

FRAGMENTS AND REFLECTIONS-
FIFTY YEARS IN UNIVERSITY REFORMED CHURCH,
EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN, 1966- 2016

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- 1. I should have challenged the congregation to consider more intentionally our response to the VIET NAM WAR (1963-1975).

2. I should have encouraged our congregation to consider how "loving our neighbor" applied to THE EFFORTS TO DESEGREGATE THE LANSING PUBLIC SCHOOLS, beginning in 1972.
3. I was impressed by the writings of the "Church Growth Movement" with its emphasis on "homogeneous unit groups". In spite of the commendable emphasis on evangelism, the effort **to concentrate on a specific, "homogeneous" population is short-sided and un-Biblical.**
4. **Our ministry to the LGBT community has been slow and halting**, not sustained, with changing emphases and resources, a cause for mild embarrassment.
5. **I encouraged too many guys to go to seminary.** (See Rev. Sam Hofman's article on "The Ladder System- How to Select and Train a Minister".)

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PART ONE: the Early Years

1. Back from the Beginning

John Hannah (1902- 1991), who was the president of MSU from 1941-1969, successfully lobbied the legislature for major expansions. Michigan State grew tremendously after the Second World War. The enrollment grew to 15,000 by 1950 to 38,000 by 1965. New colleges and departments were developed, and many new residence halls were built. (The residence halls were for men only or women only.) In 1950 Michigan State joined the Big Ten, following the withdrawal of the University of Chicago.

This broadening of programs and expansion of residence halls and other facilities meant that more and more students would come to MSU from Reformed Church in America (RCA) congregations. In the late 1950s the RCA saw a need for ministry to their own young people, but also a new avenue for ministry to the university.

2. Ann Arbor First

In 1959 the Synod of Michigan took a step to develop a ministry at the University of Michigan by beginning services at the Ann Arbor YMCA, led by an RCA missionary on furlough from the Middle East. They also bought prime real estate near Rackham Hall. They hired a well-known architect and sought a pastor to come lead the church. Calvin Malefy, an RCA minister, and the son of a Dutch immigrant pastor, was serving as Minister of Students at Park Street Church in downtown Boston. The campus ministry was especially through a Sunday Collegiate Club, drawing students from Harvard, M.I.T., Wellesley, Boston University and other area schools. Calvin was a graduate of Westminster

Theological Seminary who was completing a Ph.D. in Church History at Harvard. In the spring of 1961 he accepted the call to Ann Arbor, where the building program was already under way. The congregation took the name "University Reformed Church".

3. East Lansing Property

Interest increased in starting a ministry at MSU. In 1963 the Synod of Michigan (today the Synod of the Great Lakes) purchased land on the east end of campus, on Hagadorn Road, across from the area where the last of the new residence halls were being built. (There would come to be about 8,000 students within walking distance of that site). A retired teacher and his wife owned the property and lived in a small house on it. He was blind, and they sold with the understanding that they could live there for 10 more years.

4. To the Staff of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

While in seminary I had worked part-time with InterVarsity in Pittsburgh, at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon), the University of Pittsburgh ("Pitt"), and in InterVarsity summer camps. After graduating from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (Presbyterian Church in the USA) in 1962 I was licensed in the Chicago Presbytery of the PCUSA. That meant I had passed my exams, signed the certificate of licensure, and needed a call in order to be ordained. I went to work with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship for the next four years, spending approximately half time at the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana, the university from which I graduated). The rest of my time was with commuter schools in the Chicago area, with occasional visits to two other Big Ten schools- the University of Wisconsin and Northwestern University.

5. Visiting MSU

Before my third year on InterVarsity staff my area director told me there was no staff member for MSU for the coming year, and asked if I would make a trip there for about a week in the fall and spring. I was always unsure about the effectiveness of short visits to a campus, but I went. I attended the InterVarsity meetings. (InterVarsity was called Spartan Christian Fellowship then, a name they dropped later on.) I stayed in Bethel Manor (now Living Rock), ate in dorms, went to church at Trinity Church (then in a building on Grand River). I got to meet with student leaders, and have a campus tour, etc. The next summer I saw their student leaders at InterVarsity's training camp in the Upper Peninsula.

The next year I was asked to spend a week at MSU to help orient the new staff member there. So I had gotten some acquaintance with MSU, never guessing I would someday live near the campus fulltime.

6. Contacts with the Reformed Church in America

After my second year in seminary I received an internship year in campus ministry as a member of the Chaplain's staff at Boston University (1960-61). That year produced two eventual contacts with the RCA. I worshipped on Sundays at Park Street Church, attended

their Collegiate Club, and met Calvin Malefyt. That spring he announced that he had accepted a call to be the organizing pastor for University Reformed Church in Ann Arbor. He even showed us the architectural plans for the building there.

Before that year in Boston I went to InterVarsity's staff training and met Stan Rock. He had been president of InterVarsity at the University of Michigan and went on InterVarsity staff, traveling to colleges in New England. He used my Boston apartment as his home base when he was in town. After three years on staff he went to Western Seminary in Holland, Michigan. Three years later he was about to graduate and was approached by the RCA to be the pastor for a new ministry in East Lansing. He was committed to go back with InterVarsity, but recommended me. Calvin Malefyt also recommended me.

After correspondence and interviews I was called in July to begin a church, and got an apartment in August. I was examined by the Classis of South Grand Rapids in theology, doctrinal standards, government and sacraments, and ordained as a pastor in the Reformed Church in America in September. I arranged to rent the Alumni Memorial Chapel, on the MSU campus, for morning services. Our first service was on **Sunday, October 2, 1966** in the Chapel.

7. The Alumni Memorial Chapel

In the 19th and 20th centuries various state universities had "chapels". Their purpose and operation varied. Usually they were on the campus, sometimes in special buildings. Sometimes they had chaplains- faculty members for whom the chapel was part of their assigned responsibilities, or local clergy, or sometimes the university president led chapel regularly. Sometimes there was compulsory attendance, and chapel could be daily or weekly or in between.

After the Second World War a fundraising campaign to alumni and other friends generated the funds for the Alumni Memorial Chapel, which was given to the university in 1952, in honor of over 500 alumni who gave their lives in military service to the U.S. from 1861 through the Second World War. Their names are engraved in the walls of the Chapel.

The chapel is used mainly for weddings. It has a very traditional look, with two features to which I always avoided calling attention. Throughout the two story building there are two dozen stone fragments in the walls from European cathedrals that were damaged or ruined in the Second World War, with labels of locations. I never understood what they were meant to signify. The chapel also has 38 beautiful stained glass windows. But when you look closely at the titles and pictures they are thoroughly secular, and even a bit odd at times: Lincoln signing the Morrill Act 1862, a football player kicking the extra point, women admitted to MSU 1870, Wisdom- symbols of seven religions, Farmers Institute of 1876, Legislative Act- Feb. 12, 1855, etc.

8. Sunday Evening Services

The Chapel had no piano in its basement, so we reserved a room in the MSU Union for our evening services, where a piano could be moved in. For one year we had a missionary

couple in the church from Japan. They had been sent by the Southern Presbyterian Church to Japan soon after the Second World War ended. When they went to Japan they shipped their piano too. He was a teacher in Japan and came as a guest lecturer for a year in the MSU Classics Dept. They had two adopted Japanese daughters. This time they had shipped their piano back, since the Japanese were now exporting pianos. They offered it to us for \$100, which we happily accepted, got permission to leave it in the chapel basement, and moved our evening services there.

9. The Purposes and a Name

In seeking to begin an MSU ministry there was always the risk of describing the ministry in a defensive way- as if our goal was to protect the RCA (or other Christian) students who would come to MSU. It was important in Ann Arbor and in East Lansing to communicate a commitment to help all Christian students, not just RCA students, and to have a positive commitment to reach the campus with the gospel, not just to protect those from a church background.

It was also important to communicate that the church was committed to reaching out into **the community, not just the university**. The description was important- "we are a campus and community church". I have always avoided calling URC a "campus church".

We took the name "University Reformed Church" almost immediately. It was several years before I came to believe that was a mistake, but by then it was too late to change. The word "University" is redundant. Everybody knew we were interested in the university, if only from our location. But the "University" caused some community people to think that the church would only have or want university people in it. The word "Reformed" is also practically a "blip" word. Many people have never heard it, and have no idea what it means. I have heard, not sarcastically, just needing information- "Reformed from what?" And the name "Reformed" was a definite negative for some people who feared we were part of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, the bulwark of apartheid (racial separation), a church they did not want to accidentally attend.

10. A Support Team

The Reformed Church was taking a big chance by entrusting leadership to an inexperienced "pastor". I've always said I got paid for lots of on the job training. The most valuable help came from a three man Advisory Committee:

Dr. Calvin Malefyt was the pastor of University Reformed Church in Ann Arbor. I appreciated his scholarly mind, but also his heart for evangelism. We were speaking once at a meeting of the Synod of Michigan and he said, "These folks really care about evangelism. You mention conversions and their eyes light up".

Rev. James Schut was a field secretary for the Synod of Michigan, meaning he traveled and counseled those in campus ministry, urban ministry, new churches, specialized ministries, churches for Dutch immigrants in Canada, and new Florida churches. I always found him

deeply interested and enthusiastic about what was happening in East Lansing, but also interested in the many dimensions of the Lord's work.

Rev. Howard Schipper was pastor of our sister church, Immanuel Community Reformed Church in Lansing, and was sympathetic and supportive, with no echoes of rivalry.

PART TWO: Carried Over From InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

1. Student-Led Ministry

After the Second World War ministries to students began and expanded. The Navigators had begun as a ministry to those in the military, but they began to expand to campuses. Others began on campuses, like InterVarsity (1941) and Cru (1951). InterVarsity in the USA reflected the influence of the student ministry in the UK, being committed to developing student-led groups, as in the British-Australian-Canadian model.

As an InterVarsity staff member I visited several campuses, with the commitment that a student leadership committee would plan and carry out the weekly meetings and other activities of the campus group. My role as a staff member was to be a coach, an advisor, but not to run the student group. (It turned out to be good preparation for how a church should run.)

When I came to East Lansing I assumed that there would be a student fellowship group in URC, and that an ongoing student leadership team would be needed.

The importance of this commitment to student leadership was brought home when we had the first student retreat. Our first campus staff member, Joyce Friesen, and I planned and directed the first retreat, at CranHill Ranch. We were exhausted at the end. We recruited a retreat committee for the next time, worked with them and encouraged them. They met several times beforehand, got leaders for Bible study groups, set a schedule, hosted the speaker, and did the announcements, etc. at the retreat. Joyce and I had many hours to visit and counsel with students, and to encourage the retreat planning committee, but we were barely visible, and not exhausted. We knew students could do it, with a little help.

2. Evangelism Outreach

InterVarsity's Chicago Evangelism Project (CEP) used Trinity Seminary students and other students speakers who were trained by John Ankerberg to speak evangelistically, also a rock group, the Exkursions, and coffee houses with British folk singer John Guest. My wife Joan was then a staff worker for InterVarsity in the Chicago area, and part of the team that developed the CEP. She came along to MSU when, at different times, all of those folks came to MSU, sponsored by InterVarsity, URC and others. This also involved a debate by Dr. Clark Pinnock from Trinity Seminary with an MSU professor.

3. Summer Training Program

As an InterVarsity staff member I had led a program for two summers called the Estes Park Project. We trained students at the start of the summer for three weeks at InterVarsity's camp in the Rockies. Then they went to Estes Park, Colorado to get jobs. We had the free use of a bunkhouse and cabin for the students to stay in temporarily, while they looked for jobs. Then we used the cabin for fellowship nights for the students, who were spread out in Estes Park, and for outreach nights. A woman staff member and I kept in contact with the scattered students.

I found at MSU that some Greek houses were empty over the summer. So for three summers we rented them and arranged a training and fellowship program for students, and outreach to campus, through personal contacts, and a coffee house on Friday nights at the fraternity. We even moved our evening services to the fraternity. After the first summer we rented a sorority house where women in the program could live.

When an economic downturn came the houses were no longer available to rent. With jobs more scarce, more fraternity students decided to stay and go to summer school. And we could no longer count on plentiful summer jobs in East Lansing.

4. Theological Conferences

As an IV staff member I had helped organize one-day theological conferences on a Saturday, which were uniquely suited to the Chicago area. No one student group could produce a sizable crowd to cover the costs of a conference. But most groups could reserve space for a conference, which would be publicized to many groups. We would schedule a major speaker, and several panelists, usually with three talks by the major speaker, and three panel discussions with two or three others. The meetings would be close enough to places for parking and getting lunch.

I shared the model with InterVarsity staff in Michigan, and they were interested. Publicity went out to InterVarsity at MSU and other MSU Christian groups, and to IV groups at surrounding campuses. Some conferences were held on campus and, after we had a building, some were at URC, with its free parking.

Various faculty at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School were involved, such as Professors D.A. Carson, Walter Kaiser, Murray Harris, David Wells, Clark Pinnock, Kenneth Kantzer and Gary Collins. Also, Keith and Gladys Hunt from InterVarsity, Dr. John Powell from MSU, Dr. William Brownson, Elisabeth Eliot, Dr. John Gerstner, and others. Topics ranged from "Psychology and Christianity", "The Doctrine of Scripture", "Men and Women in God's World", "The Sovereignty of God", etc.

We held these jointly sponsored Theological Conferences at MSU more than a dozen times.

5. Non-Credit Courses

Before I moved to East Lansing my InterVarsity group at Urbana, Illinois had a non-

credit course, offered with Dr. John Montgomery from Trinity Seminary. He flew down and back one day a week.

When I came to East Lansing I sought to have similar courses, publicized to the Christian population. Dr. Montgomery did a course, along with Dr. Walter Kaiser, Dr. Murray Harris, and Dr. David Wells. Dr. John Gerstner did an intensive three day lecture series on campus, on Jonathan Edwards.

