadership in the church is not about success; it is about faithfulness. Upon this premise C. Jeff Woods, executive minister of the American Baptist Churches of Ohio, has authored a manual “specifically for Christian leaders who want to be faithful in all aspects of their Christian journey, including leadership” (p. vii).

The foundation for faithful leadership is developing and discerning a vision from God within the congregation. This frees the leader from having to generate it alone and cajole the flock to go along. Woods articulates this portion of his book well and offers helpful exercises for leaders to use to find God's vision through prayer, Bible study, and reflection.

Faithful leadership does not obviate the need for excellent skills, according to the author. Rather, the emphasis is on using them faithfully. Each chapter explicates one of the eight skills Woods believes are needed. He gives attention to vision, setting priorities, leading change, mentoring, and caring for one's soul. He clearly is in touch with the current literature on leadership and with life in congregations.

This reviewer hopes *Better Than Success* finds its way into the hands of many pastors and other church leaders. Theologically rooted and practically carried out, it deserves to be heard.

Rev. Joseph I. Mortensen

American Baptist Churches of Michigan
Midland, Michigan

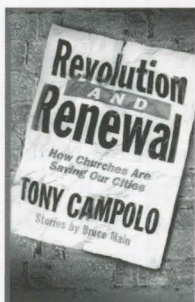
BOOK REVIEW

Revolution and Renewal

HOW CHURCHES ARE
SAVING OUR CITIES

Tony Campolo

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000



This is Campolo at his best: "There is little doubt that the church is being called to an involvement in the social redemption of our decaying inner cities" (p. 233). Drawing upon the

experiences of communities of faith in Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey, and his own considerable involvement in urban ministry, sociologist/theologian Tony Campolo has written a blueprint for this renewal. While challenging the church to work for social change, he also reminds us of our God-given calling to bring individuals into the new life in Christ.

Revolution and Renewal describes faith-based programs that are addressing, in innovative ways, people's needs for faith, economic opportunities, and justice. It is filled with stories of imaginative proposals that are providing impetus for the coming renewal. I was struck by both the simplicity and the sophistication of what is being undertaken. Change comes through door-to-door visitation pro-

grams, town meetings, the nurturing of community, and tutoring endeavors. Change also emerges when suburban churches adopt families and schools, develop employment agencies and "job readying" programs, establish alternative education, partner with business, and otherwise bring hope to many who might just give up.

Campolo provides a constructive overview of poverty and welfare reform in America, with political, social, and biblical responses. *Revolution and Renewal* gives fresh meaning to Karl Barth's challenge "to be the church for the sake of the world."

Rev. Richard A. Busch

Servant Leadership School
Washington, D.C.

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The Congregational Resource Guide is a joint effort of the Alban Institute and its Indianapolis Center for Congregations. Funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.



Mentoring: Don't Wait to Be Invited

Q

Parish ministry is learned largely through experience. How do I find a mentor to guide and challenge me now that I am out of seminary? My denomination seems more inclined to give me additional study requirements than to provide help in learning about ministry.

A

Mentoring is a form of coaching or teaching (often by example) that is usually initiated when an experienced person takes a younger colleague under his or her wing. Your experience of a lack of mentors for congregational leaders is shared by a lot of other people. There was once a good deal more of this informal leadership development being exercised in congregations, for the benefit of both clergy and leading members. For the present, it seems as if overburdened schedules, the less hierarchical nature of our congregations and denominations, concerns over exclusiveness, and perhaps a few other issues have conspired to minimize opportunities for mentoring. Also, differences between generations regarding assumptions and expectations has limited the mentoring that does occur.

I would invite you to consider three ideas:

1. Ask to be mentored. You do not need to wait to be invited or simply hope to fall into a mentoring relationship. Look around for a person whose skills and insight attract you. Do not limit yourself by looking only at denominational colleagues or at people who share your role. Clergy have often found laity who are leaders in business or nonreligious professions to be wonderful mentors, and lay people have often turned to clergy for mentoring. However, when you talk to the person you have selected as a mentor, be as clear and precise as you can about what role or function of leadership you would like to address. The mentoring relationship is purposeful, and you will want to find someone who can offer both guidance and challenge in your chosen areas. Being clear about what you hope to work on can help both of you assess whether your time together will be beneficial.

2. Consider peer mentoring. As generational expectations create larger differences between younger and older clergy in the understanding and practice of ministry, peer learning becomes important. You may want to consider "reciprocal mentoring," in

which you agree with peers in ministry to study together and to practice a structured and systematic review of your ministry. An increasing number of peer mentoring groups are being formed whose participants, having found one another because they are facing similar questions or challenges, are covenanting to work and learn together. It is not uncommon for such a group to call in one of our Alban consultants for a one- or two-day learning experience and then follow up with reading and discussion on a regular basis. Often these groups intentionally use case study methods to review their own practice.

3. Commit to ongoing learning. Whether you work alone, with another individual, or with a group who shares your questions, please know the importance of a commitment to ongoing learning. In this sense, you may want to think about what it means to mentor yourself. Be aware of where your questions lie and where you feel uncomfortable, and do your prayer, reading, studying, and discussion in these areas. Many leaders fall into the trap of always studying and learning in those areas in which they already feel well prepared and comfortable. The need to pursue mastery in an area where we seem to know what we are doing is understandable. But ministry is the practice of a generalist who is able to stand firmly in the teaching and traditions of the faith and who can also work broadly—and across disciplines—to address the multiple and varied conditions of humanity.

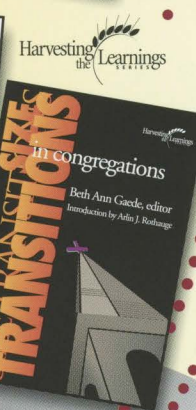
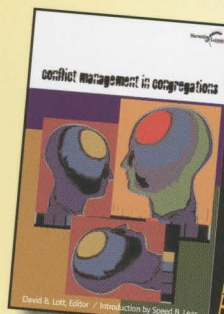
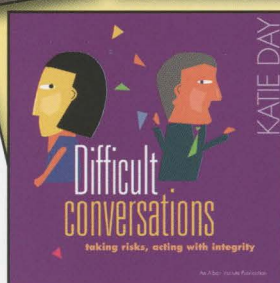
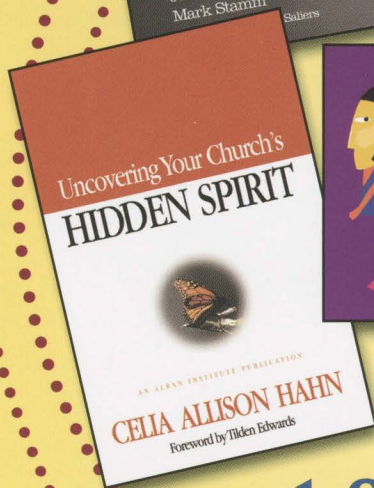
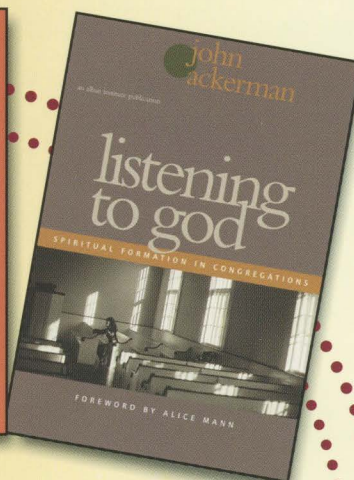
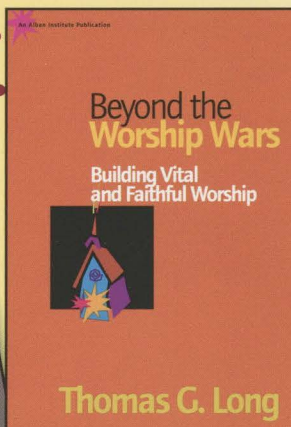
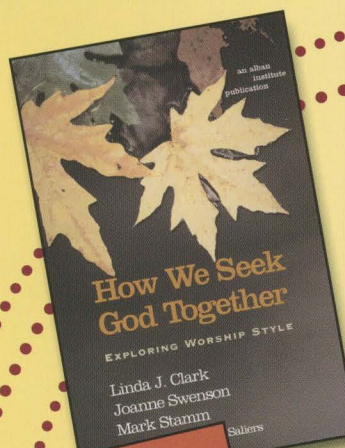


Rev. Dr. Gil Rendle is the director of consulting and education at the Alban Institute. His areas of expertise include strategic planning, change management, coping with congregational conflict, team building, and leadership. The author of several books, he is featured in a new Alban Institute videotape, *Living into the New World: How Cultural Trends Affect Your Congregation*.

New from the Alban Institute

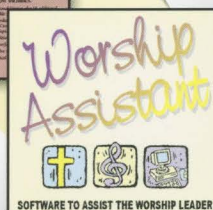
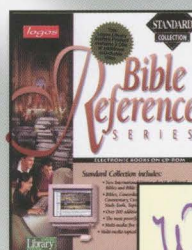
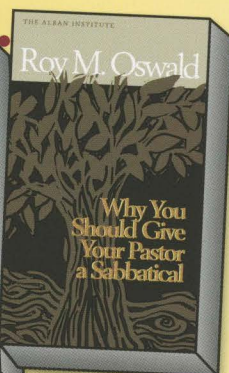
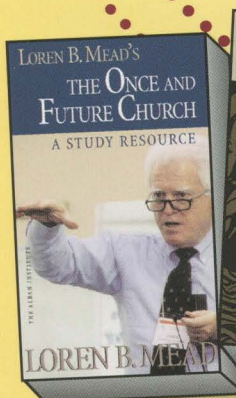


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The Alban Institute serves leaders—both ordained and lay—across the denominational spectrum through **consulting services, education events, book and periodical publishing, and research**. Our work is supported by membership revenue, grant funding, and the sale of programs, services, and publications.

The Alban Institute **encourages dialogue** with many faith traditions, people of diverse ethnicity, men and women, large and small congregations, and urban and rural congregations. We invite you to join in conversation with us by becoming a member or writing an article for CONGREGATIONS—or both! Please call us at 301-718-4407 or send an e-mail to pwalker@alban.org.

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