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RECRUITMENT OF SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

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*multiple or "shared" ministry*

I. An Introductory Statement of the Problem.

This Study Conference on the ministry is highly significant; for us Mennonite Brethren it is historic. The ministry, and the availability of ministers has always been taken for granted in our brotherhood. That there should be a shortage of ministers and pastors among us is for us a new phenomena. Since this trend and movement has caught up with us we are faced with a realistic assessment of our situation. We are here to be shaken and judged by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures. Once again we open the Bible to seek the ways of the Lord for His church.

Simply stated, our problem is that we now need more church workers than are becoming available. Neither our churches nor our denominational programs are producing the workers and leaders needed. The fact that we established seminary programs during the last 15 years has not solved this problem of the shortage of ministers.

The problem becomes more complex as we seek to indicate what may have led us to this pressing current need. We do not only have a shortage of ministers, we now have a relatively "new" kind of minister. Whereas we formerly had a multiple ministry in the local church, we now have adopted the pattern of a single paid ministry. Basically, we have adopted a form of ministry which is foreign to our brotherhood and somewhat foreign to the New Testament church as we understand it. To understand this significant transition, let us briefly review some historical developments.

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## II. Historical Developments.

In our early history congregations were generally supplied with several ministers, usually chosen by ballot from within their memberships. The congregations recognized that ministers and pastors and workers must come from among them. God provided the church with such gifts.

For specialized ministries like evangelism, Bible exposition, and missionary service, the conference encouraged such gifted men as they offered themselves for service. God did provide these special ministries. Our conference in the past was blessed with outstanding evangelists, Bible expositors and missionaries. Currently few such servants are available among us.

Since 1930 (in the U. S.; about 1940 in Canada) there has been a steady and progressive movement from a plural non-professional to a single salaried professionally trained ministry. During these last 40 years this transition has been completed.

The language problem played a part in this transition. Moving from German to English services required men to be trained better in the national language. Congregations became more demanding. Youth, many of whom went to high school and college, felt the need for a more educated ministry. In later years the churches in urban settings required more qualified ministries. In the process of the transition there seemed to be sufficient pressure and rationale to make this change. The change from a multiple ministry to the single pastor system did not come easily. This is so well illustrated by the gracious words of a lay minister as he accepted the pastoral choice which the congregation had made, "We will now need to die to ourselves because the preaching ministry will now be done mainly by our pastor. I am willing to step back."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jantz, Harold, Editorial, Christian Herald, Jan. 23, 1970, p. 11.

It is important to note that with the introduction of the single pastoral system the ordained lay ministry ceased to exist.

We do not deny the necessity of a trained ministry, nor do we deny the reality and practicality which brought about the call of a professional ministry. But we do ask, what happened to our brotherhood concept of the Christian ministry and the nature of its function? What did the church really do when it "hired" a full-time pastor? Definite changes resulted, the implications of which were not fully recognized nor understood by the people. First, with a trained salaried minister, the church no longer retained the multiple or lay-ministry, and in a short time many churches had only one minister of the Word. Secondly, many members relinquished their responsibilities to work in the church, for they had now "hired" someone to do the work for them. Thirdly, the congregation, as such, no longer carried the responsibility for praying, searching, and selecting ministers from their own ranks. They now turned from outside themselves in search of a professional minister.

Our problem today is much deeper than a shortage of ministers. There has developed a different view of the ministry and there has come a lack of involvement of the local congregation in this ministry. The vision of the gifts in the church has declined.

It is also noteworthy that all this has occurred without a study conference or a brotherhood decision! We really have never decided to go this way. We just went!

But we have been warned from time to time concerning this trend. Voices have been raised in the past about the seriousness of ministerial trends. Let us take note, for example, of the advice and exhortations given to the General Conference in Winkler in 1951, spoken by the Board of Reference and Counsel.

"The leaders, teachers, and servants of the church were chosen by the church out of their own midst after much prayer, trusting that Christ by His Spirit would give to His flock, in the words of Jeremiah, 'pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.' (Jer. 3:15). (See Article III, Par. 38 of the Confession of Faith.) From among the teachers they appointed an Elder to carry the leadership responsibility for the flock, the other teachers and ministers being their helpers. (See Par. 45 under Article III). New workers, teachers, and ministers, chosen from within the church, trained and matured under the influence and leadership of the Elders of the church, grew into the work of the local church and conference thoroughly indoctrinated with all Scriptural principles of belief and practice. The strength and stability of leadership, which characterizes the early history of our church must largely be traced back to this briefly outlined method of choice and training of such workers.