6. Faculty Prep Group

My model for an effective Christian professor was formed by the influence of Dr. John Alexander at the University of Wisconsin. He had a long service there as a professor of geography, later as a Dean, and then later was called to be the head of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in the USA. He influenced me, and other InterVarsity staff who visited the University of Wisconsin, because he had established his priorities with the Lord so well:

1. He protected time with his wife and children and the Lord.
2. He was a respected scholar in his field.
3. Early in his career he became involved in a church of his denomination, and found the pastor wanted him to be on the church board, do a devotional program on the Christian radio station and teach Sunday School, but had no vision for his mission to the University. They quietly changed to a church where the pastor blessed his calling in the university.
4. Certain ongoing commitments were expressed every semester:
 - a. He was available to speak to InterVarsity once each semester.
 - b. He and his wife hosted a "Freshman Night" each month. InterVarsity students could come if they brought a freshman, and the talks were planned as introductions to Christianity.
 - c. They hosted "Faculty Prep Nights" for grad students one Sunday evening a month, focusing on questions that were important for those going into university teaching and research.
 - d. He had a weekly Bible study on campus for faculty who were not Christians. He invited them personally and he told students he would invite anyone they suggested, if they promised to pray for the professor.

At MSU I sought to have "Faculty Prep Nights" each year, with Christian faculty at MSU as panelists. At one time there were about a dozen Christian faculty in URC, and three dozen Ph.D. students, some of them international students.

InterVarsity did a nationwide survey to identify the top dozen schools which were producing the most Ph.D.s headed for university teaching. They decided to prioritize developing their "Graduate Christian Fellowships" there. MSU is in that group.

7. Discipleship One to One and in Small Groups

When Joan and I were InterVarsity staff members the norm was to visit campuses by rotation, spending several weeks a year on each campus, and seeing students at fall and spring retreats, which drew students from campuses in part or all of a state. We tried to

meet with individuals, especially leaders of the student group, and others, and to help them in their Christian growth and leadership.

When I came to East Lansing I soon realized how much I appreciated being in one place, especially for the continuity in discipleship and evangelism.

Over the years terminology has varied. I never heard "mentoring" used among Christians until perhaps twenty years ago. "Discipling" seemed at one time to be used by groups which had an inflexible plan through which they took each person. Their "discipling" was identical for all, and a "one way street"- focusing only on the person being "discipled". That is no longer the way "discipling" is used by people and groups I respect.

Terminology is incidental. What we want is continued mutual encouragement, perhaps through meeting one to one on a regular basis.

Joan and I don't usually have a name for our meetings. We just "meet with" or "get together with" individuals. In my case that has usually meant meeting one to one with a half dozen individuals, but often included meeting with a small group of guys, and having them stay for supper. Joan cooked weekly for many such groups over the years. The number of people we meet with has varied, but I still meet with about half a dozen men individually, and Joan meets with about ten women.

We have led training classes to equip individuals to take initiative in discipling, and we have worked with individuals to encourage them to take up a one to one discipling ministry.

PART THREE: The Need to be Flexible, Intentional, Welcoming and

Accepting-in the 60's and Beyond

1. How can I make a confession of faith? A new mother, living in university apartments with her student husband, wanted to join the church. Her husband didn't like the idea and didn't want her to take the car to the New Members Class. We arranged five appointments at her apartment, with her husband studying in the next room (listening), and the mother and baby with me. When she met with the elders to make confession of faith she expressed her thanks that she could come to church in slacks, since she couldn't use the car, and had to bring the baby in a bike seat behind her. At that time, in her home church in Grand Rapids, she could never have worn slacks to church.

2. The student president of Inter-Varsity at MSU was from a single parent home in Ohio, economically poor. He volunteered to spend a summer as a counselor at a Christian camp for handicapped kids in New Hampshire. On his first Sunday back at URC I asked him about his summer. He said the Sunday before at his home church was the hardest. An elder spotted him and asked why he didn't have his hair cut, and wasn't wearing a sports coat. Nothing about- how was New Hampshire? How did you see the Lord work? The student didn't know what to say: he didn't think he needed a haircut, and he didn't own a sports coat.

3. Talking to a student one spring I asked him about his trip home the preceding weekend. "Well," he said, "my dad told me- if you don't get a haircut don't come home for Easter." With sadness I looked out on Easter morning and saw him sitting in our service.

4. Our church secretary was working on a new church directory. She told me she felt a little sad because she had the first married couple (graduate students) who didn't have the same last name. How little we knew. In time we realized that in many countries (including China and Korea) wives don't take husbands' names as many in the U.S. do. Koreans graciously reverse their names when in the U. S.- their name is really written "Stark Tom". In Latin-American countries and others, there are several ways that wives and husbands names are used.

There were also special reasons- one Latina medical student said, "I will be the first Latina doctor from this med school. My husband knows it is important to keep my name."

5. HOSPITALITY- PART OF THE GLUE OF URC FROM THE BEGINNING-

There were many opportunities to share meals and conversation with newcomers and old timers in the church. A number of examples:

Sunday morning "GABs, or Get Acquainted Brunches" after the morning services. These were sometimes on a monthly basis.

Some summer Sunday lunches were intended to be quite informal: "Loaves and Fishes Lunches- bring what you can, share what you have, no one will go hungry".

Sunday potlucks with missionaries who were visiting, who would speak further and answer questions during the potluck.

Sunday potlucks to send off mission teams, or new missionaries, or friends who were moving away.

On Sunday evening before classes started at MSU in the fall- a congregational hamburger fry or hot dog roast, free to students, outdoors, after the evening service.

The MSU dorms did not serve meals on Sunday evenings, so for many years we had "Soup Suppers" or "Sunday Evening Suppers" after the evening services. The price was kept low, sometimes subsidized, and the suppers were free for any whose budget was tight. Students and families volunteered to cook. About 10 years ago MSU began including Sunday night meals in the residence hall contracts.

For many years a potluck was held on Maundy Thursday, followed by Communion.

For many years a potluck was held on the Sunday night before Thanksgiving, followed by a worship service.

All-church picnics in June at Francis Park in Lansing were a long-standing tradition.

A Labor Day picnic at Pollitz' barn in rural Mason was a great opportunity to welcome new international students.

For a number of years the campus ministry sponsored Sunday night "New Student Nights"- to welcome a group of perhaps 6- 8 students to various homes, and also "Grad Nights", to welcome new grad students to homes.

HOLIDAYS have been important times to reach out to those who need a place to celebrate Thanksgiving, or Christmas, or Easter. This isn't limited to Christians. It includes international students, and others who would also be alone unless invited somewhere. Families, but also single people, have opened their homes and apartments.

SMALL GROUPS OF STUDENTS have met weekly for group meetings and meals hosted by families or singles. We had many groups, mainly of male students, who met at our home as discipleship groups before supper and then stayed for a meal.

SINGLES LIVING WITH FAMILIES- Some singles have been with families for vacations, or summers, or a number of years.

PART FOUR: Worship in URC

1. Tradition in the Reformed Church in America (RCA)

The RCA has been described as "semi-liturgical". That meant that for the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper there were designated orders of service to be used, but for regular services of worship there were suggested examples. The actual variety in congregations is much more broad:

1. Some congregations used the forms for the sacraments without any variation. Even though there were several possible forms, and the forms at various places said here you "may" do such and such, and the forms could substitute similar scripture readings, prayers, etc., the Lord's Supper service in some congregations was exactly the same for years on end.

2. Most congregations had services that followed the spirit of the liturgical forms, but did not always have identical wordings.

3. Some congregations had Sunday services that followed the exact form of the suggested order of worship for the Lord's Day. The Doxology, Apostles Creed, Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, and the number of hymns, etc. were the same every Sunday morning and evening.

4. Some congregations had wide variations of their order of worship from Sunday to

Sunday.

2. Beginnings at URC

My background in InterVarsity had exposed me to a wide variety of meaningful worship patterns, through attending and speaking at congregations of varied denominations. I could not imagine one sole pattern that could do justice to the range of worship in Christ's church, especially with the variety of denominational backgrounds which we began to have in URC, plus the experiences of those from other nations.

The Alumni Chapel had only an organ, and our first organist was the son of an RCA pastor. His father's church had a formal, unvarying order of service. As our first year went on the word got back to me that the organist had said, "All this variety is fine, but when are we going to decide on our order of service."

Our worship continued to be varied, as our backgrounds continued to be varied- people from many denominations, and no denomination.

3. The First Guitars

In the 60's many Christians were resentful of music accompanied by guitars. It reminded them of "hippies", "protests", etc. But much Christian music was being written for guitars. (And in parts of the Christian world guitars had been used in worship for generations.) In the evening services we sometimes had songs led by guitars, but not in the mornings.

So I planned carefully to include the first guitar accompaniment in a morning service. A group of Roman Catholic nuns had written songs setting Scripture to music in a folk style, accompanied by guitars. We listened to and appreciated their songs. On Sunday, June 29, 1969 I explained that I was going to read the text (Luke 17:11-19) and then Fred Herwaldt (a seminarian who was leading our Student Summer Training Program), and John Brown, a student in the program, would sing the musical setting for it (words were in the bulletin), I would speak on the text, and then we would sing it again. As soon as the song began one of our elders left- and he never came back. We had long, painful conversations with him, but he was bitterly opposed to "hippie music", and, really, anything he saw as representing "change".

4. Other Forms of Worship

I felt it was important for us to experience the kind of worship service appreciated in a variety of fellowships, where a message is prepared, and may come early or later in the service, but it is otherwise an unstructured service. In the bulletin we described it: "Today our order of service will be unstructured. From time to time we plan for such a format, asking God to guide us by his Holy Spirit. We believe all who come to worship can be encouraged, challenged, and guided in their worship of God as Christian men and women, following God's Spirit, share concerns, suggest hymns and songs to sing, lead in prayer and

share from the Scriptures. There will also be times of silence, where our attention can be quietly focused on God. The Scriptures speak about our worship together in Colossians 3:16- "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." We could have added I Corinthians 14:26- "What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up."

Many important words and prayers were shared in those "unstructured services". And the congregation got to experience many more people ministering to the body of Christ. Eventually, we had "unstructured services" about half a dozen times a year.

It is not easy for some Christians to "take on" a new expression of worship, or to let go of an expression they are used to. One woman told me she had been in the church for five years before the sadness that we did not have a choir finally left her. (We had nothing against choirs, and we sometimes had special choirs, but none that continued regularly.)

It can be a challenge to welcome greater breadth in worship. A young woman who had grown up in the Greek Orthodox Church once asked: "Is there a reason why we never kneel in prayer? The Bible mentions it." And I realized that we probably should begin to kneel from time to time- and we did.

Pat Quinn has been tremendously important in developing worship at URC. He has many strengths that are not always found in Christian musicians. He is extremely talented musically, but patient with musicians who are learning. He is flexible about using different instrumentalists. He tackles learning new music, including multi-ethnic music. He has composed many songs, some of which have become "heart songs" in our congregation. He has trained music leaders, and let them lead along with him.

5. How Our Culture Can Cloud Our Judgment

With people from two dozen denominations, and no denomination, we needed not to take things for granted, but to explain things, and realize how diverse the worship backgrounds were. Dr. Christina Cleveland in *Disunity in Christ* (InterVarsity Press 2013), notes how we can harm others:

"My friend Randy is a history professor at a Christian college. In many ways he holds to the history professor stereotype: white-haired, intelligent, respectable, and a little stodgy. However, he is unique in that he begins every class session by leading his students in a rousing rendition of one of the old European church hymns. This practice stems from Randy's belief that young Christians have "issues" because they possess bad theology. He is remedying this problem one class session at a time by teaching his students accurate theology via hymns- because according to him, that is where real theology always has been and always will be.

"Not long ago, Randy invited ten of his students over to his house for dinner.

Before the meal commenced, he attempted to lead the students in the Doxology ("Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow") that is often used in his conservative Eurocentric faith tradition. Much to his shock and dismay, he discovered that only one of his ten students knew the words to the brief hymn.

"He responded by interrogating them about the churches they attended and how they had lived as Christians without knowing this important piece of the Christian faith. He then sent me and a few other faculty members a forceful email demanding to know whether "this lack of knowledge represents an institutional problem for [his Christian college]? A problem for the Christian church? A problem for both?" He honestly believed that his students' unfamiliarity with an old, Eurocentric hymn posed a threat not only to his particular Christian college but also to the worldwide Christian church.

"Randy believed this threat warranted an antagonistic response, and failed to capitalize on the group's diversity by creating an opportunity for cross-cultural sharing. Rather than graciously sharing his pre-dinner prayer tradition and then inviting the students to share their own traditions, he put his students at arm's length."

PART FIVE: Seven Basic Convictions About Church-Based Campus Ministry- Some Things We've Learned

1. There are wonderful advantages and opportunities in Church-Based Campus Ministry- where a permanent congregation has a commitment to this ministry, where the church pays for as much as possible, and the church welcomes students into the life of the congregation. This is true whether at University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, once a large congregation (around 3,000 on Sundays) next to the University of Washington campus, with a large campus ministry (1,000 students in the church on Tuesdays nights for "THE INN"), or a new church meeting in a university building, renting space, uncertain about how all the stages of growth will be handled.

2. There are special challenges faced by any church-based campus ministry. Leaders in the congregation and the campus ministry will probably encounter:

A. Special issues arising out of denominational connections. Usually these involve who will be baptized, and by whom, who may receive communion, and how membership is handled.

B. The historic "town and gown" gap was described in past generations for the large Protestant establishment congregations near campuses. The questions were: Does the church really welcome people who are not university-oriented in their work or educational level? Is the ministry of the church so self-consciously identified with a university style of doing things that others are excluded?

C. Does the church have a staff-run or student-run approach to student ministry? Healthy student ministry seeks to strengthen and develop student leadership, whether by undergraduates, graduate students, or internationals. Some para-church organizations with

full time staff members develop a student ministry that in most ways revolves around the staff, and are not convinced that undergrads, grads, or internationals have the time or skills or background to take significant leadership.

D. Leaders in a church inevitably find that some people think there is too much focus on the campus, there are too many students, and some other areas of ministry are being neglected. Church families whose young people don't go to college can feel excluded by a flourishing campus ministry. Families whose children in college don't connect with the campus ministry or staff can feel let down.

E. Campus ministry, with all its joys, brings some special pain for a congregation. To invest in students and become attached to them, and then have them graduate and move on, never gets easier.

