

HISTORY OF NORTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, 1967-1992

By Laura White

Introduction

In the hundred-year legendary history of the North Church congregation, the five-year era of 1967 to 1975 out-shone most others in achievement and progress. From then on, the demise of our inspirational output exactly paralleled the inspirational demise of Berkeley. At the resignation of the Revd Robert Tull, we hired highly qualified ministers, including a former minister, Hubert Dukes, who served as an interim pastor; Newton Holder from England, whom we engaged for two years; and finally the Revd Harvey Swanson, A Shining Light For All. Although enjoying many volunteer services by our members, we could not put enough fingers in the dyke to stem the flood of evil that drowned the faithful voices of the North Church pilgrims, as well as of most other inspirational elements in Berkeley.

1967

Nanci Miller led as chairman of our Christian Education Committee, serving children from Nursery School to 8th grade. We established a youth group called the Leyden Club and an adult series that quickly grew to 25.

We treasured and promoted our music department, a vital force under Judith Breneman, who also served as organist/choir director and who arranged three choirs. They produced a Christmas play written by Nanci Miller and enacted by the children and members of the Leyden Club youth group. The candlelight service (one remaining tradition) occurred on the front steps and finished the year with prayers for peace.

1968

Celebrated events happened in these years. Resigning the membership of the United Church of Christ in 1968, we found our real home in The National Association of Congregational Churches. Soon we became the leading church in the Bay Area that operated as a truly Congregational Christian Church.

Harold Martin served as a first leader to a new Cub Scout Pack, supplementing our already existing Troop #37. Ed Caine, John Plater, John Pastorino & Gordon Andrews were our Scout Committee. Then we lost our choir director who resigned for the more prestigious job of directing the San Francisco Boys' Chorus.

Margaret Keeler arrived and served a short season as Director of Religious Education, followed by Jan Caine, who delegated the Adult Education program to the Christian Education Committee. Changing their program to the National Association's David Cook agenda, she stimulated the Leyden Club with recreational activities, as well as with Church involvements.

The Women's Fellowship under the presidency of Iva Pastorino, gave 96 new garments and many other things to the Needlework Guild for Church World Service, donating 240 pounds of used clothing to be distributed where needed. The group also established the tradition of an annual fundraising bazaar and turkey dinner.

For our celebrated outreach program, one facet began with Alvin Hamre's leadership in 1968 when we "sistered" with the First Samoan Congregational Church of San Francisco, hosting them at a Sunday worship service and luncheon when 225 Christians broke bread together. In November, 80 of the Berkeley Congregation journeyed to San Francisco and enjoyed a worship service and dining with their Samoan friends. Overwhelmed by their generosity, the Berkeleyans went home with their arms full of roast pig, chicken, fresh pineapple and other delicacies. Good will prevailed along with an unforgettable memory,

1969

At the beginning of 1969, the Revd Holder returned to England. Then in the Fall we welcomed the Revd Harvey Swanson as our new pastor and Alexander Jackson as our new organist.

Church members banded together then and bought a parsonage at 267 Amherst Ave., Kensington, for \$28,500. Lending the church funds to make the purchase, fourteen families put their money and trust in the church. Volunteers added 300 man-hours of painting, cleaning, carpentry, and "digging" in both house and garden, supervised by Ross and David Cummings.

Like President Bush, Harvey had a vegetable bias, not against broccoli but against artichokes. So the frugal workers dug these up and gave them to Laura White, who removed them to her property in Vacaville and enjoyed their harvest for 20 years.

For many years, the Christian Education Committee kept its active membership and did comparative studies for adults in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism; socialized in square and round dancing socials for all ages, potluck suppers, and group suppers in private homes; sponsored a member of the youth group (the Leyden Club) to attend a National Association meeting; and provided Bibles for children leaving the 2nd grade.

Church attendance had remained at an average of 80 people during Rev. Holder's stay but quickly jumped to 100 after 4 months of listening to Harvey Swanson.

In May, the California Association of Congregational Churches officially received us into their fellowship.

In June delegate Laura White & William Youngman, (alternate), attended a meeting of the National Association at Grand Rapids, Michigan and were much impressed by the good will and efficiency there. They watched with pride as their church was admitted officially into the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches.

The Finance Committee established a "return to England" fund for the Holders and the Social Committee organized a farewell party for them. Response was overwhelming from the parishioners, who admired and respected this fine couple and considered them a great plus in the history of North Church.

1970

Under the leadership of Ed Caine, Christian Education made great strides with children from primary to college. The younger Sunday School children spent the first half hour in the Babcock Room for assembly and worship service and a special movie with a moral lesson. Representing the youth of North Church, Margaret Hipkiss attended a meeting of the National Association at Tauton, Massachusetts. On returning, and inspired by the conference, she started the (Heritage of Christian Endeavor for college students) H.O.P.E. group.

Members of the Christian Education committee also strongly supported our Boy Scout Troop #37 and led them into their Eagle Scout Awards. In June of that year, the distinguished General William Dean, U.S.A. retired, presented this highest rank in Scouting to 9 scouts, 5 of which were members of the Leyden Club.

Celebrating the 350th anniversary of the Pilgrim landing, Congregationalists felt 1970 a special year for them, because they originally took part in the separatist movement to America. North Church Congregationalists marked the occasion in several special ways:

Robert Hipkiss renovated the outdoor bulletin board with the N.A.C.C.C. "Mayflower" emblem. Member Grace Long (a descendant of the famous Pilgrim, William Brewster) and Laura White, came dressed in costume for the premier of Laura's film "The Pilgrim Story."

By request of the National Association, Laura White served as official photographer for the National Association on their pilgrimage to Europe in June. They made contact with Congregational churches in England and Holland and presented them with medals honoring the occasion. Churches here conducted celebrations even more elaborate than in America.

"Forefathers' Sunday" – the week before Thanksgiving, a happenstance celebration marked the birth of a new tradition for North Church: Laura White brought a 40-lb. squash or pumpkin (seeds from Australia) that had grown in her parents' yard in Vacaville. She shared this giant with all members present at a special coffee hour, while she took movies of the procedure. John Pastorino, with a big knife and a special flair, performed the slicing while others placed pumpkin and seeds in plastic bags. They took the seeds home, planted them, and were asked to return their harvest the following year. This tradition continued and in the years which followed John Pastorino and Paul Higley brought in the most abundant crops.

