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In 1906, Presbyterian men from around the country gathered in Indianapolis, Indiana, to hear not only William Jennings Bryan but the Vice President, Charles Fairbanks, exhort them to fulfill their calling as leaders in their churches and to shape the communities in which they lived. In the 1950s, Presbyterian men confidently met by the thousands in national meetings at the Palmer House in Chicago to plan strategies and be renewed not only with regard to their role in the church, but also in their leadership in American society. Yet as strong as men's work has been at times, at other times it has struggled, particularly since the 1960s. Not even twenty years after the great meetings in the 1950s, the men's movement within the Presbyterian Church was nearly dead. The purpose here is to explore the history of this part of the Presbyterian experience in twentieth-century America.

There is no doubt that the leadership of the American Presbyterian Church has been largely dominated by white Anglo-Saxon males. Whether as pastors, deacons, trustees, or elders, men have historically wielded enormous influence over the direction of the church. Yet, as an identifiable group within the church, laymen have seemed much

less visible than women. In Robert Wuthnow's recent study, *The Restructuring of American Religion,* women received prominent attention as an important subgroup, but men's groups did not appear. Aside from treating a few noteworthy individuals such as Robert Speer, religious historians have written very little regarding either laymen or organized men's activity in the church. Yet American Presbyterians have spent considerable time, effort, and resources attempting to organize groups of men in the church, motivate them into specific ministries, and invigorate a sense of purpose that would make the church a much more powerful institution in the twentieth century.[1]

Well intentioned, often well heeled with resources, and often able to gain the support of some of the most prominent political leaders in the United States, Presbyterian men's organizations have had many successes and a substantial impact on local congregations and communities. Conducting Bible studies, leadership training, youth work, social ministries, and education have been among the many ways in which men's groups have strengthened life in Presbyterian congregations across the country. Nevertheless, a certain element of frustration has accompanied the leaders of this movement since its beginning. In microcosm, the history of men's work reflects many of the problems facing mainstream Protestants in the twentieth century. Understanding why men's organizations have had difficulty sustaining themselves may reveal keys to the larger problems facing Presbyterians and other mainstream Protestants.

Presbyterian men's movements and organizations flourished in two separate periods in the twentieth century. The initial activity occurred from approximately the first decade of the twentieth century to the beginning of World War I. The second period was from the end of World War II to the mid-1960s. In no sense could men's activities be said to have ended completely during the years between the world wars or after the sixties. Yet clearly the level of activity diminished, particularly in congregations. The reasons for this ebb and flow are at times seemingly self-evident while

at others they are more obscure and complex. The pattern in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (PCUSA) and, later, the UPCUSA, while similar to the pattern in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS) in many respects, differs in others. The activity and effectiveness of men's groups varied from congregation to congregation in the same city; efforts at the presbytery and synod level were far from uniform in a given period. The dynamic of lay leadership, clergy support (or lack thereof), and a host of other factors still contribute to the difficulty in making generalizations about the activity and work of such a broad group of people over an entire century.

Nevertheless, men's organizations and activity seemingly reached their greatest level when larger numbers of men perceived a direct connection between the mission of the church and broader social and political issues facing the nation as a whole. In the first period, during the height of the social gospel era, men's work, particularly in the PCUSA, attempted to reform social conditions in the larger metropolitan areas and in the missionary movement at home and abroad. In the second period, beginning in the mid-forties, men's organizations rallied around the notion that atheistic communism must be fought by a God-fearing America. Great numbers of men found purpose in meeting to discuss how that might be done more effectively and how they might make the church a vital force in American life. When the social gospel and missionary movements waned, so did men's organizations. When the consensus surrounding American civil religion faded in the 1960s, and considerable disagreement emerged concerning the role of politics in the church, men's work began to fragment. During the last two decades, it has had difficulty generating much force.