3. Support of campus ministry by senior staff members of the church is key, and can keep the campus ministry from being marginalized, not fully part of a congregation's life. A key person at First Presbyterian Church in Seattle said, "We've always got a strong base for campus ministry here because Earl Palmer (the senior pastor) loves students."

4. Campus ministry is not generic. It is a thoughtful response to a particular campus, with real needs and issues. Some campus ministries at different campuses are exactly alike. That usually means the staff are not taking the college or university seriously enough.

5. Campus ministry at its healthiest is a reflective ministry, not caught up with being trendy, but always eager to learn from others, open to change and growth.

6. Campus ministry can be comprehensive- not just for single 18-22 year old white American undergraduates. It can support all kinds of students as they go through ongoing stages of life.

7. At least some campus ministry staff can be "generalists". These are people who look ahead to the changes coming in students' lives, have a vision of how to equip them for the future, and are excited about drawing on the resources of the congregation to widen and deepen the ministry.

(excerpted from: "**OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF CHURCH-BASED CAMPUS MINISTRY**", revised March, 2007, 16 pages, on my web site-tomstarkinlansing.com)

8. A Reminder- WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO?

It has been confirmed many times through the years that students can:

1. Lead evangelism events- as speakers, musicians, organizers
2. Speak at campus meetings

3. Run weekend retreats, through advance planning committees, and leadership at the retreats
4. Run mission trips
5. Raise money for ministries
6. Welcome freshmen and newcomers
7. Lead prayer meetings
8. Run a campus fellowship. (URC sponsors Spartan Christian Fellowship, SCF, recognized by the university with that name since 1983.)
9. Lead campus Bible studies, for Christians and non-Christians.
10. Serve in the Lansing community.
11. And much more

PART SIX: Missions

1. Beginnings

Early in the congregation's life a woman came to grad school and URC who had taught in Afghanistan. It had the reputation of one country where it was a capital offense to convert a Muslim. The only Christian influences there were in an international school for foreigners and a church for foreigners, both in Kabul. But many had been praying for Afghanistan, and she urged us to do so. We learned of a husband and wife team of doctors, who served the American embassy and the international school. After a number of years they got permission to recruit outside medical people to come for summer medical teams, traveling in the remote parts of the country- an area the size of Iowa, where there was no medical care. Their son and his wife were undergrads in URC. So we got to contribute special offerings to help send them to Afghanistan for the summer, to work in the mobile medical clinics with his parents.

2. Student Ministry and Missions- Where the Campus and Church Interact

From the beginning of URC, students and others went for a summer or longer on mission assignments. There was no budget for them, so we publicized how much they had to raise, and prayed for them. And the Lord brought the money so they could go.

A vital campus ministry will encourage mission involvement and awareness. The most obvious options are local ministries, Spring Break trips, Summer Mission trips of varying lengths, Short Term Missions (three months to a year and a half) and Long Term Missions

(two years or more). Students benefit when staff and informed missions people do some initial sorting of mission information, from para-church groups that the congregation is close to, organizations that students have been with in the past, a denomination's programs, or ministries with which the church supports missionaries.

3. InterVarsity's Triennial Student Missions Conferences- "Urbana"

Since 1946 InterVarsity Christian Fellowship has sponsored a student missions conference every three years. It was first held in Toronto, then for many years at the University of Illinois in Urbana, then in 2006 it moved to St. Louis, Missouri. I can testify to the tremendous value the conference has had for our congregation. About half of the people whom we have supported in our missions budget over the years attended Urbana at one time in the past, and it was a crucial event for many of them. People may not go overseas right after attending Urbana, but it is an important link to mission boards, training, materials, etc., as students move in that direction.

In 1967 financial help was raised for those going to Urbana. This continued for each succeeding conference. In 1993, the URC Missions Committee adopted a commitment to pay the registration for Urbana for anyone from URC. Additional scholarship funds were also raised- in the church, from alumni, and from special offerings. After 1993 the Missions Committee usually adopted the same commitment before each Urbana conference- to pay all registrations, and raise additional scholarship funds.

Joan and I attended Urbana together before our son John was born, and I attended three other times through the years.

Urbana is usually every three years, but with the Y2K wackiness they had to postpone a year, and it was held in 2000-2001. Some numbers for attendance from URC:

1993	36
1996	72
2000	115
2003	86
2009	32
2012	12

4. The URC Missions Budget

In the URC 2016 Missions Budget most of the missionaries have come through URC.

Some missionaries are with the Reformed Church in America and from URC: Tom Johnson in Niger, Mark and Deb Wilson in Cambodia, R. and S. P., in Turkey, J. and A.P., headmaster in the Gulf.

For over thirty years the URC missions budget supported RCA missionaries Larry and

Linda McAuley. They were first in Kenya for 16 years, then for 10 years they were loaned by the RCA to CRWRC for Larry to direct their work in Malawi and Mozambique. During that time they had the Grabowskis from URC working with them for four years, and Kristina DeDecker from URC teaching in Malawi for one year. Then they went back to Kenya for four more years, and retired in 2016.

The URC mission budget also supports RCA missionaries Jeremy and Dr. Susan Beebout, who went to Niger nine years ago.

Steve and Joy Van Sloten serve in Turkey with Cru. After ten years in Turkey the Van Slotens were in URC for five years while working with international students at MSU through Cru, and have now been back in Turkey for seven years.

Steve and Jan Michmerhuizen met and married while at MSU/URC and served with the CRWRC in El Salvador and Zambia, and for the past six years have served with Christian Reformed World Missions in Romania.

Other missionaries include:

1. Two marrieds and one single who were in URC and now work with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in Metro Detroit, the Chicago area, and Hillsdale College.

2. One couple who works with the Navigators in international student ministry at Michigan State and are members of URC.

3. Couples where one or both spouses were in URC are missionaries in Africa, Turkey, China, and they work through AfricaRevolution, Cru, and Pioneers.

4. Two single women who were in URC include a doctor in Afghanistan and a missionary to refugees in Spain, who are sent through Interserve and SEND INTL.

5. Five married and single missionaries who were in URC are in U.S. ethnic or inner city ministries: to inner city kids in Jersey City, NJ, church planting among ethnic Albanians in Philadelphia, training churches to engage in cross-cultural ministry, working with the Lummi Indian Nation in Washington State.

6. The only other missionary who was not in URC is a seminary professor in Equatorial Guinea with WEC.

5. Why We Can't Mention Some Missionaries

It is not possible to get a visa as a “missionary” to China, India, the central Asian countries, Indonesia, or most Arab countries in the Middle East. However, most countries want doctors, teachers, nurses, skilled computer people, etc. And most are open to those who are business people. Christians who seek to work in these countries must have a skill and must

pray that through their life and work they may have an impact for Christ.

This is what we have heard from some of the people we support in “closed” countries:

AFGHANISTAN

The government knows our team members are all Christians. We can speak about our faith, but only if we are asked. We can give literature (like a Bible), only if we are asked. We could not take any national to the church for expatriates in the capital- it is against the law. We have a difficult time encouraging the few new Christians we have known. It is a risk for them to spend too much time with us. But there is no national church.

INDIA

Proselytizing is illegal in India and the use of the word "missionary" is a red flag. Even references to us having ties with your church are unsafe, as the word "missionary" is very broadly defined. Missionaries have even been killed by sectarian mobs.

AZERBAIJAN

Emails or letters attract less attention and may avoid problems if you use creative alternatives for "prayer", "God", "Jesus", "Bible", etc. You will notice that I am doing the same in my letters to you.

BAHRAIN

I did a search for "My name/ Country" in google, and your church website came up. I'm wondering if you could remove our names. At the moment it's not a big deal, but as we get more into discipleship and if someone is suspicious and googles the name, we could get into big trouble. At worst, we would be kicked out, but we could also greatly endanger believers in Bahrain if they are exposed before they are ready. It sounds extreme, but there are examples where this has happened.

TURKEY

Maintaining a lower profile on the internet is difficult and different for us, but we appreciate churches that are knowledgeable as to who should or should not have their name out there. Although Turkey is not like Saudi Arabia, for instance, they are very suspicious of anyone who wants to associate with the Kurds. So, it is better in general for us not to have our name on the internet.

6. "A Generous Christmas Offering"

A lasting impact: I was preaching on Sunday evening in Allendale, MI and Rev. Peter Muyskens had welcomed me and showed me around the church. Then he said, "When I came here a few years ago they had a large mortgage, and I realized that if we were going to reduce that mortgage we had to have a major increase in our missions budget."

I didn't get it at first, and then I did. When we give more away God takes care of our needs. The application: Many times as we have come to the end of a fiscal year I felt led to encourage our congregation about a generous Christmas offering, and the budget was also met.

PART SEVEN: Para- Church Student Ministries

1. In the United States "Para-Church" Campus Ministries Were the Overwhelming Norm from the late 18th Century Through Much of the 20th Century

(The standard reference book is *Two Centuries of Student Christian Movements*, by Dr. Clarence P. Shedd, professor at Yale Divinity School, 1934.)

In the 18th century-

The number of colleges was small (22 prior to 1800, 9 before the American Revolution).

The enrollment in each college was small.

The age of entering college was often below 18.

The colleges may have had a professor who conducted chapel services, which may have been quite routine.

What little information we have about vital Christian faith among students is the record of small campus groups, sometimes meeting secretly, which met to encourage each other, pray and share the gospel.

"Revivals" in that period, often coming from special meetings in churches, also touched campuses, and the student groups in them.

The moral life at some of the colleges was as bad as any universities today.

In the 19th Century:

Revivals of religion touched atheistic and hedonistic campuses.

The rest of the 19th century shows student-led groups on campuses characterized by:

Gathering regularly for prayer, in student rooms, outdoors (the famous Haystack Prayer Meeting), or elsewhere.

Gathering to learn and discuss Scripture and practical questions for Christians.

Seeking to lead others to faith.

A growing sense of kinship with similar groups on other campuses.

The missionary commitments made by Samuel Mills and other at the Haystack Prayer Meeting in 1806 led to the first group of students committed to missionary service, the first student missionary society. Such missionary fellowships began on many campuses, led by students, and leading to a large number of students who went overseas. "Williams

[College], at the time of the Mills group, had a student body of less than seventy, and college property consisting of two large plain brick buildings, and the president's house. There were but twenty-five colleges in the country and of these only a few enrolled as many as one hundred students." (Shedd, p. 59) The name chosen for these student missionary societies was often "The Society of Inquiry- on the Subject of Missions". By 1858 there were 13 colleges known to have student groups with that name, and 7 seminaries.

By 1856 there were 156 colleges in the U.S.

Impacted by the Second Great Awakening, and the 1958 Revival in Wales, which spread to many parts of the world, the Young Men's Christian Assn. (YMCA) began in 1851 in the U.S. and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in 1858.

As an evangelical ministry the Intercollegiate YMCA (and later, the YWCA) spread to many campuses beginning in 1858, and became the main and only Christian group on many campuses, with a number of traveling "secretaries" who visited campuses.

In 1885-86 major steps were taken by the evangelist Dwight L. Moody, to sponsor training for students from the campus YMCAs at his new Mt. Hermon School in Northfield, Mass.

Soon afterwards the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM) began, with their emphasis on commitment to foreign missionary service.

When the Student Volunteer Movement began, through the encouragement of Dwight L. Moody, it became an active ministry on many campuses, including students from many denominations.

From the end of the First Until the End of the Second World War-

The decline in theology in the YMCAs and the Student Volunteer Movement left no strong campus ministry groups between the wars.

England

In 1877 and 1879 InterVarsity began at Cambridge and Oxford, the two leading British universities. Britain had 6 "ancient" universities, 4 in Scotland, plus Cambridge and Oxford. Four other universities were begun in the 19th century. InterVarsity was and is a student-led ministry.

2. Para- Church Student Ministries and URC

Local congregations which are welcoming are going to attract students and staff from para-church organizations.

It is necessary to see the "big picture" of the work of the kingdom of God and rejoice in

that. URC at Michigan State has been blessed over the years as students and non-students have been involved in para-church ministries. These involvements have included:

1. Undergrads working part-time as volunteers at Young Life groups in area high schools.
2. Undergrads raising support to be part-time student staff with Young Life.
3. Undergrads going on the staff of Young Life after graduation.
4. Non-students being drawn into the membership of a Young Life “Mission Community” (support team) for an area high school.
5. Undergrads working as volunteer staff for Campus Life.
6. Non-students working as volunteer staff for Campus Life.
7. Students and non-students going on full-time Campus Life staff.
8. Students involved with Cru (Campus Crusade for Christ)
9. Students involved with Athletes in Action, a sub-group of Cru
10. Students involved with Bridges- the international student ministry of Cru
11. Students going on Cru staff fulltime
12. Students involved in the InterVarsity undergrad group
13. Students and non-students going on InterVarsity staff full time.
14. Full-time staff from InterVarsity, Cru campus staff and Bridges staff, Navigators, and Navigators’ internationals ministry in our church missions budget.

Some from URC have been leaders and active participants in graduate ministries, such as InterVarsity's Graduate Christian Fellowship, Christian Legal Society, Christian Veterinary Fellowship, and Christian Medical and Dental Fellowship.

PART EIGHT, Christian Education

1. Icthus, in Wilmore, Kentucky, 1970- 2006

One of the ministries to URC was this sprawling music festival- teaching event- evangelistic conference held on a camp grounds in Kentucky. Generations of teenagers in URC bonded together and were challenged about their faith, and drawn closer to the adults who were roughing it with them. Plus, everybody had access to many practical teaching sessions.

2. Summer Camps

A. URC has sent hundreds of campers to Camp Geneva and Cran-Hill Ranch, both started and owned by the RCA Synod of Michigan (now the Synod of Great Lakes). Some young people began or renewed their commitment to Christ there.

B. Over the years literally dozens of MSU students and students from URC families at other colleges have served on the summer staffs of Camp Geneva and Cran-Hill Ranch (from its very first year of operation). Those students have made an important contribution to the spiritual lives of their campers. They have also benefited tremendously from a summer-long program of more challenging training, supervision, and relationship building

than can happen in two or three week staff experiences.

C. Hundreds of individuals and families from URC have benefited from family camps at Cran-Hill Ranch each summer, and hundreds of people have attended retreats at Cran-Hill and Camp Geneva for teenagers, college students, men, women, consistory, etc.