Mrs. Edgar Altermatt, as head of the Women's Fellowship, conducted evening as well as daytime meetings. They made many contributions, nationally as well as locally, as did the Social Service Committee under Ethel Luce.

Alexander Jackson took charge of the annual music extravaganza. Aided by an orchestra and adding performers from other churches, he presented "The Messiah." In a show-stopping success, the singers made the rafters ring with their joyous hallelujahs. Probably they sang at the zenith of our church energy. But even those beautiful, joyful sounds could not overcome the strident tones of anarchy that started to proliferate in the city of Berkeley.

Efficient finance chairman, John Pastorino, happily reported that 1970 had ended “in the black.”

1971

Our enthusiastic minister opened his 1971 report stating he felt excited about the opportunity that North Church might play in fighting the front line Berkeley battle against the forces of atheism and hate that threatened the Christian and American way of life. He urged all of us to redouble our efforts in combating these forces, first by strengthening our church school and making our motto, “I will bring one new member into our church in 1972.”

Members of the church school responded well in all departments with Margaret Hardy and Laura White directing the younger children; David Cummings over the Leyden Club; and Ed Caine and Jean Hipkiss instructing the College Age Plymouth Inquirers (H.O.P.E.)

At the National Association meeting in Bowling Green, Ohio, they presented Laura White's film, “The Pilgrim Story” as part of the program. Laura left the film so they could place it in the Missions Library and make it available to all Association churches.

Harvey organized the Pastor's Coffee Club for men. Members met every Sunday at 9:00 a.m. Soon they changed their name to “Men's Forum.” Following Harvey, Harry Ross led the group. Then the late Dr. Lewis Taylor took over. In 1971, Edward Vanek assumed the leadership and still leads it in 1992.

We gave a warm welcome party for the 32 new members who joined the church in 1971, mostly through the efforts of our minister's promotion.

1972

Our Moderator, John Azer, stated 1972 provided continued progress in our church's mission to bring sanity, decency, and God, back to Berkeley. “Under the inspiring guidance of our pastor, Harvey Swanson, our church showed a growing influence in the community; the publishing and distribution of 19 of Revd Swanson's sermons that elicited considerable comment in the local press and in surrounding areas; his election as Commander of the Berkeley American Legion Post, and his leadership activities in civic organizations similar to the Berkeley Concerned Citizens.”

Our Music Committee also stayed “up-front” in our march for progress under the adept fingers of Mr. Alexander Jackson who led the choir and congregation, supported by new sounds coming from the expanded capabilities of our fine organ. In the final months of 1972, Alexander Jackson left for a larger church in Oakland, but we soon replaced him with a highly talented young musician, Allan Blasdale.

For Christian Education, 1972 proved a year of progress and experimentation, with a total attendance greater than three years before when we hit our record of 183 children and young people. This proved to be the golden year of our Church School. Even during the

summer our classes continued and there was such enthusiasm that we were able to develop a number of exciting projects. For example:

- A Sunday School weekly newsletter was written by our busy church secretary, Velma Andrews, and mailed to every child;
- For the first time in 4 years we were able to enjoy a junior choir;
- We supplemented the lesson themes for the 5th and 6th grades with Arts and crafts.
- During this time an unusual educational experience happened under the able direction of Susan Talmadge, who asked her pupils to read directly from the Bible. She then translated the same text from the original in Greek and Hebrew, and they learned to understand the deviations in meaning. She then went on to help them compare the teachings of Jesus with those of Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, and Aristotle. She even taught them to write the Greek alphabet.
- On the Sunday before Christmas, in place of the sermon in the worship service, members of the Sunday School produced a play called "The Littlest Angel." It was narrated and acted entirely by the children, and the major credit went to Martha McDonald who wrote the script and directed the play. It increased attendance, gave the children new joy in working together, and delighted the congregation with the natural spontaneity of the children.

If we were to give an Oscar for stamina, Gregory Pease, the only full-time teacher for the entire year, who taught 3rd and 4th grades, should certainly receive it.

However, in spite of hiring in the Fall, David Borglum, a graduate of the Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington to serve as Sunday School Superintendant, we never again equaled the magic of the school year of 1972.

Under David Cummings, (until his marriage in November), and then Jean Hipkiss, the Leyden Club continued to thrive. So did the Plymouth Inquirers under the direction of Ed Caine. Both groups combined serious discussions (drugs, politics, teenage problems, etc.) with recreation, and performed a great deal of service to the church and community (putting on and helping with dinners and Christmas Carols in convalescent homes).

During the year our Social Committee busied themselves with 5 pot-luck suppers and 14 after-church coffee hours. The co-chairs were Ross and Marjorie Cummings and John and Iva Pastorino.

1973

Our Moderator, Capt. John Azer, reported another very good year, especially in the increasing number of visitors who came to hear our pastor's inspiring sermons. This year we added 20 new folk to our membership.

Under the direction of Allan Blasdale, the choir expanded and improved. Their renditions aided in bringing added visitors.

Harvey, our pastor, led a well attended evening Prayer Study group, and Dr. Cleland started an increasingly popular adult Bible class late in the year.

Our Vice Moderator, Raymond Alberts, and his committee, arranged a 1973 Pictorial Directory for the entire church, and we listed 106 family photographs.

Our Women's Fellowship, under Marcia Kinney as President, enjoyed a very successful and productive year. They installed new carpeting in the Babcock Room and in the Library. They contributed \$1,000 toward the retirement loan for the parsonage as well as donating clothing and funds locally and for Church World Service. Again they put on the annual bazaar and turkey dinner with remarkable success, financially and socially. It brought shoppers and workers from distances away, creating real fellowship with all involved, both men and women. Combining service contributions socially and internationally, our church remained a vital source of good will in this area.

During this time our Scout Troup #37, headed by the able leadership of David Potter & Ralph Hansen, grew to 32 boys, but unfortunately, (possibly due to the general anti-church atmosphere in Berkeley), we began to suffer a sharp decline in attendance in the Sunday school.

