**How ethical are the ministers?**

**TM/UMR looks into 'clerical-collar crimes' in the church**

EDITOR'S NOTE: Ministerial ethics have come under fire recently as proposals to ordain women and lay people to the ministry. Ministerial qualities such as truthfulness and authenticity are at the heart of the ordination process.

First in a series

most vulnerable to unethical behavior because the local parish pastor has the least formal accountability structure, according to Dr. Larry Snow, Poultneyville, N.Y. He holds a Ph.D. in ethics and has been chairman of the New York conference board of ministry for eight years in addition to being a local pastor.

"Once a minister becomes a member of a conference, he/ she can continue to coast from one place to another and," he admitted, "there is the 'Peter Principle' at work — of persons being promoted to the level of their own incompetence — the pressure they can't 'cut it' anywhere."

Dr. Snow said the funds for continuing education provided through the denominational Education Funds are helping people gain professional skills. But, participation is self-starting, which means the highly motivated ministers are those doing those in troublesome pressure situations. But the most ineffective clergy may never bother because they know they will still have a job.

One solution to this problem is being proposed to the General Conference by the California-Nevada Conference. It reflects that the ministers have a 5-10 year "tenure term," instead of life tenure. A minister would be thoroughly evaluated professionally at the end of each term before being recommended for readmission to the conference.

"Gold-bricking"

One of John Wesley's directions to his preachers was "Never be triflingly employed, do not, the minister is particularly vulnerable on this point," Dr. Thornburg said, "no one can judge for a local pastor spending their time properly. No one tells the minister what percentage of time should be allocated to each area of church life, study, calling, worship preparation or whatever."

"Gold-bricking" is a term used to describe the act of seeking new positions in the church in order to avoid scrutiny of one's own performance.

Closely related to the possible misuse of time are uncertainties about what the minister's role is supposed to be, Dr. Thornburg said. No longer prophet, pioneer or blue-nosed conscience of the community as in former eras, the pastor is now a "marketing expert" like the modern educator or counselor.

"The pastor today," Dr. Thornburg's opinion, is "the last great leader, the one trying to weld together the community. A minister has to feel comfortable saying, 'I'm a pastor' today or strain develop between what he feels like ministering and what he thinks he is supposed to look like."

Bishops unanimously support itinerancy

**TM/UMR Staff Special**

DALLAS — The traditional United Methodist (Wesleyan) practice of periodically moving ministers from one church to another and procedures for making those moves were set down and supported here Jan. 14 by the denominational Education Funds, the Kiplinger Foundation and the Rockefeller grant, among others.

In what the bishops described as "an extraordinary consensus on appointment practices," they called for the "abolishment of the consultative process in fixing appointments" through "a collective undertaking with the local church through its pastor-parish relations committee, the pastor and pastoral family, the district superintendent and the bishop."

The statements came in a press release following the 3-day consultation, which was closed to the public.

The press release said all 45 active bishops were "unanimously and strongly in support of the itinerant tradition" of the church and that "we are determined to go forward with all partners making appointments."

"Consultation" was defined as a "continuous effort to assess the needs of the church community and growing effectiveness of the pastors so that the cabinet may be accurately advised before the bishop fixes the appointments."

Legislation was first written into the "Discipline" in 1972 saying the bishop shall appoint after consultation with the district superintendent and the local church pastor-parish committee. Before 1972, consultation with only the district superintendents was required.

The special meeting here was initiated by a district superintendent Subcommittee on the subject of the church's mission and leadership.

The purpose of the meeting was to examine the current system of appointments and to report to the General Conference on the findings.

Local church fights crime through awards program

By PAT SITES

Staff Writer

MIAMI — Good police-community relations not only help combat crime. They also help combat citizens' fear of crime.

That's the thinking behind a regular program of police service awards now being offered in Miami. Here, says the Rev. John Moore, the church is "an ideal agency for combating crime."

The program actually came about, he says, when First Church members became "overly fearful" of crime in the downtown Miami area where the church is located.

"There were muggings in the area. Members of our congregation were fearful. Our church drew much-needed congregation appreciation. And they show our people that the police are here and doing a good job."

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