3. Children and Worship

I knew little about Christian Education when I finished seminary, and needed my opinions upended by experienced people. One of my seminary classmates, Dr. Sonja Stewart, earned her Ph.D. in education at Notre Dame, researching what worship can mean for young children, ages 3-7. I vaguely thought that children that young probably could not worship. I was humbled by presentations of the Children and Worship materials which Sonja developed. It has been introduced in South Africa, Mexico, South Korea, England and Japan, and was also a blessing at URC for a number of years.

PART NINE: What Can Lay People Do?

1. Initiate ministries- in URC that happened with:

- Meals for New Mothers
- Home Delivered Meals route
- Links with Christian Services of Lansing
- Links with Shared Pregnancy

2. Preach

- at URC
- nursing homes
- Wells Hall, MSU

3. Teach

- Sunday school classes for adults and children

4. Lead in evangelism programs

5. Lead with internationals

- team to international house party
- holiday meals
- one to one English language tutoring- conversation partner
- lead classes

6. Counseling

- Lay Counselors

Stephen Ministers
Pre-marital Counseling

7. Mentor/ disciple
8. Manage the finances, design and plans for building programs
9. And much more

PART TEN: Evangelism Efforts

- 1. Evangelism Explosion-** Training materials were developed at the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, FL. I received training at a Missouri Synod Lutheran Church in Holt. I trained people in URC to be on "calling teams", concentrating on visitors to URC.
- 2. Josh McDowell-** Brought to campus by Cru, he was probably the only person around whom campus Christian groups ever united, and he drew the largest audiences of any Christian speaker. (Billy Graham had the same effect, but he seldom spoke on campuses.) Josh McDowell's talks led to many names for followup, and Cru included the other interested Christian groups in that effort.
- 3. "Wells Hall Preachers"-** MSU has a designated "free speech" area behind Wells Hall and near the Red Cedar River. It has become a place for mostly Christian speakers but, sadly, they seem to be invariably hostile, demeaning and condemning to people, including to Christians who try to reason with them about their hostile manner. Most of those who spoke were from obscure groups who thought they were the only Christians, and had no interest in Christians from the campus.
- 4. Cliff Knechtle-** A fresh wind- He traveled and spoke on campus for InterVarsity. As a pastor in Connecticut he still traveled several weeks a year for IV. He has written books on apologetics. His several visits to MSU have always been outstanding, especially for his clear thinking in answering questions, his gracious manner, and his call for a response to Christ.
- 5. Alpha Course-** Joan and I attended an excellent training session in Detroit, led by Nicky Gumbel from England. It inspired us to run the Alpha Course at our home for two years, which drew a range of international students and undergrads, Ph.D.s and sophomores.
- 6. Guest Sundays-** Specially scheduled Sundays where URC people were encouraged to bring non- Christian guests for church and a lunch afterwards. The emphasis was on evangelistic outreach.
- 7. Book Tables-** Sometimes in cooperation with InterVarsity, book tables were for selling and giving away Christian literature and Bibles, and to engage in conversation. They were scheduled weekly at the MSU Union or the MSU International Center.

8. Christianity Explored- Also developed in England, the DVD series with Rico Tice is intended to be preceded by a meal and followed with discussion around tables. The series has drawn a large majority of international students each time, primarily Chinese, and is available with Chinese subtitles. A number of Chinese-speaking Christians serve as some of the table hosts. It has been offered by URC on campus for two semesters a year for the past ten years.

9. Evangelism Stories- some of my contributions to a booklet of articles, "Evangelism Stories", printed at URC in 2009

A. The Brody Complex at MSU

The Brody Complex at MSU, with 3,000 students, is said to be the largest in the U.S., with six halls surrounding a large cafeteria and classroom building. There were originally four all-male dorms and two all-female dorms, and the residents were overwhelmingly freshmen. In the aftermath of the Viet Nam era, when the U.S. voting age was lowered from 21 to 18, the Michigan legislature lowered the drinking age to 18 too. The result was a disaster on college and high school campuses. Beer kegs, purchased with residents' dues, were on the floors every week. Student activities plummeted. Many students fled the dorms after their mandatory one year of residence, and some went home every weekend while they lived in the dorms. A state-wide petition drive put the return of the drinking age to 21 before the voters, who easily passed the referendum (though it lost heavily on campuses).

During those years a series of Christian men lived in Brody, some for all four years. They knew the inconveniences. One man mentioned walking past many sawdust piles in the morning on the way to church. (Sawdust mutes the smell of vomit.) And of course they saw almost no one leaving for church. Freshmen can't have cars, and URC didn't have a van, so the upper classmen packed their cars or walked with a group for the 2 1/2 miles to URC. The Christian students knew they couldn't study in the dorms, so they found other places. They learned to sleep through noise at night.

The ones who stayed felt they couldn't leave such an obvious mission field. They urged other Christians and new Christians not to move off campus. They had Bible studies and they saw men come to faith in Christ and grow in their faith. They instilled a vision to serve Christ in Brody. Non-freshmen were challenged to stay in Brody and serve freshmen, who were often surprised to find upper classmen seriously interested in them.

One new Christian visited us for a weekend in the summer, and wrote later about how excited he was to get back to Brody, to his friends who weren't Christians, to the ministry of the Christian fellowship there. We were stunned when he was killed in an auto accident just before school started. In the excitement of the first Sunday after the dorms opened my wife said, with tears, "It seemed like Ron should have been there."

They went on to serve Christ. One convert taught for years in a barrio school in Los Angeles, and then became a pastor. Others went to law school, seminary, the work force. They challenged each other not to leave because things were hard, and to believe God for

the power to be used by him to share Christ where they lived.

B. The First Wedding in Our New Building

After renting the Alumni Chapel at MSU for services, the University Reformed Church finally moved to its own building in June, 1976. The first wedding scheduled in the new building was for two Ph.D. students- the groom was an American, the bride a Palestinian. She had a likeable, immature brother, who was a sophomore at MSU, but the rest of her family was in Lebanon, in which a war was continuing. Her family couldn't come to the wedding.

Men and women of the church pitched in to help with the wedding and to serve a nice reception at the church. We were all conscious of wanting to be her "family", with no one else able to come. It was an honor to serve them at the first wedding in our new building.

On the Monday before the wedding she received an electrifying phone call. Her mother was in London. Although the war continued, and the Beirut airport was closed, somehow she got out on a flight from the airport. She was in Michigan two days later. So at least her mother was at the wedding, and the younger brother walked her down the aisle. The wedding guests included Palestinians from Lansing and other places in the U.S., some of them Christians, others Muslims. The guests all knew that the bride's father hadn't been able to come, or anyone but her mother and brother. They enjoyed the Christian wedding and the nice reception after the wedding.

A phrase that passed among the guests was, "The people of the church did this." Of course the bride's mother was almost embarrassingly and repeatedly grateful. Even the brother was impressed. And the guests were struck by the fact that the church was not an ethnic Christian congregation but still, "The people of the church did this."

The newlyweds moved away to his first university teaching situation. We visited months later with a Palestinian woman who had been raised a Muslim, and, after serious conversations with the bride, was drawn to Christianity. She was repelled by much American superficiality and promiscuousness, but she knew the bride had a genuine faith and she knew the impact of the wedding on guests like her. Talking among themselves, she said, they were all amazed: "The people of the church did this."

C. South Africa

In the dead of winter a team to call on visitors to URC was asked by a voice at the top of the stairs: "Who is it?" "We're from the University Reformed Church". "Then you are most welcome". She was a white South African, new to MSU. She came during the heyday of the South African government's extreme racial segregation, known as apartheid. She was from the Dutch Reformed Church, which had supplied an alleged Biblical basis for the government's policy. She did not agree with the policy, and had taught at the all-black University of Zululand. She became part of the University Reformed Church. Other South Africans attended too- a wonderful deacon from the "Colored" Reformed Church- the title reflecting the government's segregation of non-whites. Over the years three other whites

attended URC, but they were all defensive about the policies in South Africa.

As a white South African she found herself in class with an American who had met her husband in Rwanda, while she was in the Peace Corps. The American was definitely not a Christian, and had a natural suspicion of white South Africans. They had many discussions about Christianity, about Africa, and studied the Bible together. Eventually she had the joy of seeing her friend trust in Christ and helping her grow in her faith.

There are certainly barriers that make it harder for a Christian to be trusted by a non-Christian. A really formidable barrier was there between a white South African and an American married to a black African. Somehow God overcame that to bring friendship and trust and salvation.

D. An Engineer

I met him during his freshman year. He had been raised in a Reformed Church, and he was not a believer in Christ. We had a couple of long conversations before he left for the summer.

His summer internship in an engineering firm brought him in contact with a Christian engineer who spoke naturally about his faith, and had discussions with people about their questions. He was the lay pastor of a Baptist church, and a genuine, unassuming person to be around. He responded to questions from my friend and others throughout the summer.

Just before my friend was to return to MSU he contacted his pastor and asked to meet with the elders to confess his faith. And he called me when he got back to school.

His remaining years in Holmes Hall were eventful. The Christians in the dorms sponsored a Chicago Christian music group with seminary student speakers. They gave a concert and presentation in the dorm, with opportunities for follow up by the Christians in the dorm.

His Jewish roommate was secular, knowing little about Judaism, but after many hours of discussion and Bible reading he trusted in Christ. His parents in Miami were appalled, most of all when he volunteered to work after graduation with a Reformed Church ministry in the Robert Taylor homes on the south side of Chicago. He eventually became a Reformed Church minister.

Another roommate had been in high school with him, and the year they lived together provided many discussions. The roommate had also come from a Reformed Church, didn't believe and was surprised that my friend now did. He was a likeable guy, inconsistent in his thinking, as people often are. He told me he prayed every night before going to sleep. "It's a habit I can't get out of. It's like brushing my teeth. If I climb up to that upper bunk and remember I haven't brushed my teeth, I can't get to sleep. I have to get up and do it. It's the same with praying." It was some years later, while teaching in Chicago, that he finally came to faith.

And my friend got an engineering degree, but became a pastor. Still, it was an engineer

whom God especially used to bring him to faith.

E. Her Granddaughter

We used to see her each summer in Pennsylvania. We would drive a few hours to her home in the country and go out for lunch with her and her husband. He was a wonderful teacher, and a scholar and friend. She was also a writer, wise and delightful to be with. The summer lunches continued after her husband died. This time she had a totally unexpected story.

Two of their children were committed Christians but one daughter had rejected her parents' teaching and faith. She had married young, had a child, got a divorce, and continued to live in Oregon. She, with her 19 year old daughter, had made a rare trip to Pennsylvania on the month before our visit. The first evening the granddaughter asked, "Could we have devotions together in the morning, Grandma?" Her grandmother was astounded. She knew the girl's mother had avoided any religious teaching, and couldn't imagine where the request came from.

They met after breakfast and she asked her granddaughter what had happened. She had gone away to college and, in her loneliness, had visited a church near her campus. The day she was there the minister asked, at the end of his message, "Is there anyone here who needs a friend?" and she raised her hand. Then he asked, "Is there anyone here who would like Jesus to be your friend?", and she raised her hand again. He invited interested people to come forward, and she did- the only one. "And", she said, "they talked to me, and I cried, and they read the Bible with me and prayed with me, and I became a Christian."

Her grandmother's joy was immense. How striking- the granddaughter for whom she had prayed for years (as had her late husband), who had seemed to have no spiritual influences, had been reached at last in a church near her college campus.

What an encouragement to keep praying for those you love. What a reminder to offer to meet with people who are considering Christ.

And every summer since that visit I have been revitalized and challenged by the approach of a new school year at Michigan State, across the street from our church: "Mrs. Gerstner's granddaughter might be moving in to a dormitory right across Hagadorn Road. I can hardly wait."

F. My Testimony- Welcomed by a Family- by Tom Stark

I had finished one year of college and my grandmother, in another town, got summer jobs for my brother and me with a carpenter. This was before the days when sun tan lotion did any good and I burned tremendously the first day, and spent two miserable days in bed. My grandmother took me job hunting and I became a bus boy at a big restaurant, working a split shift. I had no car so she called the young pastor of a church she attended occasionally about leads on housing .

He called back and said he and his wife (and two small kids) would be glad for me to stay with them for the summer. They waited up with cokes when I got off the evening shift, took me to the beach with their family, and welcomed me into their lives, which included the young adults group that met at their house on Sunday evenings.

Coming from a difficult family I was glad to be away and was not homesick, but I welcomed being in a home and liked the young adults I met. Two problems emerged: Why was this family so generous- what was their angle? and What to do about the realization that I was not a Christian? I had thought I was, but began to realize I didn't know God like these people did- I only knew about him.

I concluded that there was no angle- they simply loved me and wanted the best for me. That was appealing, disarming, but also threatening to my sense of independence and not wanting to be under obligation to anyone.

When I got up courage to tell them about my bad relationship to my father I expected shock, but they only said, "We're sure you can't be happy with things that way. We'll pray that they will change." I was afraid I would have to apologize, even though he had done many things that were wrong. I prayed for help and I did write a letter of apology. Eventually I realized I needed to ask God to take over my whole life, not just the major crisis, and my pride took a beating when I finally prayed that prayer. They were encouragers to me during all those struggles.

This young couple served a small community church while he was going to seminary part-time. They lived in a small house, giving me their spare bedroom and meals for nothing, sharing their life with me. In later years he pastored large churches and was even Chaplain of the U.S. Senate until his wife's health failed. But I am forever grateful for how they blessed me when they were young, living on limited means, with young children, and opening their home to a mixed-up college student.

I can never re-pay them. I can only try to demonstrate the love of Christ with whatever home or resources or time I have.

PART ELEVEN: International Student Ministry

Political Hot Potatoes

Internationals seem to know that Americans have a reputation of being poorly-informed about the world. But when Americans know international students it becomes of pressing importance to be informed about certain events that affect their countries, such as:

The Biafran war of independence in Nigeria (1967-1970).

The controversy over whether the government of the Shah of Iran had spies among the Iranian students at MSU (to report on other Iranian students).

The tsunami which brought so much destruction to Indonesia and Thailand.

Genocide in Rwanda.

Apartheid in South Africa, the campaign for disinvestment in South Africa, and the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela.