Members of the Education Committee, including Patricia Pease, Jenny Wolford, Velma Andrews, Mrs. Donald Johnson, Margaret Hipkiss, and Gregory Pease made superb efforts to keep the school viable. However, in spite of the social problems in our society at the time ("God is dead," "Christianity is out," and "do your own thing"), Ed Caine and Jean Hipkiss, leading the Plymouth Inquirers, did a remarkable job with discussions and recreation in guiding these young people. Most of them did not attend worship, but our facilities and personnel provided them with a constructive atmosphere.

Climaxing the year we orchestrated our traditional potluck supper on Christmas Eve. 120 people participated. Santa came with candy canes for the children. Choir members sang a beautiful Christmas Carol concert, followed by a candlelit procession, ending with song and prayer on the front steps.

1974

In 1974 our Vice-Moderator, W. Curtis Knoll, stated, "I feel that we have a stronger congregation with more wonderful, devoted people, than ever before." Moderator Raymond J. Alberts gave special accolades to:

- Iva Pastorino, for all those hours, work-organizing, planning, and handling coffee hours, potluck suppers, and other thoroughly enjoyable events; and
- Willard Jensen, Chairman of the Property Committee, who, with the Monday morning work group, had done so much for church care and maintenance with minimum expense.

On July 3rd, at a Potluck Dinner, we entertained Ed Welty and eleven young students from the Academy of the Americas in Mexico (part of the NACCC Missions Projects) as guests. They entertained us royally with their dancing, and our Fellowship Center served as their headquarters that night as well as for breakfast and lunch the next day.

Our Annual Bazaar ended with great financial success(nearly \$500 from white elephants; \$434 from dinner; \$427 from handicrafts) -- \$2240 net! The Women's Fellowship donated \$2000 of this toward the payment for the parsonage. \$12,000 was paid on outstanding notes on the parsonage,(with a further payment of \$5000 scheduled for 1975).

We closed 1974 "in the black."

1975

As Membership Chairman Harry Ross indicated, North Congregational enjoyed a "friendly church" reputation, as our growing membership of 253 (14 new members and 200 guest signatures) proved.

Women's Fellowship President Iva Pastorino expressed her gratitude to all those who contributed to the North Church spirit of love and fellowship. Included among the services, our women provided 839 hours of work under the direction of Mrs. Mary Bayes and Mrs. David Jones. They made 134 handmade articles, 1300 price tags, and many bandages of 4" wipes for the United Voluntary Services. They also constructed 26 garments, lap robes, and decorated shoe boxes filled with gifts for the Fairmont Hospital.

Besides all that, they donated \$1000 toward the new organ console fund (our fine organ, now over 50 years old, needed constant repairs). The Evening Fellowship members, led by Mrs. John Azer, continued actively and sent \$50 to the Casa Maternal Home for Children in Italy.

Expressions of spiritual beauty and harmony, through our outstanding music, provided one of the great contributions of North Church. With such a talented organist as Allan Blasdale and 15 beautiful voices in the choir, including our own Revd Swanson with his powerful voice, and solo work by Estelle Knoll and Margaret Montgomery, as well as guest soloists, we felt indeed blessed.

North Church's history reads "always active in social service." This year's contributions followed that record. As submitted by Ethel Luce and May Kellerer, that far-away roster included such destinations as: Metlakatla, Alaska; Casa Materna, Italy; Academy of California in Tijuana, Mexico; Honduras; and Church World Service. Locally the list consisted of: Red Cross, Salvation Army, Berkeley Pantry, Allied Fellowship, Harper House, Indian Intertribal Friendship House, and the Berkeley Christmas Fund.

As a member of the Order of St. Luke, the spiritual healing order, the Revd Swanson requested a healing prayer service. So a special event of 1975 was the prayer healing service conducted by Dr. Harry Butman from the Church of the Messiah in Los Angeles. Both the lecture in the afternoon, the evening prayer and laying on of hands, brought a large attendance. We deemed them very worthy services.

Sadly, however, after the triumphs of the first half of the decade, a downward trend had set in. By the end of 1975, the Sunday School had dropped from its highpoint of 183 in 1972 to just one student, Lisa Blowers. Very reluctantly, we had to discontinue even that class.

1976 & 1977

However, in spite of local problems and the collapse of the Sunday School, the years 1976 and 1977 proved, from a financial standpoint, the best years ever, with receipts exceeding disbursements for both years.

In 1976 North Church held a special collection for the Guatemalan Relief. We also presented a generous check for \$1948.00 to the American Red Cross.

In 1977, in memory of his wife Esther, Martin Boyd started supplying beautiful begonias for the sanctuary every Sunday during their late summer blooming season. Since 1928 Martin enjoyed great fame in garden organizations for his exceptionally beautiful begonias, which he started from plants in Capitola.

The sale of a new cookbook provided a special feature of the Bazaar in 1977. Directed by Estelle Knoll and sponsored by the Women's Fellowship, its title read "Favorite Recipes."

In December of 1977, Harvey Swanson advised us of his retirement on April 1, 1978, a date he later agreed to extend to July 1. During his pastorate of nearly nine years, 176 people had joined the church, but 138 members had removed by transfer, moving, or death. This evacuation echoed the history of Berkeley. As politics injured the schools and business life in the City, so people began deserting the town by the dozen, especially those with children.

1978

Harvey Swanson resigned in the June of 1978, joining the rest of the Berkeley refugees and retiring to Rossmoor, where he soon founded a new church called the Pilgrim Congregational Church.

Following his departure, the Revd Robert Graham arrived a month later with his wife Joan and their two teenagers, Peter and Terri. In his first annual report, he stated, concerning church growth, "We have so many talented people, whom the Lord will use to bring solutions and answers, if they but let Him." He urged that each one pray; pledge and give a little more; and work, giving of time and talents.

In August the Women's Fellowship hosted and furnished refreshments for Martin Boyd's garden party. With 22 workers, these women put in 791 hours of work in making lap robes, wheel-chair bags, pillow cases, and miscellaneous articles for the Veteran's Hospital and the Red Cross. Six workers donated 2070 hours of work on knitted articles of bed socks, afghans, and shawls.