Early Men's Organizations

Several factors led to the development of organized men's work in the last part of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Certainly women's groups provided an important model for organization, as did the Young Men's

Christian Association. The intensification of missionary activity overseas proved also to be influential toward stimulating new men's activity. But perhaps most compelling were the voices of social gospel advocates in the context of the larger movement of progressivism in the early twentieth century. The belief that the church could reshape the urban and political environment, and the optimism associated with such reform, provided the motivation and energy for many men to participate.[2]

In the 1880s, largely due to the influence and success of the YMCA, increasing numbers of clergy and lay leaders called on churches to facilitate programs directed at saving America's youth from the perils of urbanization and industrialization. At the Congress of Religions, held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, clergy and lay leaders pushed for more formal organization of men's activities. Yet, in most congregations throughout the country, men's organizations grew slowly. The vitality of congregational life centered largely in women's organizations. By 1895, the PCUSA General Assembly acknowledged that men were much less organized compared to women. In 1901, again the report lamented, "If the men in the churches were as the women, the Kingdom would come in by leaps and bounds."[3]

The one organization that did achieve some success in the last part of the nineteenth century was the Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip. Organized in the late 1880s by the Reverend Rufus Miller, the Brotherhood was not strictly a denominational organization. Its objective focused on spreading Christ's kingdom among men, especially young men. Asked to adhere to a rule of prayer and a rule of service, members were urged to pray daily for Christ's kingdom among men and for God's blessings on the Brotherhood. Secondarily, the Brotherhood required members to make an honest effort each week to bring at least one young man to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. By the end of the 1890s, chapters were quite common in Presbyterian churches; several hundred chapters existed, mostly in the Northeast.[4]

At the turn of the century, pressure mounted at the General Assembly level in the PCUSA to develop more support for men's work, and in 1906 that body approved the formation of the Presbyterian Brotherhood, a group distinct from the Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip. Charles Holt, from Chicago, provided the initial leadership for the Brotherhood. National conventions were quickly organized to stimulate great enthusiasm for the Brotherhood. Held between 1906 and 1911, these remarkable gatherings reflected the close relationship between the PCUSA and major national political figures. The prospects for church participation in major reform movements at the city, state, and national levels were never stronger. Spokesmen for the social gospel addressed the challenge of making Christianity relevant to the needs of the working class and stressed how important it was that Christian values permeate public policy.[5]

For example, at the Indianapolis convention in 1906, speakers included not only Vice President Fairbanks and William Jennings Bryan but also many of the most prominent Presbyterians of the day, including Robert Speer, evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman, and the foremost Presbyterian advocate of the social gospel, Charles Stelzle. The convention speeches encouraged men's participation on a wide variety of fronts including Sunday evening services, ushers' associations, education, and leadership training. The organizers focused on the importance of the Brotherhood's catching a vision that would assist pastors in developing employment bureaus and sick and relief funds, on general issues of civic reform, and on temperance among boys. Speakers vehemently stressed the importance of evangelism, particularly to young boys. The charge was clear: More men should be brought to Christ and more energy must be expended on civic reform.[6]

By 1908, *Presbyterian Brotherhood* was published quarterly, with articles and news regarding affiliated chapters around the country. By that year over seven hundred chapters existed at the congregational level, claiming a membership of just over thirty-six thousand. The activity of the

Brotherhoods tended to focus on Bible study, assisting at services of worship, leadership training, and boys' work. The activity of many groups centered on civic affairs. For example, in 1909 at First Presbyterian Church in Elkhart, Indiana, the Brotherhood examined the question of "Where Your Taxes Go." The group mailed a copy of the tax pamphlet to every taxpayer in the city. Enthused about their ability to influence city planning, Brotherhood members authored a comprehensive plan for the entire city. Other men's groups from around the country held periodic programs on various issues associated with the progressive movement. By 1911, the Presbyterian Brotherhood, still under the direction of Charles Holt, supported an interdenominational effort, the "Men and Religion Forward Movement." This effort exhorted men in metropolitan churches not only to evangelize but to become involved in social service. The movement lasted for one year, its leaders traveling throughout the country conducting rallies and organizing efforts to promote Christian service and civic reform.[7]