The fifteen year Marxist government in Ethiopia, with the inability of some of our students to return home, and the persecution of Christians there.

How to regard the seeming conversions of former Muslims- a Ph.D. and a grad student, from two different "_____stans".

The move in 1949 of two million mainland Chinese to Taiwan, which had 6 million native Taiwanese, meant that the Taiwan Presbyterian Church (where the RCA had missionaries) was the largest and almost the last organization in Taiwan which still functioned in the Taiwanese language. The government eventually put the highest official of the Presbyterian church in prison. When an RCA missionary on furlough from Taiwan spoke at Ann Arbor and at URC he also met, on both campuses, with students from the Taiwan Student Assn. At the end of his furlough he could not get a visa to return to Taiwan, and continued his missionary service in Hong Kong.

Non-English Bible Studies-

When leadership can be found international student ministries celebrate the availability of Bible studies in "heart languages." At various times, usually for several years at a stretch, we have had leaders for Bible studies in:

- French
- Japanese
- Korean
- Chinese

Chinese Students

In the 70's we had an American Ph.D. candidate, who became a deacon, who had been a businessman in China. He was a former Navigators staff member who had been involved for a number of years in running a joint business venture with a Chinese partner in China. In his personal witness there he had led several men to faith in Christ, but he never felt free to introduce them to each other. They were wary of meeting a possible false believer. In the U.S. he would contact them only occasionally, so as not to arouse suspicion.

In the early 1980's, Chinese students began coming to study in the U.S. and at Michigan State University. There was a totally different climate from today. Students couldn't bring their families; they came for a year or two at the most; no undergrads came; there were spies for the Chinese government in the student population. They couldn't regularly attend a Christian church, and definitely not a Chinese church, because the Chinese church had people there from Taiwan and Hong Kong. But some came to faith in Christ, usually through small Bible studies, and some were eventually baptized. However, they did not become members of the University Reformed Church. It would have been illegal for them to join an American organization, certainly not a church. We gladly baptized several, but "membership" was not involved.

One of the students was a Ph.D. candidate in engineering, a Christian and a wonderful

pianist. He explained that during the Cultural Revolution his family's piano and many other things were confiscated, because his parents were educated. His father took a long board and painted black and white keys on it, and "Mark" practiced on it for seven years. He had come with his wife and son, and when his wife became pregnant they made it clear that they would stay in the U.S., since they would be punished if they went back to China with a second child.

Out interactions with Chinese students have changed dramatically.

In 2015 MSU had 7,562 international students, from 121 countries. This included 3,857 Chinese undergrads, and 706 grad students. The undergrad population has all come in the last half a dozen years, from wealthy parents in China. (Undergrads can not get scholarships.) They are remarkably free to consider Christianity.

PART TWELVE: Over the Years- Changes in the University- Fourteen in All

1. Grad School- no debt: when I came to MSU a sort of unwritten expectation in universities was "If we let you in a grad program there will be some combination of resources- teaching assistant, lab assistant, scholarship, grant, etc.- so you will get by, maybe just break even, and not need to go into debt." That has not been the case now for many years.
2. During the first recession after I arrived I experienced for the first time a tight job market for Ph.D.s. It came with the decline of massive federal funding in the inflated war economy of Viet Nam. One of our men was finishing his Ph.D. and job hunting, and in his field of the sciences there were two openings in the entire country. (Many prayed- and he got one of them.)
3. With the decline in the job market many university departments were not candid with their students about the real employment situation. For a few more years they continued to admit more students than they could ever place. I remember arguing with a student who had a wife and child, and was admitted to a Ph.D. program in intellectual history. The field was glutted, but no one had told him.
4. Until about five years ago Chinese undergrads had never been admitted. Now they are the majority of international students, from rich families in mainland China, who can pay the entire college costs.
5. A record of over 7,000 international students were at MSU in 2015.
6. The remnants of the view that the university can function "in loco parentis"- in place of the parent, died years ago. It is hard to remember when women had to be in their dorms by a curfew time, and there were only all male or all female residence halls. The switch to coed dorms came in the early 1970s. The university also had restrictions on student

political activities, which eventually were dropped.

7. Student political participation increased after the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 (26th Amendment, 1971).

8. Most universities have education degrees that require four years, including a quarter or semester of student teaching. MSU made a daring change, beginning in 1993. Education majors graduate in four years, but to become a certified teacher they must do an internship year in a school, typically for four days a week with a fifth day of graduate classes at MSU.

9. The state legislature lowered the drinking age to 18 in 1972. It was a disaster on campuses. The voters, by referendum, raised the drinking age back to 21 in 1978.

10. During a deep recession we had many people graduating from MSU with poor job prospects. And others were hurting for jobs too. We recruited about three dozen people to be JOBS PRAY-ERS. We got updates every few weeks and in a period of over two years, we saw over 100 people get jobs.

11. The College of Human Medicine was begun in 1964. The college began training pre-clinical medical students in the fall of 1966, though these students needed to finish the final two years of their medical school education at other schools. The entering class of 1968 completed all four years of education at MSU.

12. The College of Osteopathic Medicine admitted its first students in 1969 at its facility in Pontiac, Michigan. In September, 1969, Michigan State University adopted the program. MCOM was renamed the Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine when the campus was transferred to East Lansing in 1971.

13. The MSU College of Law, formerly the Detroit College of Law, relocated at MSU in 1995, with a new affiliation with MSU.

14. For the first time ever, the MSU residence halls beginning offering Sunday evening meals about ten years ago.

PART THIRTEEN: Women in URC

1. From an Informational Flyer About Women in URC, Approved by the Consistory, 1994

"Question 6. **What can men and women do in worship services?**

So far they have planned services, given testimonies, led worship, given reports, led in prayer, read Scripture, sung solos and sung in choral groups, accompanied music, participated in dance and drama, shared concerns, given children's messages, given financial appeals, given mission reports, taken the offering, been on Prayer Teams.

Question 7. Are there any things which women in URC have not done in worship services?

No woman has been asked to preach at Sunday services.

Question 8. What is the Reformed Church in America's policy about women serving on the Consistory (governing board), as Elders and Deacons, and as Ministers of the Word?

Women can and do serve as Elders, Deacons and Ministers in some Reformed Churches. In 1954 a small booklet was approved by the General Synod with some study of scriptural teaching on this subject, but it was quite brief. After debate over a period of years the **Book of Church Order** of the R.C.A. was amended in 1972 to allow women to be elected Elders and Deacons. After the approval of this amendment the General Synod Executive Committee of the denomination issued a statement reminding churches that they could have no legal restrictions forbidding the election of women (by-laws, for instance), though underscoring the fact that each congregation would make its own decisions as to whether or not women would be elected Elders and Deacons.

Repeated efforts were made to open the office of Minister of the Word to women, but these were defeated. In 1979 the General Synod dealt with appeals from several areas which had gone ahead and ordained women as ministers, and ruled that these were valid. Amid a great deal of controversy over the legality of that decision the Synod of 1980 met, and adopted a "Proposal to Maintain Peace and Diversity in the RCA Concerning Women as Church Officers". It was a package amendment to the RCA's **Book of Church Order**, which guaranteed "freedom of conscience", under Scripture, of those who hold opposite views concerning women in church offices. No one can be penalized for expressing or voting according to his or her views on women in church offices, as guided by Scripture. No one can obstruct the ordination or installation of any legally elected women. No one can be required to participate in such acts of ordination, contrary to conscience, as guided by Scripture. Our pastor was a delegate to the Synod, and a co-author of the compromise amendment. It was given final approval in 1981.

Question 13. What is the Consistory's view about women in the office of Elder and Deacon?

After it became legal in 1972 for women to hold these offices the Consistory (then only 6 members) studied the question, and sent a short letter to the congregation in 1973 indicating that their membership included those who, after studying Scripture, favored, opposed, or were uncertain about whether women could hold these offices. The consistory has made no statement on the subject since then.

Question 14. Why did the Consistory establish The Board of Deacons and Deaconesses in 1981?

Many Christians would agree that women have gifts for Diaconal service, and that those gifts should be used freely.

Most all reformed denominations world-wide have a Board of Deacons which is subject to the authority of the Board of Elders or Session, and the Deacons are not members of the governing Board. In those situations Christians who feel that Scriptures restrict the offices of authority to men would still want women and men to be called to diaconal service. Since RCA Deacons do exercise a governing responsibility (as Consistory members) there are some women and men who would feel that, scripturally, women should not serve as Deacons, because that involves membership on the Consistory.

The short job description for the Board of Deacons and Deaconesses (available in the church office) provides that the four Deaconesses and the four Deacons carry out a full ministry of setting the Mission Support budget, community service, and ministry to the needy in the congregation, the community and the world. Deaconesses, who serve as members of the Board of Deacons and Deaconesses, and have chaired the Board, are elected by the congregation but are not members of the Consistory, though they are invited to attend and advise the Consistory. The office of Deaconess is a fourth office in the University Reformed Church along with Pastor, Elder and Deacon, to which those elected are ordained with the laying on of hands by fellow deaconesses, deacons and the pastor.

Question 16. Since there are diverse views in the University Reformed Church about whether or not women should be Elders and Deacons, how can the congregation have any unity or harmony?

It is not always easy, but every congregation needs to strive to “maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). A first step in looking at differences is to see whether they represent a “salvation issue”. If so, there can never be any compromise, because the Gospel of Christ is at stake. Most Christians do not believe that the issue of women in office, which has divided sincere Christians, is a “salvation issue”, requiring that one leave a church unless it adopts the positions one holds.

A second step in dealing with differences is to accept the personal challenge to reexamine one’s own view, and its scriptural basis, and to examine carefully the view which one does not hold, to be sure one understands it, and the scriptural basis claimed for it, and is being fair to it.

A third step which may be helpful in dealing with differences is to recognize that, sad as it may be, some people leave churches over matters which others would not believe should be sufficient cause, but there is no way to prevent that.

In our congregation’s history of over a quarter century people have said they left because we did not have an official stand against the Viet Nam War, or because we allowed women to speak in the unstructured services, or were not pacifists, or practiced infant baptism, or used guitars in worship services, or taught that the gifts of the Holy Spirit (with the exception of apostleship) continue in the church today, or did not teach that every believer should seek to have the gift of tongues, or did not teach that Christians could “claim” healing and prosperity, or did not have a choir, or did not have a structure whereby the Elders directed the lives of our members, or had people serving on our Consistory

whose children were not baptized, or because we did not have women Elders and Deacons.

The congregation of University Reformed Church includes people from over two dozen denominational backgrounds, and no background. This represents a rich variety of experiences and preferences in forms of worship, styles of leadership, forms of church government, approaches to evangelism, and sizes of congregations, not to mention various doctrinal emphases. By the grace of God we continue to walk together, not in complete uniformity on every doctrine or personal preference, but in unity in the gospel of God's Son, and in the power of his Holy Spirit."

2. Deaconesses-

The Deaconesses have provided vital service since 1981. I am not sure how many have served since then (with rotating three year terms), but there are about 15 women in the congregation who have served as deaconesses in the past.

3. My Preaching About Women in Ministry-

I had preached on the subject several times before. On March 4, 1973 my sermon title was "Should Women Hold Offices in the Church?" Three texts were listed for the sermon: I Corinthians 11: 1- 16, I Corinthians 14: 26-40, and I Timothy 2: 8-15. The sermon (and service) went overtime, and I discovered afterwards that my watch had lost fifteen minutes during the service.

The following Wed. morning, March 7, 1973, I was meeting with a "Sermon Team", which I recruited a number of times. The group of five had agreed to meet one morning a week for a month to give me feedback on my sermons. We had not been meeting long when a long distance call came that my father had died suddenly of a heart attack in Illinois. We left that day for a week, and the preacher the next week was a seminary graduate who had been in URC. The bulletin that week said "Mr. Stark is in Illinois for the funeral of his father, who died last Wednesday." It also said, "Mr. Stark wishes to apologize for the unusually long message last Sunday. He discovered afterwards that his watch had lost 15 minutes between 10:45 and 12:30. He's investing in a new watch." It must have been out of sympathy that I didn't get any other feedback on my sermon.

4. A Letter to a Sister in Ministry

My own view about women in ministry is reflected partially in the following letter, an actual letter to two RCA woman ministers.

Dear Sister:

I have a desire to share with you, as best I can, some of the context from which I approach the subject of women in ministry, especially as you may wonder about my convictions concerning you and your ministry.

I shared at General Synod in 1998 that a new law school student in Lansing came to our

church a few years ago and told me his pastor said to come to our church since she had become a Christian here when she was in grad school at MSU. My wife and I had known her well in her "B.C." and after days. We followed her through a year's volunteer service with the RCA in Taiwan, and then working with an inner city church in D.C. Then she went to Princeton Seminary and took a Presbyterian church in New Jersey. You may wonder what I thought of "Anne". I certainly wanted her to succeed. I would never want her to crash and burn, or go off into some goddess heresy, and I was glad that she was preaching the gospel in the Presbyterian church- my former denomination. We became close to the law student and former elder whom she sent our way (now a lawyer in Philly, and part-time student at Eastern Seminary). And we grieved with him and with "Anne" as she slowly succumbed to cancer. She wrote a wonderful letter to her congregation and friends in the spring several years ago, hoping to make it to Easter, but she didn't make it on earth.

I grew up in the United Methodist Church, in a small downstate Illinois town. My father was a teacher who moved to teach in Chicago one year after I finished high school. When I went back for a 40th reunion I hadn't been in the church in all those years. I walked in to look around and the pastor walked out of her office. A farmer's wife, with grown kids, going to seminary in concentrated spurts and pastoring two small churches full-time- and a warmly evangelical woman. My parents weren't churchgoers, only we three kids, and the church had a number of faithful women whom we unkindly regarded as "church widows"- their husbands and sons didn't attend church. One was the Sunday School superintendent I loved- Stacey Mortenson- long dead by then, as were most of those adults. The pastor talked about revival services and Bible studies, and, just that spring, leading Stacey Mortenson's son to accept Christ. We talked about the past and the present and, when she asked me to pray with her before I left, I was shedding tears of joy that the gospel was still being faithfully made known in that Methodist church.