1979

In January, Bob Graham and Mary Gessart attended the church Growth Seminar in San Anselmo sponsored by the Pacific School of Religion. Mary and Bob displayed great enthusiasm regarding these meetings, and felt that more of us should make an effort to attend such seminars and discover positive views on how to keep our church vital. Several direct results came out of this session:

- A poll of members' interests,
- A Sunday morning Bible Class with illustrated movies and discussions,
- Tuesday night brainstorming sessions called "15 Reaching for 60," designed to enable us to meet the needs of our members as well providing better service to the community.

Out of the interest poll came a bus trip to the Giants' baseball game and the formation of the Shuffle and Deal group, a monthly social with 2 or 3 tables of bridge, headed by Laura White, who saw that refreshments and prizes were part of the Deal. Kenneth Kinney, our church treasurer and an expert bridge player, never missed a session.

But the continued absence of new members during 1979 prompted our Moderator, Sidney McGaw, to ask for prayers & an expanding loving service, and Bob Graham, quoting the maxim of Robert Schuller: "The church that fails to plan, plans to fail," to start a committee for long-range planning in church growth.

To stimulate more interest, the Diaconate Board, under the chairmanship of Harold Martin, invited ladies as lay leaders for the first time, and elected a woman, Patricia Hunting, as the next head of the Diaconate Board.

Held in the Fellowship Center with tables arranged like a cross, the Maundy Thursday Communion Service drew excellent attendance.

Marcia Kinney, President of the Women's Fellowship, happily reported that the Fellowship succeeded in fulfilling its purpose in worship and education; in service and giving, both locally and internationally; and in aid to programs of North Church. The highlight of the year had occurred with the Fifth Wednesday Quilt Show in May when over 50 quilts had been displayed. More than 150 people had attended, and we collected over \$200.

The Chairman of the Property Committee, Capt. John Azer, reported that by contributing their skills and labor, Willard Jensen, John Pastorino, Lester Stoner, Kenneth Kinney, Otto Enz, Bob Hunting, David Cummings, and Ed Vanek had saved us thousands of dollars.

However, in spite of all the efforts in 1979 the following year showed yet another disappointing year in growth. Membership fell from 228 in January to 219 in December, and we only gained two new members. Financially, we were unable to meet our budget and we were forced to dip into our reserves, though John Pastorino, heading the Finance Committee, made sure that after expenses we still remained solvent and active in fellowship and service.

1980

Undeterred, we made supreme efforts to correct this downward trend:

- We hired a young theological student, Steve Stanton, to attract young singles by starting an outreach program.

- We hired Kathy Rich to assist Allan Blasdale in a series on “Worship and the Arts.”
- We gave an interesting and fruitful content to our seminars, but the attendance remained disappointing.
- Eight members attended another interdenominational church Growth Seminar in San Anselmo. We implemented several direct actions from ideas at the conference:
 - * Name tags for all members.
 - * Immediate follow-through of all church visitors,
 - * The formation of the New Life Christian Singles by Martin Boyd.

This Singles group became a welcome and vigorous part of North Church activities. Martin Boyd had started it in August among the begonias in his beautiful garden. We planned special activities for each month, including a trip to Bethel Island on two houseboats in October. Membership climbed from 8 to 30 in one year!

At the 1980 Annual Meeting the Moderator Paul Higley reported his gratitude to the Property Committee with their “Monday Morning Boys” group who did everything from yardwork to making building repairs and laying carpets. He commended the New Life Christian Singles, whose members did a great deal in making life brighter and more interesting for those living alone. He also complimented the Sunday morning Men's Forum for providing interesting speakers and discussions on many thought-provoking topics.

Our Social Committee, with Iva Pastorino as Chair, gave us a very special year. They arranged 10 potluck suppers, one honoring 5 couples who celebrated 50 years of marriage. These included John and Marguerite Azer, Kenneth and Marcia Kinney, Sidney and Claire McGaw, Milton and Grace Peterson, and Harry and Esther Ross. They ordered a special cake, and presented each couple with cards and small plaques. The Golden Wedding night! A second dinner honored 12 of our members celebrating 80 years or more of age. The 12 honored guests were: Grace & William Johnson, Ethel Luce, Marjorie Cummings, Lucille Lane, Jane Compton, Martin Boyd, Rachel Moore, John Pastorino, Milton Peterson, and Helen and Paul Higley.

Lastly, this is the year we re-created the Northern California Congregational Fellowship and hosted in North Church both the meetings for April and October.

1981

In 1981 we named the church library “Taylor Memorial Library” in honor of Lewis and Ethel Taylor, who did so much for the good of North Church. Both served as Moderators and were active in every aspect of church life.

Headed by Martin Boyd, The New Life Christian Singles members enjoyed activities almost every month in the year. Three of the highlights included: bus trips to Daffodil Hill and the Gold Rush area and a bus trip and picnic to the Backwoods summer home of Muriel Backman in Sonoma County near Cazadero. For the Daffodil Hill trip we joined 9

members of the Co-Minglers, the singles group from the Epworth United Methodist Church. We made a tour to the John Muir House and John Swet Ranch near Martinez. Estelle And Curtis Knoll hosted the picnic, and Curtis, the docent for both areas, did an ex-cellent "guide" job.

Our delegate, Mary Gessert, reported that the National Association still grows. Its membership now exceeds 400 churches. The Commission on Christian Education produced a kit called "Celebrating Who We Are," suited for training from kindergarten to adult students.

But in spite of all this activity for adults the Sunday School, which is our future, was never restarted.

1982

We celebrated the 90th Anniversary of North Church with a catered banquet coordinated by Joan Graham and enjoyed a program organized by Ed Caine.

Steve Stanton, our assistant minister left, returning to his theological studies and we made more attempts at church growth by adding Debra Smith to the church staff.

Debra helped wherever necessary, but concentrated on a group for young couples called Co-Weds.

Headed by Patricia Hunting, The Diaconate Board purchased 15 copies of the updated, Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible and made them available to the congregation. Two years earlier, the Board had agreed to the minister 's request to order new hymnals.