While the PCUSA took the lead in sponsoring men's activity, the United Presbyterian Church of North America also began formally to organize men's activity in 1906 on a model like the Brotherhood. In 1908, United Presbyterian Men sponsored a Nile mission boat and a home mission in Yakima, Washington, as well as one in Philadelphia. For the most part, however, men's work in the United Presbyterian Church centered on Bible study and leadership training.[8]

The Missionary Movement

While the social gospel and progressive movements strongly influenced men's activities, the missionary movement also had considerable impact. The Laymen's Missionary Movement was organized in 1907, with conferences in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Chicago, with the sole purpose of generating support from the laymen for student missionaries overseas. The Laymen's Missionary Movement brought Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, Wood-

row Wilson, Alfred Thayer Mahan, governors, presidents of universities, and business leaders to speak before its gatherings. Attracting men from all over the country, the movement perhaps reached its peak when the Men's National Missionary Congress met in Chicago, May 3–6, 1910. The Congress was the culmination of seventy-five conventions from October 1909 to May 1910 that reached nearly a hundred thousand men.

The missionary movement had enormous influence in the PCUS as well. In fact, most men's activity in the PCUS centered on mission concerns rather than on the social gospel, although urban issues were not entirely absent. Charles Rowland helped orchestrate PCUS involvement in the Laymen's Missionary Movement. PCUS conventions were held in Birmingham, Memphis, Dallas, Chattanooga, and Charlotte over the next few years.[9]

Undergirding these conventions and the work at the congregational level was a spirit of what some have called "muscular Christianity." Both clergy and lay leaders attacked the notion that religion carried feminine associations. Men were encouraged to connect their faith with strength and virility. Pastors such as Mark Matthews, who built the largest Presbyterian church in the country in Seattle during this period, frequently exhorted congregations with sermons such as "Wanted: More Man in Men," and "The Manhood of Christianity in Civic Affairs."[10]

It is difficult to read the 620 pages of the proceedings of the Missionary Congress or the reports of the Presbyterian Brotherhood conventions and not feel that these were extraordinary moments in lay activity. There seemed little division between conservatives and liberals. Men from all walks of life felt called to articulate ways in which Christians might influence the debate over public policy as well as how to evangelize entire nations more effectively. The confidence in Western civilization, so evident in the United States and Western Europe prior to the First World War, was reflected in the zeal for missionary activity and men's work in particular. After the United States entered World War I and as energy was siphoned into other mat-

ters, the maintenance of men's activity in the church proved to be more difficult. The enthusiasm for social reform across the society waned; the impetus for social Christianity declined; and as missionary zeal ebbed, Presbyterian men's work entered a new phase, led largely by staff supported by the two General Assemblies.

Sustaining Men's Work in the Years Between the Wars

Although there are many exceptions, historically it has been more difficult to sustain men's organizations at the congregational level than women's. Certainly World War I was a major factor in diminished activity at the congregational level. But even prior to the war, in the midst of great enthusiasm generated at national conventions, men's activity at the local level began to show signs of waning. Several factors seemed to be at work. Presbyterians began to feel the divisive effects of the fundamentalist/modernist debate, and the social gospel and progressivism gradually lost vitality. The excitement surrounding civic reform, which gave great purpose to men's work, slowly dissipated. The case of Union Presbyterian Church Men's Club in Schenectady, New York, reveals the problem. Club minutes between 1911 and 1915 reflect the difficulty of maintaining enthusiasm at the local level. In February 1912, the men's groups sponsored a debate on the topic, "That the Trusts Are Responsible for the High Cost of Living." Later that month, the sixth annual Men's banquet featured the great Presbyterian layman Robert Speer as the speaker. But by April, there were not enough members present for a quorum. A ladies' night was held in May with a stereopticon lecture on Scotland. But by June there was no quorum again. Starting late in November, the meetings focused on suggestions for increasing attendance, more exciting programs, outings, refreshments. But by 1915 the group had apparently disbanded.[11]