Those examples may surprise you, but they mean to me that it is possible to rejoice in the work of God, without agreeing on all things not essential to the gospel. A very different example. We got to know a young couple who were living together- she had a strong CRC background, was rebelling, and knew it. He was nominally Roman Catholic. I helped him make a commitment to Christ, and disciplined him and helped them set up separate bedrooms until their wedding. They were too poor for separate apartments, it was a deep recession time and he couldn't find a job, and she had a severe ankle problem that needed surgery, but had no coverage. A job came through in the southern U.S., and we sent them off after the wedding with concern and prayers. A letter came shortly- "We decided we should find a church our first Sunday and went to the Free Will Baptist Church. The people were so friendly, like our church in East Lansing, and some folks took us home for lunch, and prayed for us and we are so happy." You probably know that "Free Will" means strongly Arminian, anti-Calvinistic in the case of that mostly southern denomination. But as I read the letter I wept and prayed "Lord, thank you for the Free Will Baptists. Thank you that they took in our- and your children."

I hope that you can believe that I affirm you as sisters in Christ, hope for God's blessings on your ministries, and am thankful for what the Lord does through you, though we do not agree on all aspects of ministry.

Sincerely in Christ,

Tom Stark

PART FOURTEEN: Reformed Church in America- Issues Through the Years- Seven in All

1. A controversial proposal to merge with the Southern Presbyterian Church was defeated in the RCA in 1969. I wrote and spoke against the merger. All the RCA classes (presbyteries) west of Detroit voted against the merger, but it received the necessary three-fourths vote in the southern church, partly because it would have provided an easier way for conservatives to leave, and because others saw it as a stepping stone to merge with the larger Presbyterian Church USA. (Four years later, in 1973, many conservatives left the southern church to form the PCA., and the southern church merged with the northern church in 1983.)
2. Abortion- various General Synods have spoken, and those statements are on the RCA web site.
3. Homosexuality- various General Synod statements have tended to agree with Biblical teaching, also on the web site. Currently, however, there is an ongoing controversy about adopting binding requirements.
4. Spiritual Gifts- in 1975 and 1977 the General Synod of the RCA affirmed the validity of spiritual gifts today, opposing the “secessionist” view of Calvin and others, but also opposing the teaching that all believers need to seek the gift of tongues, or that tongue speaking is to be equated with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The official RCA statement would be closest to Dr. Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology.
5. Women's ordination/ conscience clause- see PART THIRTEEN, “Women in URC”.
6. Belhar Confession- first adopted by a Reformed church of black South Africans, as a testimony during the era of apartheid. Adopted in 2010 as an additional doctrinal standard of the RCA, along with the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort. I wrote and spoke as an enthusiastic supporter of the Belhar Confession.
7. In 2005 there was a trial of Dr. Norman Kansfield, president of the RCA's New Brunswick Theological Seminary, who performed a wedding of his daughter and her female partner. He was deposed from the ministry. I was at the trial, at the General Synod, as one of over 50 ministers and elders who had filed charges against Dr. Kansfield.

PART FIFTEEN: the URC Consistory- What Was Learned Through the Years

1. Should We Build a Church building?

At the Alumni Chapel we had increasing growing pangs, especially for Sunday School classes. Over time we got the use of classrooms in the Christian Reformed student center on Bogue Street, and basement classrooms in Phillips Hall at MSU. Eventually we had use of the house on the Hagadorn Road property, and had students living there. But we also had teenagers there for youth group during the week and for a Sunday morning class.

The balcony at the Chapel was small and dark, but we had to use it for seating, and, on rare occasions, had people sitting in the large choir loft at the front of the Chapel.

We had office space at the house rented from the Hostetters and then in the East Lansing Bank.

Nevertheless, the congregation is one of the few I've known of that "backed into" building its own building. People wanted to avoid building, if possible, and wanted us to check all other alternatives first: Sunday afternoon in a rented space, rent a bigger location on campus, buy a fraternity house, etc. So a long preliminary investigation took place and eventually most people concluded that there is a reason why services are on Sunday morning- babies and young children are not well-suited to Sunday afternoons; fraternity houses have large spaces that are not big enough and small spaces (student's rooms) that are too small.

Fundraising took place in the churches and classes (presbyteries) of the RCA Synod of Michigan, and to many individuals.

We moved into our own building on Hagadorn Road in June of 1976. Crowded space soon became a challenge. Staff office space and regular office space became tight. In 1979 we bought the house and land next door for parking and class rooms. Portable classrooms were added and additions to the original building happened twice. I moved my office to our home for many years.

2. Who May Come to the Lord's Table?

When I arrived in East Lansing, Michigan in 1966, to begin a congregation of the Reformed Church in America, I understood that the RCA tradition was that the invitation to the Lord's Supper was to those who, in addition to faith in Jesus Christ, repentance of known sin, and love for fellow members of the body of Christ, were also "a member of a Christian church". So our Sunday bulletin said and I said from the pulpit that you must be "a member of a Christian church".

That first year I talked with Emma, a freshman at Michigan State University, who explained that she had come to faith in Christ in the youth group of a Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Her parents were hostile to her faith and to the church and told her she couldn't join a church or be baptized. She explained that her parents were paying for her schooling, and she was just glad that they hadn't forbidden her going to church (though they didn't like it), and that she was sorry she couldn't take communion, because she wasn't

baptized, or a church member. I was able to baptize her in her senior year, and perform her wedding after her graduation. But I was confronted for the first time with whether an unbaptized person or a non-church member, who nevertheless has met Christ as Savior, has openly confessed her faith, and loves Christ's people, could also take Communion.

Complications I Didn't Know About

1. Church- early on some regular attenders explained their difficulty with our "member of a Christian church" wording. They were from a Plymouth Brethren background. I had known some wonderful "P.B.s" in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Their places of worship are generally called assemblies, gospel halls, etc., and not churches. They do not think that "church" is a building, a formal name or a denomination. So they feared that "church" was being used in a non-Scriptural sense.

2. Member- Some groups do not have "membership". That includes the Plymouth Brethren, whose assemblies don't have membership.

A woman from a Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) background unburdened herself on one occasion. She told me that her parents had been killed in a plane crash when she was in middle school. She had three older sisters, and they and their families were in a large Church of God congregation, of which she and her parents were also a part. After her parents' death she moved in with one of her sisters, and all three sisters and their husbands raised her. In many ways, the whole congregation- which knew and loved her parents and grieved for her- loved her and raised her. But the Church of God doesn't have membership. So she wondered- was she wrong to take communion at University Reformed Church? Should she become a "member" of URC so she could take communion, when that made her feel like she would be rejecting the Church of God? I told her she didn't need to join URC in order to take Communion.

(Most church leaders do not intend to pressure people to become church members when inviting them to Communion. The offer of grace in the Lord's Supper would be undermined if the invitation to Communion were used to get more church members.)

3. Membership for international students- When, in the early 1980's, Chinese students began coming to study in the U.S. and at Michigan State University, there was a totally different climate from today. Students couldn't bring their families; they came for a year, or two at the most; no undergrads came; there were "minders" in the student body (other Chinese students who spied on them). They couldn't regularly attend a Christian church, and definitely not a Chinese church, because there would be people there from Taiwan or Hong Kong. But some came to faith in Christ, usually through small Bible studies, and some were eventually baptized. However, they did not become members of the University Reformed Church. It would have been illegal for them to join an American organization, certainly including a church. We gladly baptized several, but "membership" was not involved.

For some other internationals there was a different barrier. Though they would be baptized, they couldn't imagine joining an "American" church. They thought that would be

a bad witness in their home country. They planned to find and join a Christian church when they got home, to underscore that they had become a Christian, not an American.

4. Membership that is cultural, or perfunctory- On one occasion a student from a Greek Orthodox background voiced her frustration with our wording about Communion. (We were still using "member of a Christian church".) She had been raised in a Greek community and church, but came to faith in Christ in high school, through the ministry of Young Life. Her problem was concerning two friends. One friend had been raised in a Greek Orthodox background like her, meaning that she had been free to take communion since being baptized as an infant and then given communion. She and her friend had been "members" in the Greek church since they were X months old. But it was only cultural for both, until our student turned to Christ in high school. It bothered her that her friend who showed little evidence of faith in Christ and, according to the Orthodox Church, shouldn't take communion outside the Orthodox church anyway, nevertheless could take communion when she came to URC, while a new Christian from her dorm could not, because she was not a "member" of a church.

The same problem may apply to Roman Catholics, or others, who may have been confirmed at a young age and after that are "members", and can take communion, even if their faith is only cultural.

5. An evangelical church- We once changed the Communion wording to require membership in "an evangelical church". That increased the confusion!

a. The word "evangelical" is widely used in U.S. political analysis, but it is just about impossible to agree on what it means, in belief and practice. The term provokes many questions:

"Does evangelical only refer to whites?" (It is not as widely used by African-American and Hispanic-American Christians to identify themselves.)

"Does it mean conservative Republican?"

"Is that 'evangelical' a denomination?"

"Is that the same as Baptist?"

"I'm a Lutheran- is that 'evangelical'?"

"I was raised Missouri Synod Lutheran, not 'Evangelical' Lutheran".

b. Some confessionally Lutheran or Reformed denominations avoid calling themselves "evangelicals", believing it implies shallow theology.

c. In Germany the term "Evangelical" refers to an umbrella organization of Lutheran, Reformed and United denominations, comprising about 29% of the German population.

d. Many Latin Americans use "evangelico" (Spanish) as a synonym for "Protestant", or it might be used to mean "not Roman Catholic".

Many Different Practices Among Christians (Fourteen Are Listed)

(There are a few Christian groups who do not observe the Lord's Supper, such as the Salvation Army, many Quakers- Society of Friends, and an extreme dispensationalist group, sometimes called ultra-dispensationalists.)

1. The Orthodox denominations (Russian, Greek, Romanian, etc.), Roman Catholics, and Lutherans officially believe in "baptismal regeneration" - the individual is born of the Holy Spirit at baptism, so regenerated people, infants or adults, would theoretically be allowed to receive the Lord's Supper.
2. Greek and other Orthodox churches- babies, when baptized, then receive the Lord's Supper. All baptized Orthodox believers may receive communion.
3. Roman Catholic- Baptized children may receive "First Communion" at the minimum age designated in a diocese- geographical area. This will usually be around seven or eight. Older Roman Catholics who are not under excommunication and have made proper spiritual preparation may also receive the Lord's Supper.
4. Closed Communion- Some denominations (such as the Missouri Synod Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox), and other groups- like the "Closed" Plymouth Brethren, and some Anglicans, allow only confessing members of their group to receive communion.
5. "Close" Communion- The long-held practice of the Christian Reformed Church and others provided that non-CRC members needed to arrange beforehand with the elders to take communion. This is no longer the practice in most CRC churches.
6. The Churches of Christ and many "Christian" churches (which do not consider themselves denominations), believe that, after profession of faith in Christ, baptism by immersion is so closely linked to salvation that they would not want a professing believer to take Communion until they were baptized by immersion. Some believe the baptism by immersion must be through a Church of Christ.
7. Intense self-examination- The Apostle Paul instructed that "everyone ought to examine themselves"- I Corinthians 11:27-29. The Netherlands Reformed Church, in Holland and the U.S., developed an emphasis on self-examination such that the large majority of their members do not come to the Lord's Table, including elders and deacons. Some folks evidently never come to the Table, many come infrequently, and others not until their 30's and beyond. The perhaps apocryphal story is told that when Rev. Joel Beeke came to Grand Rapids to pastor a Netherlands Reformed Church of a thousand people, only about two dozen would take Communion.
8. In the 18th and 19th centuries and even into the 20th century Scottish Presbyterians had a practice of "Preparatory Services" during the week before a Communion Sunday, with the issuance of "communion tokens" to those who attended. Only those with tokens could receive the sacrament on Sunday.
9. In some churches the pastor admits people to the Lord's Supper. Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan New England Congregationalist and brilliant reformed scholar, accepted the

practice of the minister alone admitting people to the Lord's Table.

10. Some Lutherans- Baptized children may receive the Lord's Supper before confirmation.

11. Presbyterian Church USA- Baptized children, with the consent of parents and the session (Board of Elders), may receive the Lord's Supper without having made a confession of faith.

12. Some Protestants- All are invited to the Lord's Table, including unbelievers, because the Lord's Supper might become a "converting ordinance". ". . . the New Side and Log College Presbyterians [19th century U.S.] united in a unique way both the notion of fencing the table and the notion that the sacrament is a proclamation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. They made the sacrament of the Lord's Supper an evangelistic opportunity by inviting those present to accept the faith and to come to the table. The Lord's Supper became for them an occasion for personal decision. The communion sermons of Samuel Davies are an example." (*Dictionary of the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition in America*).

13. Fixed minimum ages for children or young people to be admitted to the Lord's Table- The minimum age may be set by parents, a church board, or a congregation, by official written action or by tradition. Examples of the range of practices include requiring that children can read (second grade?), not admitting grade school children, waiting until high school, having different minimum ages for boys and girls.

14. Many Protestants- all who believe in Christ as Lord and Savior, whether baptized or not, whether confessing members of a church or not, are invited to receive the Lord's Supper.

Finding a Pastoral Response- from the Board of Elders

Eventually, the Board of Elders of the University Reformed Church took action to adopt various wordings of the Invitation to the Lord's Supper, and Explanatory Notes, which were the basis for the Invitation for over thirty years:

“All who have confessed before others that Jesus Christ is their Savior and resolve to be his faithful subjects are welcome to this feast of love.”

“All who have embraced Jesus Christ as their Savior and have confessed his name before others and are resolved by his grace to live as is fitting for his true followers are welcome at his table.”

Explanatory Notes:

1. We understand that our Invitation does not restrict Christians who are not members of a church (or who are even unbaptized) from receiving Communion.
2. We agree that our counsel to our members is that they should not have their children receive Communion before they make a confession of faith.

3. We approve this as the more desirable pastoral approach to the complex range of backgrounds and situations to which our Invitation needs to respond."

3. Should Infant Dedication Be Allowed When Parents Do Not Accept Infant Baptism?-

Policy of the Board of Elders University Reformed Church, East Lansing, Michigan

Concerning the Dedication of Infants.