Our New Life Christian Singles started the year in January with a full course turkey dinner (turkeys roasted and carved by Martin Boyd), which the whole church and friends enjoyed.

In November before Thanksgiving, we celebrated our annual Forefathers' Sunday with the cutting and distributing of pumpkins and squashes (donations coming in regularly from the gardens of John Pastorino, Paul Higley, and David Cummings).

In October, the New Life Christian Singles served another Thanksgiving dinner, from then on an annual event instigated by Martin and his able committee. Everyone enjoyed this real and popular service, not only with our own members but with outsiders as well. We suggested a minimum contribution of \$5 but did not insist. Martin always managed to have a slight surplus. As usual the tables displayed beautiful decorations - this time using begonia blossoms and redwood branches.

We added three new members to our rolls this year.

1983

1983 saw many changes, and despite a continued decline in membership and funds (although the benevolence budget remained over-subscribed), the spirit of hope and struggle continued.

The changes included three secretaries in quick succession and a new custodian Mr. Tsi Fu Wong. Perhaps our worst change came with the death of our excellent Moderator, Harold Martin, who had been an attorney. This was a great loss, not only to all who knew him, but to our church and community as well. At the end of the year, our talented organist, Allan Blasdale, left to undertake a new task with a much larger church in San Francisco.

In his Annual Report Ed Caine, Chairman of the Diaconate Board, told us that we had, according to the duties set out in our by-laws “fulfilled our duty in 1983 by ministering to the spiritual interests of North Church and our community. In cooperation with our pastor, Revd Robert Graham, we assisted in all worship services, the preparation and administration of the ordinances, the caring for the poor, the sick, the indigent, and the stranger.”

Without cost to the church, the Board led a successful effort to provide new hymnals, *Hymns of the Living Church*, through voluntary donations in honor of or in memorial to family or friends.

Thanks to the gifts of Royal and Charlotte Thompson, four new painted murals on frames were added to the choir lofts to give them more color and interest.

As one of our special services to the community we shared our facilities with other non-profit organizations. As we had provided no Sunday School since 1979, we made the whole lower floor of the Fellowship Center available for use:

- The International Children's Club met during weekday mornings;
- The Graduate Theological Union Childcare Center, in the afternoons.

Parents of the children enrolled in both helped with the care and teaching of the 37 children involved in the daily program.

Christian Education for North Church members continued with the diligent efforts of Bob Graham, who conducted an Adult Bible Study Seminar every Sunday before regular services.

Local outreach to the poor and needy came to \$388 in contributions and cash; the Women's Fellowship continued United Voluntary work (lap robes for veterans, pertinent needs in the Thrift Shop, and knitted and sewn items).

Women's Fellowship President Emily Gavey said since the last 30 years of her first presidency, the group grew smaller with no more sections and different needs, but NO changes in their willingness. “We answered demands submitted, and we supplied whatever we could. Programs provided interesting content, our devotions continued well thought out and hospitality must surely stand in memory as our special ability. God does provide the means to do whatever we must do.”

Membership Chairman Martin Boyd found an answer to our difficult parking problem. He contacted the State Department of Public Health and they made their parking lot available on weekends. Martin's committee even provided free script for taxi service for people who needed a ride to the church from the parking lot. Later on, we set up a special shuttle bus system with members providing rides.

Women's Lib finally came to North Church. During the Revd Swanson's pastorate, Margaret Pattershall inadvertently wandered into the Men's Forum and was summarily dismissed, much to her embarrassment. Ever after, women tried to follow Margaret's lead. Finally, in 1983, the former Men's Forum admitted women and renamed themselves The Forum, still under the able leadership of Ed Vanek.

The New Life Christian Singles continued with interesting programs and activities each month. Three of the highlights included a program by the Memory Singers of Alameda; a bus trip to Kenwood, home of Margaret And Lyman Wiltshire in Sonoma County; and the third anniversary of New Life Christian Singles in Martin's begonia garden.

1984

In April, 1984 we hired Elaine Silveris as organist and choir director. Until her arrival, Joan Graham and Estelle Knoll had served as organists, and we had felt lucky to "lure" such talented members.

In May our charming seminary assistant, Debra Smith, graduated from P.S.R. and concluded her association with North Church. For her ordination in her home church in Colorado, the Diaconate Board sent a corsage for Debra and flowers for the church.

The Revd Graham and the Board prepared a special service and reception in October for all couples celebrating their 50th wedding anniversaries.

We pinned the wives with orchid corsages, the husbands with carnations. After they had recited their renewal vows, the Senior Deacon presented a 50th anniversary plaque to each couple. Those honored included: Helen and Paul Higley, Iva and John Pastorino, Emily and John Gavey, Jean and Willard Jensen, Elizabeth and Arthur Hoeman, Sarah and Frank Patty, and Grace and Milton Peterson.

New Life Christian Singles continued active with bus trips to Daffodil Hill and Marin County Civic Center. We celebrated a fourth anniversary in Martin Boyd's enchanting begonia garden attracting over 100 guests, each leaving with a beautiful begonia blossom of his or her choice. Again members prepared a delicious Thanksgiving dinner, serving 43 people and sending out 2 dinners to members unable to attend.

Financially, 1984 ended as a very successful year. A \$35,000 donation (to be distributed over several years) from the estate of an outsider, Howard Elms, who had appreciated the hospitality of North Church at potluck suppers and the Forum, made it possible for us to meet our budget without using reserves.

Our Local Outreach contributed \$866 to churches and Ethiopian relief, using an accumulated benevolence and other donations.

A telephone communication plan was designed by Diaconate Board Secretary Marguerite Azer to inform all members of emergency situations in the church.

In the hope that we could resume the Sunday School, Iva Pastorino and Jean Hipkiss checked over outdated materials telling us that new were needed.

Membership Chairman Grace Peterson and her committee mailed over 1000 brochures about North Church with attendance invitations for people living within a radius of 10

miles from the church. We received few replies and the membership still continued to decline.

1985

Alarmed by the steady decrease in our numbers (only one new member in 1985) and by the continued dipping into reserves our Moderator, Edward Caine, reminded us of our importance as the only true Congregational church in the central S.F. Bay Area, saying “We appreciate warm, willing people able to help revitalize the church in 1985 but only a few are left now, and most of us live in a retired status and our energy runs in short supply. Without a lot of new members, we can't make it.”

In spite of more personnel changes, the Christian spirit of service carried on. Our minister suffered more changes in secretaries, with gracious Marcia Kinney substituting when necessary. Our organist left after one year, but the Music Committee found an excellent replacement in Tom Davis. Although shorthanded by three members, the Diaconate Board kept up their duties successfully.

Several events highlighted the year:

- We carried out a successful Maundy Thursday Communion Service, handling it in the manner traditional at North Church with the loaves and wine at candlelit tables which were placed in the form of a cross, recalling the first Communion at the Last Supper;
- Two special coffee hours: one for the Grahams' Silver Wedding Anniversary, and one for the McMillans' Golden Wedding Anniversary;
- An invitation to Dr. David Gray, Associate Executive Secretary of the National Association, to counsel the church and the Diaconate Board;
- The celebration, once more among gorgeous begonias, of the 5th anniversary of the New Life Christian Singles, who were a real spark in the spirit of North Church. Just before Thanksgiving they again conducted another Program by the delightful Memory Singers, together with a 3 turkey dinner.

1986

In spite of our declining active membership (although we did take in 5 new members - from Iran), we remember 1986 as a year of active effort. Bob Graham made 16 hospital visits, 161 rest home calls, and 235 home visitations. Mr. Hal Frentz, West Coast Field Representative, shared with us his expertise in the field of finances. and later, Dr. David Gray led us in an all-day workshop. With working charts and posters he outlined the progression of how churches start, how they peak, when they decline, and then gave suggestions of what other churches do to revitalize themselves. We enjoyed a very stimulating and worthwhile seminar.

At a meeting of the congregation in June, we made several changes in our Constitution:

- The mandatory size of the Diaconate Board was eliminated.

- A vote of confidence in the minister was mandated every 2 years, beginning in 1986.
- The quorum requirement for congregational meetings was lowered from 35 to 20 voting members.

Headed by Alvin Hamre, a task force composed of Ken Kinney, Wally McMillan, Ed Caine, Grace Peterson, Jenny Young, and Laura White worked for several weeks and many hours to make suggestions for reinvigorating our church.

The Forum, the Adult Bible Class, and the Women 's Fellowship maintained interesting programs for their members. Moderator, Royal Thompson extended special thanks to Ed Vanek for the difficult job as leader and program chairman for the Forum. Although the Women 's Fellowship meetings continued small (down to an average of 8 each time), Secretary Geraldine Strizich reported that ongoing work continued, sending lap robes for the Veterans' Hospital in Martinez, and knitted articles sold in the U.V.S. Thrift Shop. They supported the Music Fund with \$600 a year, and gave other donations to the Berkeley Food Pantry, Friendship House, the Chaplain at the Fairmont Hospital, Missions of the N.A.C.C.C., Church Women United, and others. Friendship Chairman, Marguerite Azer, faithfully sent cards to members and friends for birthdays and anniversaries.

Kudos went to Tom Davis for an inspiring year in the musical life of the church even though our choir had been reduced to one soloist, Susannah Wood, our melodious soprano. In addition to educating us with a written synopsis of the music and composer of each Sunday's selections, Tom presented several very inspiring programs, adding to our worship. A quartet provided special Easter music. On Memorial Day Sunday 8 singers inspired us with English cathedral music.

In August Tom presented three composers in skit form, illustrated by their music. He spent a busy Sunday not only playing the music, but conducting the service as well. Our annual Christmas Eve service featured especially beautiful music provided by Susannah Wood and the Pacific String Quartet.

We presented plaques representing our deep appreciation to Kenneth Kinney for his 50 years' service as Treasurer, and to John Pastorino for his many years of service as Finance Chairman.

The New Life Christian Singles under Martin Boyd made great efforts to improve interest within the church. We delivered twenty-five floral pieces (mostly begonias) to shut-ins. For Sunday church service, we set up a shuttle bus system with other members to deliver members who needed rides to and from the parking lot belonging to the State Department of Health.

Another encouraging event happened with the addition of \$15,000 from the Blair estate and \$10,000 from the Elms estate for our general fund.

Again, we very much looked forward to Thanksgiving dinner by New Life Christian Singles who served 60 people at the tables. As usual, the tables wore beautiful decorations, this time using Fall-colored chrysanthemums.

1987

In spite of the fact that our group of active members continued to dwindle, we felt blessed with a true spirit of Christian love and desire to keep the church alive. As Winston Churchill put it, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

With no secretarial services available, Pastor Graham took over all the editing, typing, copying, and mailing of the North Star, our Church Magazine, and other work usually handled by a secretary. He spent considerable effort ministering to our shut-in and ill members whom we considered an important segment of our membership.

Bob and Jenny Young from the Diaconate Board made superb efforts to keep the quality of our worship services from severely diminishing. Due to lack of workers, the Women's Fellowship gave up making lap robes for the Veterans' Hospital, but the few knitters who made men's socks and women's bed slippers donated 148 articles in 1771 hours for the U.V.S.

Marcia Kinney saw to it we enjoyed flower decorations each Sunday.

Outreach with both money and contributions continued from both the women's Fellowship and the Social Service Committee.

One of North Church's great assets lies in our available room for other organizations. In 1987 the following shared our facilities: I.C.C.; G.T.U. a Chinese mission (arranged by our Malaysian friend, Tan Kah-siew); Movement for Men; Morris Dancers; Recover; New Life Christian Singles; and Davey and Myrtle Jones' Round Dancers.

Our music provided another of our great plusses. You seldom find talent and inspiration like that brought to our church by Tom Davis and his soloist collaborator, Susannah Wood. In fact you seldom find talent such as theirs even in churches of much greater size and resources. Tom presented more special programs than most churches provide in a single year.

In addition to supervising several potluck luncheons and dinners, the Social Committee initiated a special after church Coffee Hour to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Marion and Paul Kieser.

Our beloved Ethel Luce became 100 on October 17. Many members gathered at the Kayakameena Convalescent Hospital to help Ethel cut the cake in celebration and presented her with her favorite red aetheriums.

In August, the New Life Christian Singles feted its 7th birthday among Martin Boyd's beautiful begonias -- this year they enjoyed a "pink begonia" theme. Most of the 180 guests left with a lovely blossom.

Moderator Royal Thompson requested that we give faith a chance, come forth with innovative ideas, and pray for the future.

Again we received a new break financially - \$30,473.39 in combined bequests from the Rachel Moore and Elms estates.

In November, we entertained at a Thanksgiving dinner with 4 turkeys carved by Martin Boyd and served to a record number of guests. We paid all bills, including a \$100 donation to the church, and a double fee to Mr. and Mrs. Wang for their services.

We shared the traditional Christmas Eve potluck for 25, and the Candlelight Service brought 63 people. The instrumental and vocal performances received superb ratings.

1988

North Church continued viable but at a lower key than in past years. One of our hardest working and long-time members, John Pastorino, died leaving a request for no services.

Two changes occurred in the use of our facilities. The Cedar Street Childcare Center replaced the G.T.U. and the I.C.C. and the Berkeley Opera arrived as a new addition to conduct rehearsals in our premises. The Childcare Center received the approval of the Board to make improvements in the downstairs area, costing about \$6,000. In return, we promised them occupancy as long as we remained in operation.

Sadly, 1988 saw the close of Bob Graham's Adult Bible Class.

We met a major maintenance expense: the installation of a new fiber-glass fire-resistant roof over the sanctuary at a cost of \$13,280. The New Life Christian Singles met again for their 8th birthday among Martin's begonias. Earlier in the year Martin received an honor from the East Bay Garden Society as "Man of the Year." This group remained a valuable adjunct to North Church. Mary Gessert and her staff and Martin Boyd deserve "superb" ratings for the excellent Thanksgiving dinner they cooked and served.

Unfortunately that dinner proved our last because Martin, our leader and master chef, missed by only a little over a year the achievement of his goal - reaching his 100th birthday the following January. When he turned 98, the Motor Vehicle Department refused to give him a driver's license because of his advanced years. This infuriated him. He took it as an insult, since he never considered himself a senior citizen!

The annual inspiring, Christmas candlelight service as conducted by Tom Davis and Susannah Wood made North Church a leader in promoting the Gospel at this time of year.

1989

A welcome new addition appeared on our horizon when in October the Grace Institute for Religious Learning asked to share our facilities. This group had separated from the Episcopal parish of St. Clement's in Berkeley. Led by Richard Mapplebeckpalmer, their chaplain, they received an enthusiastic welcome from Pastor Graham and our Board of Directors.

We suffered great losses this year as death came to several of our dearest members:

- Ethel Luce, who always participated in nearly every facet of church life and who always asked about the church to the end of her very long life at 102.

- Lucille Lane, who offered an inspiration to many people, and who gave time unstintingly, speaking to children about Black History. She felt proud of the fact that her grandmother had lived in slavery as a young girl and later became a Congregationalist. Lucille's mother had also lived as a strong follower of the Congregational Way, and had instilled this in her daughter. Lucille blew out the candles on her birthday cake for more than 90 years.
- Martin Boyd, as we have written, died in January at age 98.

Property Chairman, Willard Jenson, gave special commendation to our friendly, hard-working custodian, Tsi Wang, who continued to maintain a neatly groomed yard and a clean sanctuary and recreation building.

The Women's Fellowship disbanded because of no more members, but their Social Service and Local Outreach programs gave donations - \$574 to five organizations.

With members from the Grace Institute joining us for the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 120 (a record attendance for recent years), ended 1989 with another beautiful program.

1990

North Church continued to function in 1990 as a rewarding religious organization for a small but vital group of concerned members who held on with heart-warming determination.

The Senior Deacon, Bob Young, with indispensable caring and support from wife Jenny, kept our services functioning smoothly, despite the fact that he suffered ill health. Deaconess Eunice Kent supplied Lay Readers for each Sunday, and Deaconess Jenny Young arranged for greeters at the door. Tom Davis did an admirable job in filling in at the pulpit during the four August Sundays of Pastor Graham's annual vacation. He focused his sermons on church music, an area in which he is a real expert.

Under the unflagging leadership of Ed Vanek, our Sunday morning Forum continued to participate in intellectually stimulating programs and warm Christian fellowship. Interest remained high with an almost filled library every Sunday.

For some time, the Board of Directors had hoped that we could share our facilities with another church. Over the course of 1990 The Grace Institute answered that prayer. Their school is a religious community performing all the functions of a gospel congregation plus many related educational functions. Their concerns are the same as ours, and they many times expressed their gratitude for an association with an autonomous and completely democratic community such as ours. We feel fortunate that they came knocking at our door, bringing new blood and young people into our church home.

During 1990 our membership dropped - 158 as of the 1985 Directory, but with only an average of 12 to 15 attending every Sunday. This year we lost 6 old-time members by death, including :

- Kenneth Kinney, who attended Sunday School as a boy with Ethel Luce as one of his teachers. For 50 years he had served as our Treasurer.

- Sidney McGaw, a college professor and former Moderator.
- Davey Jones, who taught Round Dancing.
- Virgil Reese, a former high school principal, who touched the lives of many young people for the good. He attended church regularly and imbued others with his warm infectious smile.
- Marjan Smith, who had enjoyed the honor of recognition by the Diaconate as an Honorary Life Deaconess.

The Christmas Eve potluck dinner and Candlelight Service achieved “the best ever” vote of those attending. Tom Davis and Susannah Wood arranged a beautiful program, and the two pastors, Bob Graham and Richard Mapplebeckpalmer shared in the leading of the service. To the delight of all who attended (about 150), station KPIX used scenes from the singing of Silent Night by candle- holding worshipers on the front steps of the church. This appeared again at 11:00 p.m. on Channel 5 at the end of their Christmas Eve newscast.

1991

In 1991, we decided to accomplish, as our main business, the development of a plan for closing our church in the best way for our members, the minister, the National Association, and the Berkeley community.

Those forming the task force to look into the best procedure for the closure included: Alvin Hamre, Chairman; Royal Thompson, John Azer, Willard Jensen, and Eunice Kent (we don't forget our women in North Church!). They arrived at three possibilities:

- The donation of all the property to the National Association;
- The donation or sale at a low price to the Berkeley Y.M.C.A., primarily for them to use as facilities for their Head Start program;
- The sale of the property and fund some of the money to the Pacific School of Religion for scholarships designated by the North Church.

Because June 1992 is the month North Church becomes 100 years old, we chose the last Sunday, the 28th, for our final service.

To provide a more accurate census of members, Deaconess Jenny Young sent out letters to all members in the 1987 Directory asking whether they still retained membership or if they still wanted to continue receiving the “North Star” - 59 responded.

1992

In February the board of the Grace Institute gave us a writ ten proposal of what they wanted to do to help us retain our property primarily as a house of worship.

In March, the executive committee of the Northern California Association of Congregational Christian Churches offered their assistance to our Board in our deliberations for disbanding. Especially since the already established Grace Institute

included a respectable and growing membership they felt they offered a fine opportunity for renewing and sustaining the time-honored witness for the Gospel.

Two months later, Michael Robertson, the new Executive Secretary of the N.A.C.C.C. and Burkert Cree, President of the Northern California Association of Congregational Christian Churches, met at an unscheduled meeting with members of the board, then available, to offer suggestions and to alert us on the possible proposals the National Association might offer. Mr. Robertson felt that at least we should maintain the use of our facilities as a church, especially since the Grace Community continues to grow. He particularly wanted to see an outreach program for the young people in our area. In closing, he suggested a 3-year trial period and leaving intact the present setup for organizations using our facilities.

In due time an approval arrived from the National Association to accept our church with the above proposals. Additionally they offered to let Pastor Graham remain in the parsonage with the responsibility of taxes and its upkeep. For his duties of maintaining a fellowship of old North Church such as calling on shut-ins and additional work on behalf of the National Association, they promised to pay him a stipend.

We set May 3rd as the date for our Congregational meeting to decide the fate of our church.

For their Spring annual meeting the Northern California Fellowship of Congregational Christian Churches celebrated our coming birthday two days before our local Congregational meeting. They planned an entertainment for Friday night, which they unfortunately felt compelled to cancel because of the spreading Los Angeles riots (unscheduled roadblocks, etc.).

At our local meeting, Fr. Richard brought along six beautiful young people from the Grace Community to share the evening with us. They did not seem too disappointed when we sent them off with money for ice cream treats.

Our fellow Congregationalists arrived with vans loaded with all sorts of goodies to provide both breakfast and lunch for Saturday. What treats - pastries, croissants, fresh fruit (pine- apple, strawberries, grapes, oranges) - even more than we could consume.

We followed breakfast with a worship service and business meeting led by the Revd Burkert Cree. After a sumptuous Mexican lunch, we heard a keynote address by the Revd Dr. Harry W. Clark, and reports from the churches.

On April 13th we had sent letters to members who had responded to our '91 census-taking, informing them of our Congregational meeting May 3rd and listing the 3 options with detailed descriptions of each.

Thirty (30) members attended the May 3rd meeting, well in excess of the constitutional requirement of 20 minimum as a quorum for business meetings. (At Easter we had acquired 3 new members).

Twenty-six (26) voted by proxy. They cast an almost unanimous vote for dis-banding the church and conducting our last regular Sunday service June 28th.

On the three options for disposing of North Congregational Church real property, a large majority of the votes favored giving it to the National Association.

At the following Board meeting we planned a proper celebration for our 100th anniversary. We included a special service with a quartet arranged by Tom Davis, followed by a catered silver tea. Ed Caine, now living in Santa Rosa, promised to dress in Scout Uniform and round up as many of our past Scouts as possible. The Altermatts expect to fly here from Oregon.

Our Board chose August 17th, 1992 for the official dissolution of the church property.

However, instead of thinking of this as the end, let us think of this as a new chapter -- a renewal in the life of this church. Yes, it will be different, but with God's help it may blossom again, perhaps into a witness for the Gospel in ways far beyond our perception. We can apply the sage advice their beloved pastor gave to the Pilgrims before their departure from England – “Keep your minds open to new truths God has not yet revealed to you.”

Errata

Unfortunately an error appears on the front cover. The old Church was dedicated, of course, in 1893, not 1883. Our present Sanctuary was built on ground just west of the old building, which continued as a Fellowship Hall until it burnt down in 1944. The present Fellowship Hall, which replaced the old building was built a year or two later.

Acknowledgements

This summary was written by Laura White, assisted by Ruth and Andy Gotzenberg, of the Grace Community, and formatted by their Chaplain and his wife Richard and Lindzi Mapplebeckpalmer, who were also responsible for the presentation, printing and binding of this book. Every member of North Church offers them their sincere thanks.

1967-1992

MINISTERS OF NORTH CHURCH

Revd Robert W. Tull	August 1965 - June 1967
Revd J. Newton Holder	October 1967 - June 1969
Revd Harvey Swanson	November 1969 - June 1978
Revd Robert E. Graham	July 1978- July 1992

MODERATORS

1968	Edward E. Caine
1969-70	Harold R. Martin
1971	Robert W. Young
1972-73	John B. Azer
1974-75	Raymond J. Alberts

1976-77	W. Curtis Knoll
1978-79-80	Sidney E. McGaw
1981	Paul L. Higley
1982	Harold R. Martin
1983	Harold R. Martin & Paul Higley
1984-85	Edward E. Caine
1986-92	Royal Thompson

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP MODERATORS

1968-69	Mrs. Iva Pastorino
1970-71	Mrs. Mary Altermatt
1972-73	Mrs. Marcia Kinney
1974	Mrs. Esther Ross
1975-76	Mrs. Iva Pastorino
1977-78	Mrs. Esther Knoll
1979-80	Mrs. Marcia Kinney
1981-82	Mrs. Ethel MacMillan
1983	Mrs. Emily Gavey
1984-5	Mrs. Emily Gavey
1986	Grace Peterson, and Marguerite Azer and Georgie Hutson
1987	Geraldine Strizech
1988	Emily Gavey