...In view of the rapid changes in our churches of the past two decades where the ministry becomes less the product of the church, the local congregations in many instances having passed through the transition from the 'collective ministry' to the pastoral system, it is the judgment of your Committee of Reference and Counsel that it is urgent that we make provisions to safeguard the accepted biblical principle of a collective leadership as also expressed in No. 35 of our Confession of Faith which in part reads: 'All questions relating to doctrine and life in the congregation are decided according to the example of the Apostolic Church as we read in Acts 15:1-28, etc.'<sup>2</sup>

The church with Anabaptist tradition and strong belief in brotherhood has found it somewhat trying to accept a "professional" ministry. Although we have accepted the practice, we have been reluctant to call it such. It is interesting to see how the Mennonite Encyclopedia avoids using the term "professional" ministry. It speaks instead of a "single pastor with training and full salary."<sup>3</sup>

The problem, however, is not the acceptance of a trained professional ministry. The problem is rather to see this ministry in the context of a total view of ministry of the church body. The professional ministry is compatible with the believers' church of ministry if redefined within the

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<sup>2</sup>45th Yearbook, Winkler, Manitoba, 1951.

<sup>3</sup>Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. III, p. 704 f.

total concept of church ministry. There is a place for professional and for non-professional ministries. "The professional ministry is to coordinate, direct, advise, enable, and equip the various ministries of the church. The professional minister is not a spiritual bonanza. He is a Christian technician whose duty it is to enable the church to channel its energies toward constructive ends."<sup>4</sup> *of Paul's Ministry -*

It must therefore be noted that any sincere effort in recruitment for more workers in the church, must take into account not only the shortage of workers, but also the nature of the ministry for which recruitment is made.

### III. The Current Shortage of Volunteers.

During the early history of our churches ministers and workers came from within the local congregations. There was a sense of obligation on the part of the members that the gifts of the ministries of the Word were lodged within the membership, and that these gifts must be sought out and encouraged.

Another source from which workers emerged were the local and regional Bible Schools sponsored by local congregations. While this was basically a lay-training school, the results were often in terms of young people seeking full-time ministries in the church.

In more recent times these Bible schools have ceased to exist. However, a new surge of interest has been manifested in regional or provincial Bible Institutes, particularly in Canada. These Bible Institutes retain a strong evangelistic and missionary spirit. From these schools there is emerging a rather heavy flow of volunteers for church and mission related vocations.

The Winnipeg M. B. Bible College, reflects a small but rather steady record of men volunteering and preparing for the pastoral ministry. The

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<sup>4</sup>J. Lawrence Burkholder, "Theological Education for the Believers' Church," Concern, No. 17, Feb. '69, p. 16.

services of the Bible College to the ministers in form of seminars and ministers conferences has been a highly significant contribution.

A study of the enrollment at the M. B. Seminary in Fresno over the last six years indicates the following: (1) Total enrollment shows a steady growth from 31 students in 1964 to 49 students in 1970. (2) The largest growth in enrollment is from non Mennonite Brethren students. (3) There has been a steady growth in the number of Canadian M. B. students, three in 1964, and eighteen in 1970. (4) There has been a slow and steady decrease of M. B. students from the U. S. constituency over the last six years. (5) The number of seminary students going into pastorates and career missionary service is small and shows no signs of increase. (6) There is a growing interest in the graduate M. A. program at the seminary among students not planning to enter the Christian ministry, but who become rather effective laymen in local churches while remaining in secular vocations.

In the U. S. constituency the emphasis in recent decades has been on education in the liberal arts. The demands for a Christian liberal arts education have been met through the establishment of two accredited liberal arts colleges with strong biblical studies departments.

While the need for liberal arts education has been met, we have not thereby as yet met the need for more volunteers for Christian ministries. The volunteers from our colleges for full time ministries remains small. Encouraging, however, and also significant, is the growing number of young people volunteering for short-term Christian service abroad. There is a marked increase of interest in this area. It can be assumed that a goodly number of these young people will eventually return to full-time ministries either at home or as missionaries abroad.