- A. We want to carry out infant baptism with proper caution, i.e., as our Liturgy suggests, such baptism should not be performed "out of custom or superstition". Therefore, at least one parent must be a practicing Christian, and a member of our church, or a member of another church, from which we obtain permission to perform the baptism.
- B. We want to continue to teach positively the meaning of baptism, and avoid misconceptions such as "baptismal regeneration", which may become associated with infant baptism.
- C. We invite new parents who are members of our congregation to consider baptism for their children. We do not pressure them to do so, and we want to indicate a willingness to talk over with them questions which they may have about this step.
- D. If, however, a request comes for dedication of an infant, rather than a baptism, we would first want to make sure that there has been sufficient opportunity to talk with the parents about the Reformed Church's understanding of the meaning of infant baptism, and to lovingly challenge such parents to consider the Biblical basis for this practice. Once we were satisfied, however, that such parents had given consideration to that point of view, and continue to desire to have a dedication service instead, we would be willing to comply with their request. Our grounds for doing so are the hope that we are assisting to some degree the parents in their intention to depend on God and His grace in their lives and their children's lives, and that it would be better for us to assist them in this way, if the opportunity is available, rather than miss such an opportunity entirely.
- E. We will not, however, seek out parents in the spirit of initially offering a choice between an infant baptism and an infant dedication. Our concern is that parents should avail themselves of the Sacrament of Baptism. Only when we know that the door seems to be closed would we want to explore an infant dedication."

On my last Sunday to baptize an infant before my retirement I baptized Dan Vander Sloot,

but also dedicated Marco De Leon. (The elders have since decided they would no longer consider requests for infant dedication.)

There were also elders and deacons whose children had not been baptized. Since office holders in the RCA are not required to subscribe to the three doctrinal standards of the RCA, men who were not hostile to or agitated against infant baptism became faithful elders and deacons, although their children were not baptized.

URC has always taught that infant baptism is not, in our view, linked with **baptismal regeneration**. But it also does not support **presumptive regeneration**, a Dutch doctrine, required of Christian Reformed office holders from 1906- 1962. The CRC Synod had taught:

"And finally, in regard to the fourth point, **presumptive regeneration**, Synod declares:

that according to the Confession of our Churches the seed of the covenant, by virtue of the promise of God, must be held to be regenerated and sanctified in Christ, until upon growing up they should manifest the contrary in their way of life or in doctrine;

that it is, however, less correct to say that baptism is administered to the children of believers on the ground of their presumed regeneration, since the ground of baptism is found in the command and promise of God;

that, furthermore, the judgment of charity with which the Church regards the seed of the covenant as regenerated, does not at all imply that each child is actually born again, seeing that God's Word teaches that they are not all Israel that are of Israel, and of Isaac it is said: in him shall thy seed be called (Rom. 9:6,7), so that it is imperative in the preaching constantly to urge earnest self-examination, since only he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

4. How Do We Deal with Spiritual Gifts?

This wasn't usually a direct question. Harder questions were how to deal with people and groups.

There have been a number of groups which attracted people from URC and we had to respond to their teaching and their emphases. For instance: one group, the Children of God, was clearly teaching false doctrine and an immoral lifestyle- but that was not clear for some time.

Some groups had broken away from groups which had broken away, etc. They were clearly

schismatic, and would have nothing to do with us

Some groups had heavy patterns of authority and control and really functioned as a church, though they might deny that.

Some groups equated tongue speaking with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In the "Spirit Alive" weekends we had a balanced emphasis on the Holy Spirit and lay ministry, which benefited our church and, in turn, many of our people who went on teams to minister in other congregations.

Teaching about the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit, and a Spiritual Gifts Survey, were part of our New Members Classes. Individuals were encouraged to know and practice their spiritual gifts.

PART SIXTEEN: Staff During My Years as Pastor- Fifteen in all, not counting some wonderful Secretaries and Building Managers

Paul Hostetter- He and his wife Winifred met at Wheaton. She went on to get a Ph.D. in Classics at the University of Illinois. He did study after seminary at the Kennedy School of Missions. They went as missionaries from the RCA to Sudan, learning the tribal language of South Sudan, and doing linguistics work. When the government expelled all missionaries, they went to Pakistan, learned Urdu, and served one five year term. On furlough Winifred was diagnosed with cancer. With her ill they came to East Lansing in 1967 for grad work for Paul, and he worked with international students through URC for a year and a half. Winifred died here, and Paul took a call to the Reformed Church in Midland, Michigan.

Dorothy Clark was a Ph.D. student in education at MSU who had been a classmate of my wife Joan at Moody and then an InterVarsity staff friend of both of us. She was in URC from the beginning. Paul began to date her after he moved to Midland, and later I performed their wedding. His three teenage daughters were bridesmaids.

When the girls were out of high school Paul and Dorothy went to Chiapas State, in southern Mexico, to teach at the Bible school. They learned Spanish and an Indian language. Eventually, they came back to teach missions at Kuyper College.

Paul is the only person I have known who was a missionary on three continents, learning more than five new languages along the way.

Corwin Smidt- 1968- 1969, Funded by "Adventure in Mission", an RCA program for one-year volunteers. He met his wife Marilyn in our church, and became a long-time professor of political science and researcher on the faculty of Calvin College.

Stephen Herwaldt- also a one year AIM volunteer, 1972-73. One of eight Herwaldt siblings from Flint, six of whom came to MSU/URC, along with two cousins. The oldest

brother, Fred, is now with the Lord. Stephen and three sisters are still in the Lansing area.

Fred Herwaldt- I met Fred when I came to MSU, and we became good friends during his years at MSU. He met his wife, Paula, at MSU, and married her after starting seminary. He studied at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and worked in the summers on the staff of our Summer Training Program for students. When Fred finished seminary in 1973 we called him to be our associate pastor, and he was here for four years in that position. Fred was a pastor in upstate New York and then went to Lincoln Park, New Jersey, where he served from 1984 until he died of cancer in 2007.

John Nyitray- He was here with his wife Maria for a year as a seminary intern from Western Seminary, 1980-81. He went on InterVarsity staff in New Jersey, his home state, and is now an RCA pastor in the Holland, MI area.

Rich Winton- He was an engineer from Cincinnati who wanted experience in church ministry. He came for a year as an intern. He met Eva, his wife to be, in our congregation, and went on to Trinity Seminary.

Four women staff members came to work with University Women, and Single Working Women, beginning in 1970. Each was here for three years.

Joyce Friesen- Just out of the Univ. of California at Santa Barbara. Daughter of a long-time InterVarsity staff leader. Our first woman staff member, and a hit. She left to marry Ron Rottschafer.

Kathy Lang- Mentored in Spain by InterVarsity legend Ruth Siemens, who pioneered in "tentmaking" ministry in closed countries, and published and publicized these possibilities to university students. Then Kathy went to Bethel Seminary. Left URC to get a doctorate in counseling at the Univ. of Missouri.

Gayle Barnes- from New Orleans. Studied under J.I. Packer in Bristol, and Elisabeth Eliot at Gordon-Conwell. Left to marry Gary Somers, doctoral student in philosophy in Illinois.

Bonnie MacPhee- architect graduate from the Univ. of Texas. Had worked at L'Abri in Switzerland. Left to go to grad studies at Columbia University, and work at InterVarsity's Hudson House student center in Nyack, New York.

Stu Austin- At URC 1985- 1991. Stu came to Christ at Boston College through Cru. Graduate of Gordon-Conwell Seminary. Married Ethel Anne, a classmate from Gordon-Conwell. Called to URC as Campus Minister. Joined the RCA, ordained in the RCA. U.S. Navy Reserve Chaplain. To graduate school in Arlington, Texas, then served as a pastor in PCUSA and EPC congregations.

Frank Smith- graduate of the Univ. of Virginia, attended Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Came in 1991 as Campus Pastor for six years. Wife Judy and two small

children. Returned to work in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Ben Falconer- Graduated in music from Northwestern University in 1997. Called as campus director to begin that fall. Later took seminary courses in the summers and, eventually, a full year's sabbatical to study at Trinity Seminary. He was still the campus director when I retired in 2002, but after finishing his seminary degree was ordained in the RCA, and became associate pastor, with a new campus director.

Kim Ebricht- Graduated from Hope College. Worked with the Navigators in Russia for a year, then at Moody Press. She was hired in 1999 as associate campus director, working with Ben. After two years she and Ben were married.

Jim Rairick- Graduate of Hope College. He came as a campus intern 1998 and then stayed as a campus staff worker in missions and evangelism. Married Marlaina while in East Lansing. Moved in 2002 to international student ministry staff of Horizons in Boulder, Colorado, and later to SBTS in Louisville, KY.

PART SEVENTEEN: Looking Back- Some Ways We Christians Didn't Get it Right- Now is Better?- Seven Examples

1. We lived with a divorce system that was weighted to the wealthier party (usually the man, who could afford a lawyer), had a double standard about the importance of marital faithfulness, and didn't have any built-in protections against violence toward women. "No fault divorce" isn't perfect, but is better than some of the patterns of shame and power it replaced.

2. When an unmarried woman got pregnant the expectation was that the man should "do his duty" and marry her, and she should be grateful if he would. Many bad marriages were begun on that basis. So much harder to say to a man: "We can now scientifically confirm your paternity. If you're the father I think they should get a court order so that you contribute support until that baby graduates from college. But you should not marry her, unless you are both committed to each other."

3. There was strong support for pregnant unmarried women "going away" until the baby was born, and the expectation that the baby would be "put up for adoption", and that a new mother, if a teenager, or college student, or just about anyone, shouldn't/ couldn't raise her baby on her own.

4. Christian ministers were not taught that it would be right for a woman to leave a husband who abused her physically (and "raping your wife" was considered an impossibility). So Christian women were told to "stay". There would be no justification to leave.

5. There were few legal requirements to report to the police suspected or actual child abuse. Ministers were not required to report, and for awhile some protested that it would violate pastoral confidentiality. Eventually, we learned about widespread abuse, including

by the clergy, and now ministers, teachers, social workers, police, etc., must all report suspected abuse.

6. Universities put their public relations concerns ahead of the safety of women students who were victims of sexual assault. They never wanted the bad publicity of a newspaper report, so they provided little or no support to women who were assaulted. One of the women in our church was the head resident in a women's residence hall where a freshman woman was raped, kept away all night, and finally dropped at her dorm. The first words to our head resident, by her supervisor, were "We must do everything we can to keep this from the police." That mindset is actively opposed on campuses now.

7. The Christians I grew up with who were positive about racial integration would freely add, "Of course, I don't believe in interracial marriage." It only gradually occurred to them that: it is not up to you to decide; there is no Biblical basis for such prejudice; it is a clear expression of racism.

PART EIGHTEEN: Some of My Mistakes and Regrets

When a Christian looks back over a long period of time he or she is sure to have forgotten many things which were mistakes- even sins, over the years. What was forgotten may have been dealt with before the Lord, with prayers of repentance, or it may have just have faded away, unrealized as displeasing to God. But some things remain in one's memory- sins of omission, sins of commission, and mistakes in judgment. I want to identify some of those areas.

1. I should have challenged the congregation to consider more intentionally our response to the VIET NAM WAR (1963- 1975).

What happened in URC and the U.S. during those years:

We had no one from our church serving in the Armed Forces.

The age range of our congregation was younger. In the early years of our church there was an article about us in the RCA magazine: "The Church Without Grandparents". So we had almost no men who had served in the Second World War or the Korean War, and that limited our perspective.

At first and for a long time men received draft deferments if they were in college as undergrad or grad students, if they were married, in medical or dental school, in seminary or an ordained minister.

Some of our college men came from high schools where their classmates who didn't go to college were drafted, including a disproportionate number of soldiers of color.

Here in Michigan it was considered fairly easy to leave the country to stay in Canada, but very uncertain about coming back.

There were deferments for Conscientious Objectors, but some draft boards would not support a man's claim to CO status if his denomination was not officially pacifist. (Some non-pacifist denominations, like the RCA, might support COs, but if a denomination or local congregation would not verify that a CO position was possible in their church, a deferment would probably not be granted.)

CO status required convictions arising from a supporting church. Therefore, agnostics or those who were not theists could not claim CO status.

CO status was limited to those who objected to all wars, not just the Viet Nam War, or to those wars which were perceived to not qualify as a "just war".

The punishment for resisting the draft varied wildly. One man told me his lawyer said, "Pray that you get Judge Green, and not Judge Jones. Green will give you parole, and Jones could send you to prison for fifteen years."

Some men went to seminary who had no intention of going into the ministry. I knew two men like that, one a pastor's son.

The DRAFT LOTTERY, begun in December, 1969, upended the future for hundreds of thousands of men. Many felt there was no reason to stay in school. They expected to be drafted before the year was out. Others found a sharp decrease in motivation to stay in school, since they knew they wouldn't be drafted. Over the next several years the numbers shifted, so eventually the majority of undergrads in universities were women.

What happened for me:

My brother was an Army doctor, doing a residency at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C. He had a wife and 3 children.

He and his family were close friends of another army doctor at Walter Reed, with 5 children. He was killed in Viet Nam before my brother got there. The picture of his long funeral cortege to Arlington Cemetery was in *Look* magazine.

My brother was sent to Viet Nam in 1967-68, which overlapped with the Viet Cong's Tet Offensive. It began in Jan.- Feb. 1968, a turning point in the war.

My father was a World War II veteran, and a school teacher in Chicago, not a Christian or churchgoer, who became increasingly distraught during my brother's year in Viet Nam.

My father had heart problems, but kept teaching in Chicago, spending summers and holidays in Keithsburg, Illinois, where my parents had a cabin on the Mississippi River. One weekend (in about 1970) Japanese-American teenagers went door to door to tell the neighbors in Chicago that a Japanese-American church had re-located in their neighborhood, with a Japanese service at 11:00 and an English service at 9:30. My parents visited, and my mother took a friend from work- a Japanese war bride married to an

American. The part-time pastor for the English congregation was an engineer at Bell and Howell, who helped out churches not ready for a full-time pastor. My dad asked him lots of questions, and the pastor gave him Scripture references and articles, and they talked a lot. After a year or so the engineer had to step down because of health problems. The next part-time pastor was a young student from India at Wheaton Grad School. My parents loved him too. During that period my father placed his life in the hands of Christ as his Savior. I had some wonderful letters from him, which we lost in our house fire. When he died unexpectedly at Keithsburg in March of 1973 the church van came there from Chicago, loaded with Japanese folks, and the pastor from India conducted the funeral.