The General Assemblies of the respective Presbyterian bodies increasingly recognized the difficulty during these

years and made considerable effort to institutionalize the support for men's activity. The other emphasis in this period was on interdenominational activity. In 1912, the United Presbyterian Church of North America placed the support of the Brotherhood under the Division of Home Missions. By 1916, William Weir had been selected by the PCUSA to serve as general secretary of Men's Work, and he continued until 1931. Weir hoped to promote interdenominational cooperation and the development of printed materials, program helps, and general information that would assist the educational mission of men's organizations.[12]

Weir's belief that laymen, rather than clerics, could move denominations more rapidly to accept an ecumenical structure was shared widely after World War I. Even as the United States failed to join the newly formed League of Nations, men from around the country caught Woodrow Wilson's vision of a more internationally cooperative world. In religion this led to several ecumenical efforts. In 1923, largely through Weir's efforts, the Interdenominational Council on Men's Work was established, consisting of twenty-two Protestant denominations. In 1930, the Interdenominational Men's Congress met in Cincinnati with the hope that laymen might lead the Christian church into a more unified phase of its history. Although lacking much in the way of lasting success, the effort reflected the different direction that men's work took during the years between the wars.[13]

Weir also developed printed material for men's programs at the local level. This consisted primarily of suggested program ideas for men's groups. Everything from the program content itself to how to organize a group and lead a discussion was sent out to congregations on a monthly basis. In the twenties and thirties a newsletter entitled *Men's News* helped inform congregations of activity throughout the country. Local and regional conventions of men were held fairly regularly, but in general the years between the two world wars did not generate great enthusiasm for men's work. Pockets of activity continued

to exist and in some cases thrived. Certainly Weir's efforts helped sustain men's work at a time when other cultural forces worked against the movement. The Depression further sapped energy and enthusiasm, and internal division over fundamentalism and the decline of the social gospel made Weir's task even more onerous.[14]

A similar situation faced Presbyterians in the PCUS following World War I. The General Assembly for the PCUS agreed to establish a Permanent Committee on Men's Work in 1922. The previous year they had conducted another survey; in the 431 churches returning questionnaires, 265 had some type of men's organization, of which 165 were Bible classes. The PCUS followed in the footsteps of the PCUSA, largely because its secretary of Men's Work, J. E. Purcell, had worked with Weir. Under Purcell, program suggestions were sent to the various men's organizations.[15]

Purcell deserves much of the credit for the development of an outstanding set of program helps for the men's programs. Prior to his efforts, aside from Bible study, men's work in the South had focused primarily on missionary efforts. Beginning in the late twenties and extending through the thirties, Purcell commissioned twelve separate programs each year. The programs centered on stewardship, church doctrine, occasionally church history, and oftentimes controversial issues such as the problems of lynching in the South or civil rights. How receptive local men's groups were to these program suggestions is difficult to say, yet one thing is clear—Purcell sought to raise the men's consciousness throughout the South regarding racial issues. In addition, Purcell focused on the need for better leadership training, more aggressive evangelism, and higher commitment to the broader life of the church.[16]

Besides formal programs provided by leaders such as Weir and Purcell, men's work in congregations continued to be sustained by Bible study and Sunday school courses. Exceptionally strong at the turn of the century, the Sunday school movement accounted for much of the leadership training in the Presbyterian Church. The continued suc-

cess of Bible studies often depended on the organizational abilities of pastors and key laymen, but many groups developed a tradition of excellence that provided support for male involvement in the church as a whole.

Upon reflection, the years between the world wars marked a new direction for men's work within the Presbyterian Church. The General Assemblies provided support in the form of finances and personnel. Staff members worked diligently to provide program suggestions and encouragement in a variety of forms. Yet, for a variety of reasons, leaders of Presbyterian men's organizations found it more difficult to sustain enthusiasm at the congregational level. It would not be until the general resurgence of religious activity after World War II that men's organizations would gain new momentum. Increasingly, the element of American patriotism and civil religion would be a part of men's work in the postwar years.

Revitalization in the Forties and Fifties

In 1940, concerned about the lack of overall enthusiasm for men's organizations, a group of PCUS men met with the new director of Adult Education and Men's Work, Samuel Jasper Patterson, to devise a new strategy. Over the next few years, this group provided the impetus for reorganization and more concerted support from the General Assembly. In 1946, the General Assembly approved the formation of the Assembly Men's Council, which began to meet officially in Montreat, North Carolina, that same summer. Anxious to be seen as making a tangible difference, the Men's Council approved continued support for the Assembly's Radio Committee and urged that all synods plan and promote the holding of Negro Youth Conferences.[17]

By 1949, the Assembly Men's Council reported that there were 855 local men's groups, 69 presbytery rallies held, and 11 synod conferences. Momentum in the early fifties continued to build around several regional conventions in Greensboro, Jacksonville, Nashville, and Dallas.

The launching of the magazine *Presbyterian Men* stimulated interest, and new material for church officer training was published. In 1951 it was announced that a Division of Men's Work in the Board of Christian Education would be on a par with other divisions of the Board. Six conferences for Black youths were held in 1950 and more were urged. By 1952, PCUS statistics indicated that more than 200,000 men were members of 1,039 local men's organizations. One thousand copies of the bulletin, "Program Helps," were sent out each quarter. Assembly-wide conventions were held in Atlanta in 1949, New Orleans in 1954, Miami in 1957, and Dallas in 1963, reflecting the enthusiasm for men's work at that time. Aside from Patterson, men such as Andrew Bird, Jr., E. A. (Andy) Andrews, Jr., and Powell Fraser worked diligently to make men's work a vital part of the PCUS in the 1950s and early 1960s.[18]

The PCUSA men, perhaps taking their cue from their PCUS counterparts, established in 1944 a Special Lay Committee approved by the General Assembly. Led by Charles Turck, president of Macalester College, the committee made several recommendations to the General Assembly regarding lay activity, including the establishment of an Assembly-level men's organization. Accepted by the General Assembly, the recommendation bore fruit in 1948 when the National Council of Presbyterian Men convened a meeting in Chicago. In 1949, the United Presbyterian Church of North America also approved a men's organization.[19]

Several factors directly contributed to this revival of organization and enthusiasm in the late forties and early fifties throughout the country. One factor was the camaraderie created among men during World War II. Men returned from their military experience and rapidly integrated themselves into civilian life, but they also tried to preserve opportunities for fellowship that had been a part of the war. Another factor was the upsurge of enthusiasm for the work of the church after the war. Church attendance boomed, and the suburbanization of America produced an explosion of new churches.

In addition, the concern over the cold war helped provide a larger purpose, for men not only to belong to a church but to work for its growth and influence. During the last twenty years the phenomenon of civil religion has been widely studied in relation to the surge of religious activity following World War II. The identification of the United States with God's work, and specifically the role of the United States in battling atheistic communism, were important factors in stimulating men's activity from the mid-forties to the early sixties.[20]

Men seemed to find purpose in gathering to strengthen the work of the church in this worldwide struggle. The programs suggested by the national men's organizations clearly reflect this. Even during the war, men's organizations were encouraged by the boards of Christian Education to hold programs emphasizing patriotism. Program titles included "Defending the Bulwarks," "Building Up Home Morale," and "Planning for a Post-War World."[21]

In 1947, several suggested programs directly referred to the cold war. In the program "Christianity and Communism," the discussion leader was encouraged to stress the importance of supporting America's political leaders. "The Communistic influence, under its active mission of world-wide 'evangelism,' has spread its influence and sent its agents into all parts of the world. . . . Needless to say, the mission of the Christian Church in America and in the world at large is of tremendous importance. In fact, the successful accomplishment of this mission can be of controlling importance in the present struggle for world peace." The anxieties associated with the postwar world surfaced in discussions and generated enthusiasm for the work of the church.[22]

Men's programs in the PCUS periodically raised the issue of civil rights. For example, one program suggestion in 1947 was "The Golden Rule and Men of Every Color." The program directly attacked those who maintained the status quo in the South. Race relations in the South were compared to British rule of India; program leaders were asked to encourage their men's groups to seek actively

"equal economic treatment" and "equal treatment in law courts and by police," and to "oppose all laws and customs that deny them the ballot solely because of their color."[23]

PCUSA men's activity was led in the late forties and throughout the fifties by Paul Moser. A distinguished lay leader in the 1940s, Moser served as executive secretary for the National Council of Presbyterian Men beginning in 1948. Over the next decade, the National Council met yearly at the Palmer House in Chicago. Its purpose was "to promote the Kingdom of God worldwide by encouraging Presbyterian Men to serve Jesus Christ in the work of the Church and to follow Him in the vocations of the common life."[24] Participants in these conventions heard national business leaders explain how they incorporated Christian principles into their everyday business practices. Inspired and stimulated to reflect a Christian ethos in the workplace, men returned to their communities believing that they were part of one of the great movements in the postwar world.

The sense of mission and desire for moral leadership during the late forties and through the fifties was exceptionally strong among men's groups throughout the PCUSA. Attendance at these conventions and gatherings grew significantly. In 1948, 370 men representing 245 presbyteries met at the Palmer House; John Foster Dulles spoke on the effectiveness of Soviet slogans in the Third World and the necessity to counter with a strengthened moral vision. The Reverend Louis Evans maligned the nation's universities for creating a moral vacuum and called on Presbyterian men to counter these influences. By the next year 600 men met at Palmer House; 900 in 1950; 1,400 in 1951; 1,900 in 1952; 2,100 in 1953; 2,652 in 1954; 7,400 met in regional conventions in Sacramento, New York, and Chicago in 1955. By 1957, 11,000 men were participating in area meetings of the National Council of Presbyterian Men.[25]

In 1958 the PCUSA and the United Presbyterian men's groups merged into the United Presbyterian Men in The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of

America (UPCUSA). But the late fifties represent the zenith of men's activities, the greatest activity since the early part of the century. Sustained by forces in American culture, men believed there was a larger purpose for their coming together and supporting the activity of the church (GA, UPCUSA, 1958, p. 220).

The Turbulent Sixties

At first glance, the best explanation for the decline of men's activity is related to the changing sociocultural climate in the 1960s. Social unrest did affect the problems afflicting men's organizations, but there are several indications that by the late fifties other difficulties began to contribute to declining interest and effectiveness. In 1957 the *Christian Century* editorialized that the Chicago meeting of the National Council of Presbyterian Men was not much more than a gathering of America's business elite hoping to cloak their activity in a religious mantle. Particularly dismaying to the editorial writer was the treatment of William Schnitzler, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, who asked for sensitivity to the plight of labor. "When Labor Leader Schnitzler lifted his lone (and admittedly, not too compelling) voice to plead the other side, he was received with unforgivable rudeness," reported the *Christian Century.* "There were insulting cries from the audience. . . . The moderator of the meeting at one point had to reprimand the delegates with a little lecture on courtesy."[26]

Criticisms of men's organizations began to surface more frequently. Charges that men carried on a kind of "fried chicken" theology referred to men's meetings as social gatherings. Pastors occasionally complained in national publications that they were apparently expected to lead meetings and provide the essential organization. "There is something both fascinating and discouraging in the man who holds a responsible job involving long range planning who, serving as Program Chairman of the Chapter, comes to the Pastor crying . . . 'Our Chapter meets next week.

We are planning our program. Do you know anyone we could get to speak? Or should we use that Rose Bowl film?' " reported one clergyman.[27] By 1961, an extensive report was delivered to the General Assembly detailing a number of the specific criticisms and urging structural changes as well as more coordination of national themes with congregations (GA, UPCUSA, 1961, p. 49).

In the PCUS, there was less overt criticism of men's programs. Perhaps this was due to the continued leadership of Andy Andrews, who succeeded Patterson in 1959 and remained in the position of executive secretary until 1964. But Andrews, by his own admission, struggled to find new avenues to invigorate men's work. After spending a year in Geneva, Switzerland, Andrews believed that the future of men's work rested with a European-style lay movement. He maintained that renewing the church through laymen's training centers, retreat houses, and "communities" would be the central purpose of men's organizations in the latter half of the twentieth century.[28]

But instead of revitalization and new vision, serious division emerged by the mid-sixties. In 1964, the Christian Education Committee of the Synod of Texas recommended eliminating organized men's work and absorbing its functions into adult work. Critics attacked the programming for being weak and irrelevant to the needs, particularly, of younger men. Often seen as just "knife and fork" clubs, men's organizations seemed ineffective in dealing with much other than the social needs of a few men. Some argued that it was anachronistic for men's programs to be responsible for church leadership training, when women were now officers as well. All agreed there was widespread ferment, from the congregation to the General Assembly, in both the UPCUSA and the PCUS regarding the purpose, organization, and effectiveness of men's organizations.[29]

As a result, the PCUS commissioned a thorough study of men's work. Forty interviewers were trained, and more than 750 men were questioned. These included laity, officers, and pastors from 119 churches in all synods across

the denomination. The 1968 report found that the majority of men asserted "that the church and its role in today's world appear very unclear to them. And at the same time they expressed a great need for the church and feel that it should not be dismissed." The survey revealed a clear difference of opinion on a variety of topics between those over and those under the age of thirty-five. The younger men generally saw themselves and their role in the mission of the church much differently from those who were older. Younger men tended to be less satisfied with the church and expressed a need for renewal and for the church to be more relevant. Tension between clergymen and laymen surfaced repeatedly in the survey.[30]

Authors of the study concluded that the programs of study, worship, local men's programs, rallies, conferences, and conventions generally failed to convince men that they were adequately equipped for mission. The report urged that control and direction of lay programs be in the hands of the session; the General Assembly's newly formed Board of Lay Activities' role should be merely advisory. Flexibility, variety, creativity, experimentalism, relevancy, and responsiveness were encouraged in congregations. But the authors failed to offer much in the way of specific suggestions.[31]

The growing division over the role political issues should play in church life also tended to fragment men's organizations. As early as the late 1950s, differences in political outlook began to surface at national men's conventions. More conservative men increasingly resisted the call for social change desired by program leaders at the national level. By the late sixties, outside groups brought increasing pressure, particularly on the UPCUSA, to respond to the civil rights issues and the war in Vietnam and to open up church leadership to women. By 1969, in the wake of the King and Kennedy assassinations and the rioting at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, the National Council of United Presbyterian Men urged much more involvement in politics. The publication *Call to Action* stressed that "Christ is in the midst of the fear,

alienation, and bloodshed of our cities. . . . We presume to join him there . . . institutions perpetuate destructive forces such as poverty and injustice. . . . With joy and hope born of our faith in Christ, we commit ourselves and call upon you to join us in this commitment to action in this age of crisis so that we may witness together." The message was clear: Men in the church must have their consciousness raised and must seek ways to directly solve the social crises affecting the nation (GA, UPCUSA, 1969, pp. 376–377).

But the issue of how involved the church should be in political issues, and more specifically what stances should be taken, continued to fester in the late 1960s and exacerbated the already existing generation gap among men. Whereas in the postwar period a broad consensus unified the movement, that agreement ceased to exist by the late sixties. In a 1968 Gallup poll, one month after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death, 53 percent of the Presbyterians polled argued that the church should stay out of politics altogether. This was an increase from the 44 percent who took this position in 1957. The number who argued that the church should express its political views dropped from 47 percent to 40 percent. Several editorials in *The Presbyterian Layman* spoke to the growing alienation among men because of the political positions of both the General Assembly and the National Council of United Presbyterian Men.[32]

The 1960s proved to be very difficult times not only for the church as a whole but for men's organizations in particular. The PCUS study revealed a broad generation gap, and the UPCUSA group struggled to find an appropriate stance in regard to the social unrest in major American cities. The growing women's movement tended to undermine the notion that men's groups should be responsible for leadership training and more subtly suggested that men's groups were bastions of continued sexism in the church. By the end of the decade, there were many who felt that men's organizations might have ceased serving a useful purpose.

Reorganization and Attempts at Revitalization in the Seventies and Eighties

By the mid-seventies the UPCUSA men acknowledged the serious problems facing their organization; hope dissipated that more flexibility and relevance could overcome the larger cultural forces and lack of focused mission. The United Presbyterian Men continued to meet, and a self-study resulted in the adoption of a fourfold program emphasis: Mission to Men, to Families, to Pastors, and to the World. More efforts were directed toward the redevelopment of organizations within the local congregation. By the late seventies and early eighties, moderate growth began again.

In 1972, staff support for men's work from the General Assembly of the PCUS was eliminated. Synods and presbyteries were charged with the responsibility of providing resources for congregations. In 1982, after two years of planning, PCUS men held a convention in Atlanta. The following year a new organization called the Men of the Church Council was established.[33]

The merger of the PCUS with UPCUSA provided the stimulus for the National Council of UPM to invite their PCUS counterparts in 1983 to form one organization. Created in 1984, the new organization, Presbyterian Men, held a major convention in New Orleans in 1987. One of the major efforts has been the development of fraternal relationships with men's movements in churches in other nations, particularly in Asia. Program emphases continued to vary: for example, the men of the Pittsburgh Presbytery assisted with Project Garden 5,000, which planted and harvested potatoes and corn for food banks. Concerns ranging from ministry to Mexican-Americans to the plight of the homeless were found in local men's programs around the country in the late eighties. Bible study remained a strong focus for many groups, and attempts to integrate Christianity into the workplace provided discussion topics for many men. Yet the seventies and eighties

will surely be seen as a period of reorganization and reflection. The difficulty of sustaining activity at the congregational level continued. The efforts, largely sporadic, still depended heavily on the individual efforts of one or two persons in a given congregation (GA, UPCUSA, 1987, pp. 587–588).

Conclusions

Men's work and men's organizations have been an important but neglected part of the history of the Presbyterian Church. Their impact on the life of congregations and local communities has been significant. Yet the history of men's work is one of struggle and difficulty as well. When a broader consensus concerning larger social and political issues was achieved, such as existed prior to World War I and during the forties and fifties, men's organizations succeeded in attracting larger numbers of men into their ranks. When that consensus broke down, men's work experienced greater difficulty sustaining itself.

The comparison of Presbyterian men's work with that in other denominations, while it might prove fruitful in helping to determine the relative uniqueness of the Presbyterian experience, is beyond the scope of this article. It seems likely, however, that the historical Presbyterian effort to mold and shape American culture and public policy has had a significant impact on men's work. This engagement of American culture is not unique to Presbyterians, but it certainly has been greater than in many other Protestant groups.

In many ways, the intertwining of Presbyterianism with American culture has served men's work well; many Presbyterian business and political leaders have provided key leadership in their churches and communities. Yet in the period since the 1950s this may also help account for some of the difficulties faced by men's organizations. Without question, Presbyterian and mainstream Protestant influence in American culture as a whole has been waning. Men's work has been most successful when organizational

leaders felt confident regarding the role of religion in society; that confidence has significantly eroded over the last two decades.

Two other factors will certainly influence future men's work. One is the feminist movement in American culture. Whether men's organizations can retain a separate identity without being perceived as sexist is difficult to say. Many clergy as well as Protestant lay leaders have attempted to eliminate all forms of sexism in the church. A second, more subtle factor is the influence of professionalization. As the middle class has increasingly developed professional organizations, some of the social needs that men's work in the church formerly met no longer exist. Again, the long-term influence is difficult to project. Nevertheless, the future health of the church does seem to depend heavily on finding ways in which the laity can serve in meaningful ministries. Men's organizations have historically provided such an avenue, and certainly that will remain their key challenge into the next century.