As the result of our shortage of workers it has become necessary for our local churches to call in pastors from outside the M. B. constituency. In the Southern District, with 38 churches, 11 of these pastors are from

non M. B. background. Other districts have also secured ministers from other than M. B. Churches. How grateful we are for the pastors who have been willing to come to serve us. But it is an indictment upon our congregations that we are no longer able to supply workers for our own needs.

It seems that our U. S. churches have had a greater shortage of pastors than have the Canadian churches. It has been noted that the U. S. churches have secured 26 ministers from our Canadian constituency within the last 20 years or so, while only a few have been called by Canada from the U. S. constituency.

At this point, the significant and appropriate question may arise as to why more men do not go into the ministry and into church related vocations. No doubt, the reasons are many and complex. Some of the surface and more obvious reasons may be 1) financial insecurities, 2) frequent moving as the result of the whims of the people, 3) the ambiguities of the ministry, 4) fear of traditionalism and establishment, 5) lack of dedication, 6) materialism, etc. However, these are hardly the major issues. It appears to me that reluctance to enter church related ministries arises out of three basic areas of confusion.

First, we recognize a confusion about the role of the minister-pastor. The modern pastor-image is blurred. With the introduction of the paid-single-pastor system has come a certain decline of congregational involvement and understanding of the ministry. This has forced the pastor to function in an undefined role, and he, together with the congregation, no longer clearly understand the function and duty of the minister. Many new recruits for the ministry hesitate to enter the work because of the fear of being asked to do what seems irrelevant and inconsequential. A group of young men interested in Christian service voiced their confusion about the ministry as follows: "Yes, we have thought about the ministry, but we don't like the image, we don't like what you have to do and the way you have to

do it."

It is evident to me that many objections to the ministry today are not to the N. T. ministry, but to a distorted, structurized, and inadequate concept of what the true ministry is. Dr. Seward Hiltner says, "Most ministers are more puzzled than tipsy. I prefer ferment, and with its clear implications, first that the stage of agitation may be both necessary and anxiety-inducing, and second that the result may be very good if the commotion is stopped in time."<sup>5</sup>

It is essential then that recruitment effort bear in mind a biblical reorientation of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13, II Tim. 2:2, etc.).

2. A second area of confusion is the meaning and nature of the church. With all the criticism against the established and institutional church today has come a reluctance to throw in one's lot for it. To young men comes the appeal of a more effective involvement with other human agencies as social work, or educational ministries. Underneath is a seething restlessness about the church - its current plight or future hope.

This questioning and current criticism is very real and cannot be ignored. The negative feeling about the church as it is today is expressed in these words: "Let's face it. The organized church, all the way from staunchly evangelical to hard core liberal, is losing ground, especially with the 35 and under crowd. And a significant number of the ecclesiastical dropouts have nothing whatever against God, or Christian ethics, or personal piety. A number of these non-church goers, I believe, are true Christians. They are just fed up."<sup>6</sup>

If, of course, we look upon the church of Jesus Christ as buildings, establishment, organization and program, a stereotyped service, traditions,

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<sup>5</sup>Seward Hiltner, Ferment in the Ministry, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup>Peter Gillquist, "Is There An Option to the Church," Christian Life, Feb. 1970, p. 38.



and a defensive perserver of the status quo, then it cannot challenge a younger generation. If, on the other hand, we see the body of Christ, as new life centers, an organism, spontaneous and open to change, a free gathering of loving souls, unencumbered by tradition and structure, sharing life honestly in the liberty of the Holy Spirit, then we speak about a church that will challenge men to serve it.

3. A third area of confusion rests in the matter of a "call" to the ministry. Recent times have seen an emphases upon the lay-ministry. There has been a resurgence of the place of the laity in church life. A stream of volumes and studies have come forth (classic example: Hendrik Kraemer, A Theology of the Laity, '58) which have brought the layman into new perspective.

Along with this rather appropriate emphases has come an emphasis which goes beyond the New Testament patterns. It is stated that all believers are ministers of Christ, and that each person can serve the Lord full-time in whatever occupation he may be. The "general" call to Christian ministry on the part of all believers is biblical. However, to conclude thereby that there is, therefore, no longer any place for the so-called "ordained ministry" is assuming too much. There are those who would urge that the ministry, as we generally know it, has had its day. It is urged by the defendents of this view that the work and teaching of the Word could just as well be done by the laymen of the church. An ordained ministry is no longer necessary. We all have the same calling, and there is actually no such an experience as a "call" to the ministry. I am reminded of the words and advice of Elton Trueblood: "The lay ministry, is a great idea, but it will not do itself, it will not emerge in power unless it is consciously and deliberately encouraged, and it will not be encouraged unless there are

able pastors and teachers to perform this liberating task."<sup>7</sup> *Paul's Ministry*

Amidst the confusion of the call to the ministry one must not overlook the "some group" which God appoints, or sets apart, in the church. "And God gave some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers...and He gave some apostles and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers (I Cor. 12:28, Eph. 4:11). We are all called to be His servants. But some are also called to special functions (not status or position) that need to be performed in His church.

As is vividly portrayed in Acts 13:1-3, these special functionaries receive an inner and an outer call. The inner call through the Holy Spirit upon the individual conscience, and the outer call by the church substantiating the personal call. It is incumbent upon volunteers and church alike to articulate and identify the divine call to special ministries.

#### IV. Directives For Recruitment.

Biblical Patterns: Certain basic directives become apparent in searching the Scriptures for some guidelines in ministerial recruitment.

First, our Lord's exhortation is that laborers be brought forward through prayer.

"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. (Matthew 9:36-38)."

It is the Lord who moves, selects, appoints, and sends forth laborers. It is not our programming and our recruitment plans, in themselves, which will produce workers. We are dependent upon the Lord of the harvest to call out the workers.

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<sup>7</sup>Elton Trueblood, The Incendiary Fellowship, p. 37.

A second pattern of selection of workers in Scripture is through appointment. After a night of prayer our Lord appointed his 12 disciples (Luke 6:12-16). Paul appointed elders for leadership in newly organized churches (Titus 1:5). Paul was also known to have personally selected young men to assist him in his ministries, such as Barnabas, Silas, Mark, Timothy, etc.

A basic provision is made in the New Testament church for workers and leaders. God provides the church with such gifts. This pattern is seen in I Cor. 12, Rom 12, and Eph. 4. These passages indicate that: a) All believers are given spiritual gifts which they are to exercise for the good of all, and b) God also provides special ministries needed by the church.

"God has appointed some as apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors, teachers, for the <sup>equipping (RSV)</sup> <sup>12: for the equipping of the saints, for the</sup> equipping of the saints (Eph. 4:11-12)." It would appear that God has amply supplied His church with workers and leaders. <sup>work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God</sup> If then there is insufficient leadership in the church, the church body must look within itself for the difficulty and for the solution.

In apostolic practice the Lord called His servants through the church (Acts 1:21-26, 6:1-6, 13:1-3, 20:28). The calling out of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13 is normative and illustrates succinctly how the selection occurred. "The Lord said (to the church) separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them (Acts 13:2)." While the call for workers comes from the Holy Spirit to the individual, it comes also through the church body. "It is the teaching of the Bible and apostolic practice that the call proceeds from God and takes place through the church."<sup>8</sup>

For purposes of clarity one may distinguish the call to service in two parts, an inner personal call, and a substantiation of such a call by the church body. "First, there comes the private inner sense of calling by

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<sup>8</sup>H. S. B. Neff, "The Call to the Ministry," Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. III, p. 706.

God to serve His serving church in a special role of servant-leader. Secondly, there comes the call of the church to validate and corroborate the personal inner call."<sup>9</sup>

The local congregation has an integral and vital part to play in the selection of workers. A call to serve can and should also originate with-  
 in the brotherhood, and those should be encouraged *what about encouragement by pastors and preachers, of young and aspiring workers?* who have shown a possession of gifts of service. John Calvin went so far as to say, "The body, not the individual, is charged with responsibility to discern the gifts and provide the church with an ordained ministry."<sup>10</sup> We must continue to stress the highly significant function of the local church as a recruiting agency. This is in full accord with the New Testament teachings, and the Anabaptist concept of the church. In the oldest confession of the Anabaptists (1780) we read, "Therefore shall the believers who lack *Church lacks discernment and desire to call certain men -* preachers, after they have sought the face of God in ardent prayers, turn their eyes to a God-fearing brother who keeps his body in subjection and in whom the fruit of the spirit is evident..."<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Paul Miller writes, "A more healthy pattern and more consistent with the brotherhood church and the priesthood of all believers might be to have the call come first as a tap on the shoulder by the church. This could then be God's agent to arouse the slumbering inner call."<sup>12</sup>

It is not important to argue as to which is, or which comes first, the inner call, or the tap on the shoulder. But it is significant to note that God works through His church in providing workers and leaders. The inner call needs the substantiation encouragement and support of the local church.

<sup>9</sup>Paul Miller, Servants of God's Servants, p. 39.

<sup>10</sup>Robert C. Johnson (Ed), The Church and Its Changing Ministry, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup>Neff, op. cit. p. 706.

<sup>12</sup>Miller, op. cit. p. 39.

We can easily see that the call to serve has today become an almost totally individual matter. If the necessity of a divine call is granted at all, it is certainly a personal matter between an individual and His God. The church has lethargically abdicated from involving itself in the calling out of workers. It is here that the greatest weakness lies. Any attempt at recruitment must consider a restoration of congregational involvement.

Practical Implications. As we project what ought to be done about our problem of recruitment we should give heed to biblical patterns as we see them and line up with these patterns.

This calls for renewed vision and revitalized teaching concerning the spiritual gifts of the church. This will return the church to an active role in recruitment. This will bring the church to prayer, to shoulder-tapping, to encouragement, to support and to acceptance of gifted individuals. The church council, the teachers and leaders in each congregation need to make this a constant prayer concern and plan specific actions to be taken for recruitment. Whether or not we return to electing ministers out of the membership is not so important. But what is crucial, is that the church body once more become the spiritual womb in which workers are born and nurtured. It is of essence that the church give birth to leadership. The church should recognize now that leaders are not simply called in from "outside!" The church should assume primary responsibility in identifying potential church workers and begin them "on the way" in their preparation for church work.

Dr. Paul Miller suggests: "The congregation dare not wait until they are confronting a need for a pastor-preacher. Each mature congregation should produce three each generation, two of which are shared with the world-wide ministry of the church and to serve emerging congregations. Discerning of gift and call of an ordained minister of the Word (and of the gifts of other members) is part of the on going work of a faithful

congregation."<sup>13</sup>

Any new effort in recruitment must, furthermore, be accompanied by a redefinition of "ministry." It is quite futile to think merely in terms of better and more urgent recruitment of workers. It is not simply a matter of supplying pastors for pastorless churches. Something more basic must be undertaken. We must understand what is meant by a trained, salaried (or professional) ministry in the context of a believer's church. J. Lawrence Burkholder says, "...the professional ministry is compatible with the believer's church if, and only if, the professional ministry is redefined within a total view of the ministry which stands in contrast to traditional protestant presupposition and practice."<sup>14</sup>

Again, let me stress the fact that our problem is not a trained, salaried or even a professional ministry. "God appointed some to be apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors - teachers." Their best training is imperative for our age. What we have, however, brought along with a professionally trained ministry is 1) a neglect of congregational involvement in the ministry, and 2) a renunciation of the multiple ministry in the church. Both, church involvement in ministry and multiple ministry are essential for church renewal. "There can be no vital church without a multipastoral system," says Elton Trueblood.<sup>15</sup> The modern pastor must not function alone. He can have laymen, even ordained laymen, to help him. It is therefore necessary for a trained ministry to see itself in the light of congregational involvement and in a multi-pastoral ministry in the church.

In the future, it may be unnecessary for each small church to have a seminary trained and fully salaried minister. A local church may be served

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<sup>13</sup>Paul Miller, "We Call You To The Ministry." p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Burkholder, op. cit. p. 15.

<sup>15</sup>Trueblood, op. cit. p. 54.

by capable and ordained laymen in the congregation. A cluster of smaller churches within a reasonable geographical area may secure a professionally trained minister who would serve these churches as special teacher and counselor. The regular and ordinary duties of the church would be performed by ordained laymen.

A practical plan needs to be put into force which will encourage volunteers for church vocations to come forward. Such a plan could incorporate the following features:

a) A yearly Bible Study series in the local church on the congregational ministry, emphasizing such passages as I Cor. 12, Eph. 4, and Romans 12, dealing with spiritual gifts to the church.

b) At the conclusion of such a study each member would be requested to fill out a card or questionnaire indicating his interest or calling in any particular field of Christian work.

c) Any person being identified as indicating interest should become the special concern of the church leaders who would encourage and advise this person in a further pursuit of service preparation.

d) The church should offer opportunity to an interested person to testify and relate his interests and inner call to the congregation.

e) When the inner call of an individual is firmed up, the congregation should find ways and means of helping and supporting such a worker in training. This was done in early M. B. history. Our first missionary in Russia, Abraham Friesen, was supported by the M. B. churches in Russia as he studied in Germany in preparation for missionary service in India. Several of our early American missionaries, as well as a number of brethren who first attended seminaries (usually Baptist), were supported in seminary training by either congregations or members of M. B. churches.

\* f) Denominational recruitment agencies need to be correlated and brought in regular contact with local congregations.

An excellent congregational plan for recruitment is outlined by Edward Stoltzfus of Goshen College Biblical Seminary under the title "Comments Regarding the Development of a Congregational Plan for the Discovery and Encouragement of Potential Church Leaders."

Ample opportunities and programs exist within the local church now that can be used to facilitate specific recruitment efforts. Certainly ministers and pastors could be more bold and systematic in putting out the challenge for workers to come forth and commit themselves. The notion that somehow God will call them and that it is not for us to recruit workers is not being true to our task. Men's meetings can assume the task of presenting the challenge of church vocations, and the men of the church can underwrite support in the form of college and seminary scholarships. The education committees of the church can sponsor career days and arrange special services for the presentation of opportunities now open to young people in church related vocations. Vocational guidance ought not to be left to the public school alone! Vocational guidance and counseling is a mission of the church, and can be facilitated through denominational programs.

Certainly the homes are crucial centers of recruitment. They can make or break a recruitment program. The church may offer parents some help here in understanding the calling to church ministries, and offer accurate information as to opportunities now available for Christian services and future full-time ministries.

Conclusion. Finally, our case for recruitment rests and depends upon love for Christ and His body, the church. Recruitment is response to excitement and challenge. If we are not deeply in love with Christ, and if we do not love His church, why should the younger generation follow in our train? Of what use is it to invite youth to serve the church if all we do is criticize it, knock it, and become sour on it? What good is there in parents asking their sons to serve the Lord if they disrespectfully chew



up the preacher and the church throughout the week?

We must soon be done with sophisticated analyses and negativism about the church and the minister. There is a time for ferment, as Seward Hiltner says. But the ferment must cease, else all goes bad. The last ten years has seen the minister and his ministry under attack. The fermenting, the agonies of critical examination, must lead to a new stage of reconstruction. That time for reconstruction is now. We now reject the image of a ministry that is colorless, defensive, feminine, lazy, uncreative, bound to status quo position and status conscious. We embrace, rather, the New Testament image of the minister who is call-conscious, flexible and open to the stream of the Spirit, disciplined in body and Spirit, honest, relevant, unapologetic, fearless and compassionate. We reject the view of the church as being only structure, establishment, status quo, program, bound by tradition, and totally irrelevant. We embrace, rather, the New Testament view of the church as a new life center where loving souls gather freely and gladly to share the dynamic Word, spontaneously and creatively involving themselves with compassion in the lives of people in the community. We revere the church as the ongoing life and breath of Christ in the world.

After all, Christ did not call us to a life long examination of the church; He asked us to give our life for it. "Because He laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (I John 3:16)." I invite you, brethren, to a new day of reconstruction. I ask that we renew our pledge of love and loyalty to Christ, and that we here declare our love and faith in the body of Jesus Christ. I ask that we take our stand with the prophet Isaiah, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up...Then said I, woe is me, for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king the Lord of hosts...Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I, send me (Isaiah 6:1-8)."

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