2. I should have encouraged our congregation to consider how "loving our neighbor" applied to EFFORTS TO DESEGREGATE THE LANSING PUBLIC SCHOOLS, beginning in 1972

"The Federal Court record:

The record shows that as early as 1964 the Lansing Board of Education became concerned because certain elementary schools in that system were in the process of becoming segregated. During the ensuing years certain study groups and ad hoc committees were appointed to study the problem and to make reports to the Board of Education. These reports are summarized in some detail in the preliminary injunction issued by District Judge Noel P. Fox in the present case. Based in part on the reports of such studies and after numerous public hearings and extensive public debate, the Lansing Board of Education on June 19, 1972 adopted a desegregation plan, commonly known as the "Cluster Plan," involving students in grades 3 through 6 in 13 of Lansing's 50 elementary schools. This plan does not involve high schools or junior high schools.

The "Cluster Plan" met with public opposition resulting in a recall election directed against the five members of the Board of Education who supported it. All five members of the Board who voted for the "Cluster Plan" were recalled.

Five new Board members were elected in January, 1973. At the first regularly scheduled meeting of the Board as reconstituted, the "Cluster Plan" was rescinded effective at the end of the 1972-73 school year. The District Court found that this rescission would have the effect of reassigning many Lansing elementary students back to their previously segregated schools."

People sometimes did not realize how many northern cities had schools that, by carefully drawn boundaries, segregated some, if not all schools. The federal courts were bound to consider whether the existence of predominately black or predominately white schools had been caused by governmental (usually local school board) actions.

The court found that the white school board had taken actions to make the boundaries of some elementary schools such that the schools would be predominately black or white.

The school board, faced with answering the federal court, had newly elected members, including Hortense Canady (1927-2010), the first African-American member of the Lansing

Board of Education. They adopted the cluster plan for some of the Lansing grade schools. Opposition was organized and all who voted for the cluster pan were recalled, including Mrs. Canady. Their replacements after the recall wanted to fight any change in the status quo, and their leader was a prominent layman in a large fundamentalist church in Lansing. The new board spent several hundred thousands of taxpayers' dollars, and prolonged their resistance to desegregation for several years, until the court ordered the original "Cluster Plan" to be implemented.

It was an explosive time, and there was not much support for the recalled board's position, but there should have been more.

3. I was impressed by the writings of the "**Church Growth Movement**" with its emphasis on "**homogeneous unit groups**". This is reflected in the classes I took and the dissertation I wrote for my Doctor of Ministry degree at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, 1984. In spite of the commendable emphasis on evangelism **the effort to concentrate on a specific, "homogeneous" population is short-sided and un-Biblical.**

URC, because of our homogeneity, has always had to contend with certain strengths, which can become spiritual weaknesses:

A. For a long time we were not a comfortable place for older and retired adults ("the church without grandparents").

B. We have always been less effective in reaching and keeping adults who did not go to college. In some surveys over the years about 95% of our people over 25 years old had gone to college (not all graduated). This hinders us in reaching those who don't go to college, factory workers, men from the City Rescue Mission, teenagers who don't go to college after high school, the unemployed, and refugees.

C. We have been interested in international students, but not so much in refugees, immigrants, undocumented aliens, people of color.

D. In the fall of 2001 we put a schools census summary in the bulletin and prayed for the schools and staff in the evening service. We had a total of 110 students, with six home schoolers. We had 55 high school students, including 23 seniors, in 15 high schools, and one home schooler. We had 24 public school staff and teachers. At MSU we had 29 graduating seniors, and in the MSU College of Education, 12 internship students, going on to the fifth year of their program.

The number of education majors, internship students, and public school staff and students have all had a marked decrease since that census. We have perhaps become more focused on home school students, since they have become the majority of our church students in the last ten years, and public school students and staff may be less affirmed.

E. We have not always realized that our church culture is not "the norm". No congregation's culture is the norm. Christian sub-cultures are quite diverse in:

Worship

Music

Ministries of prayer.

Variety in who is asked to preach

Multi- ethnic background

Leadership by non-paid staff

Staff with informal, non-academic training

F. We can be perceived as very academic- writing things up, discussing wordings, focusing on policies, "university-ish".

4. Our **ministry to the LGBT community has been slow and halting**, not sustained, with changing emphases and resources, a cause for mild embarrassment. At various times we have had:

a. Some interest in Christian ministries that reported immediate change for gay and lesbian people, only to find later that more careful Christian research reports little overnight change, or disappearance of all temptation.

b. Some folks have used materials from Leanne Payne (1933-2015), based on her theories about the healing of past parental conflicts, especially of males with their fathers.

c. Some were supporters of Dr. Joseph Nicolosi's "reparative therapy".

d. We sponsored a conference with David Kyle Foster.

e. Some were influenced by "ex-gay" ministries like Exodus, which changed its mission in 2012, before shutting down entirely.

f. We sponsored a ministry for a time, accountable to URC's Board of Elders, but that connection was finally severed due to lack of accountability.

g. As time passed, more people in our church became aware that they had relatives, co-workers, and friends who were gay, with the church still largely unsure about ministry.

5. **I encouraged too many guys to go to seminary.** In the early years I encouraged most any sincere young Christian student to consider seminary. I worked with a lot of seminary students through the RCA, but never found a good way to confirm that the gifts

and calling of God were present. (I don't believe that written and verbal exams are sufficient to provide confirmation.) I knew about TEE (Theological Education by Extension) in the Two-Thirds World, but never saw it taken seriously in the U.S.

Later, I was profoundly influenced by the accuracy and wisdom of this article by a veteran RCA missionary to Mexico, and a seminary graduate:

From "**The Ladder System – How to Select and Train a Minister**," by veteran R.C.A. missionary to Chiapas state, in southern Mexico, Rev. J. Samuel Hofman, The Church Herald, May 19, 1972.

"I like the way the Tzeltals choose their ministers. First of all, they only choose a minister when there is a need for one—and they choose a man to fit that particular vacant spot. The man they choose is always an experienced elder of the church who has shown real stability and the necessary spiritual gifts during his years of service in the church.

I also like the way they train their ministers. They use a method called the "ladder system", the same method they have always used in selecting and training their tribal leaders. A promising young man is given a lowly job at the bottom of the ladder. If he fulfills his job well, he is later allowed to take a higher position. Thus the cream rises to the top, and those who lack the qualities of leadership are screened out.

The Tzeltal Church now reflects this same system of leadership selection and training. If the elders spot a promising young married man, they will encourage him to come to the weekly preaching class, which is taught by an elder or the minister. Assignments to preaching locations are made immediately following the class; and after some months of attending the class, the young man is urged to try his wings and preach in some small chapel. If he shows the gifts and dedication desired, he eventually becomes one of the regular preachers and is given an assignment every week.

If he develops and matures spiritually, the consistory will later choose him to be a deacon or elder, with the people's approval. After serving as an elder for several years and the need for another ordained minister arises, he may be chosen by the consistory to be their minister, again with the people's approval.

This system has a great deal that ours does not. In the Reformed Church in America the call to the ministry has become a personal call and decision, about which the consistory and God's people have very little to say. The "call" comes very early in life, so the young man has not had the opportunity to demonstrate or develop his spiritual gifts. Often the call and decision to enter the ministry are made even before he is married, so there is no assurance that his future wife will be a helpful and effective minister's wife. (The Tzeltals always take a good look at a man's wife and home life before they make him a deacon or elder.)

Consequently, there are some young men in the seminaries and in the ministry in the United States who should not be there, men who are eager to serve the Lord, but who really do not have the gifts for the work of the ministry. But by the time they discover that fact it is usually too late, since they are already in the ministry, from which there is no easy way out.

There are many in the seminaries who are not answering a personal call into God's service, but who are still searching spiritually and have come to the seminary hoping to find God and themselves. Others do not feel ready to enter a competitive, fast-moving world and have delayed the traumatic moment for three more years by entering this safe, monastic haven. Yet all of these young men, after three years of study, are considered qualified and eligible to be ministers in our churches. And the church feels a strong obligation to find places of service for each graduate.

Unfortunately, the training they receive in the seminary often does not adequately equip the students for the work of the ministry. Seminary professors have traditionally been scholars rather than pastors or evangelists; and the seminary curriculum has always been heavy on the theoretical side and woefully weak on the practical side. The assumption that every minister has to be a theologian, a language expert, and a scholar is ridiculous; and yet this is the reigning assumption and the basic product of most denominational seminaries. The seminary course offers a heavy diet of highly indigestible material, rather than the development of an individual's spiritual gifts.

On the other hand, those who responded to their call to the ministry as young men and went directly through the high school-college-seminary channel have never really lived in the secular world. This plagues them for years- their preaching, teaching, and counseling may lack relevance and reality because they do not know the world that their people live in. Add to this their inexperience in church affairs, having never served on a consistory and having never done or observed any pastoral work, and it is a wonder that our failures are not more numerous and serious.

Also, these men are often haunted by the knowledge that their decision was made before they had tried any alternative. A personal call is always open to suspicion, even on the part of the individual who answered the call. Other people can also add to the minister's insecurity by insinuating that he is a minister only because he could not have "made it" in any other occupation."

Sam Hoffman's challenge brings me to a Biblical explanation of the pastor's role:

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. . . ." (Ephesians 4:11,12, NIV)

A man can't equip others for what he doesn't do,
and he isn't supposed to be the only one doing it,
and he is not to always be in charge.

He could be called a kind of "playing coach".

A pastor I much admire, Rev. Kevin Harney, formerly of Corinth Reformed Church, Byron Center, MI, systematically worked with all ministries in the church to see how they could communicate the gospel to unbelievers. He took a special assignment for several

years of coming along side of lay leaders and staff in a large RCA church in Dyer, Indiana, and at Central Wesleyan in Holland, MI, doing the same "equipping for evangelism" of the lay leaders, which he had done at Corinth Reformed Church, while also preaching on Sunday nights at Grand Valley State University in Allendale.

It is tempting to assume that paid staff will carry out the church's evangelism, or it will be accomplished through bringing visitors to church.

PART NINETEEN: Personal Events Through the Years- Fifteen in All

1. My ordination was September 24, 1966, just before we began services in October. The first service was on Sunday, October 2, 1966.
2. That first winter was unusual. I went home over Christmas to visit my parents in Chicago. I came down with hepatitis on Christmas Eve, but my brother, an army doctor, was there and got me a prescription for pain. The day after Christmas I went into the hospital for a week. Recovery was slow- I was jaundiced and very tired for weeks. I had two friends from Illinois visiting in January when MSU had its heaviest snowstorm ever, which closed the school for the first time and my visitors were snowbound. Later we learned there were an unusual number of hepatitis cases in December, but we had all left East Lansing for the vacation, and the numbers weren't known for awhile
3. Joan and I first met when I joined the InterVarsity staff in Chicago in 1962, and she was completing a Master's in New Testament at Wheaton Graduate School. She joined InterVarsity staff and served for eight years in the Chicago area. So we were on the same staff team until I moved to Michigan. Joan and I were married in May of 1970, in the evening service at URC, in the Alumni Memorial Chapel. I had always thought a Sunday evening worship service would be a good thing. Only years later did I realize I was really selfish- friends were driving through the night to get back to jobs and school in Illinois and Iowa on Monday.
4. Our son John was born in August 1972, three weeks early. He was carried to the evening service, in the rented fraternity house, just a few weeks later. He graduated from MSU and Cooley Law School, works in Lansing and attends an evangelical church in Lansing.
5. When we were first married we were living in Paul Hostteter's house on Division Street in East Lansing, which the church had rented as my home and an office. When the Hostteter's decided to sell we found a home to rent, and later buy, at 231 Oakhill, in a student neighborhood, next to a fraternity house, with the back yard sloping down to Valley Court Park. We were about three blocks from MSU. It was a big house on a small lot, and turned out to be excellent for hospitality. We enjoyed housing many people in need.
6. Over the years we lost all four of our parents, and other good friends and mentors.
7. I had a stroke on August 2, 2000, which left my left side paralyzed. I started on physical therapy, and didn't get back to church until late October. We had terrific support from our

congregation.

8. I retired in August 2002, after 36 years. We have remained active in URC.

9. For several years before and after my retirement I was involved in a committee of the Synod of the Great Lakes of the RCA to draft and implement a proposal for accrediting "Commissioned Pastors". This is a track separate from the seminary degree for finding, training and placing those gifted in ministry. This was one of my most satisfying assignments, to see a non-seminary model developed and confirmed.

10. The year 2005 was intense. I attended the trial of Dr. Norman Kansfield in Schenectady, New York in June. In a routine stress test in late June I was found to have serious heart blockage. In July I had quadruple heart bypass surgery, followed by physical therapy. In October our house burned, and was taken down in January. The insurance company housed us in a motel and then a town house. We moved in February to our present house, on Bolley Drive in Lansing, which is smaller and one floor. We had incredible help from our friends during the months before we got in to our new home.

11. From July 2005- January 2011 I was a member and then chairman of URC's Missions Committee, and began to put out a newsletter, "URC Missions Update".

12. Since leaving the Missions Committee I've begun putting out my own newsletter, "Windows on the World", which goes out about a half a dozen times a year to friends in the Lansing area, missionaries, and other friends around the country.

13. In 2012 the church sold to MSU its building on Hagedorn Road, across from the eastern boundary of MSU, and purchased a building originally built as a church, but owned then by the East Lansing school system. It is about 2 miles north of MSU.

14. Several years ago I was diagnosed with spasmodic dysphonia, a tightening of the muscles around the vocal chords, which leads to tightened, raspy speech. The treatment is by botox shots in the muscles, with the effect still inconclusive.

15. In March 2015 the Great Lakes City Classis voted to transfer URC to the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). I had written background papers for my classis analyzing and critiquing the move. The papers are on my web site, but were not presented in the congregation. In September 2015 the transfer became official. By the transfer Joan and I became PCA members, but I also remain an ordained pastor in the RCA. The congregation's name was not changed.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY