

Mr. Dewey Blasts Statements Made By Moderator

By REV. ROBERT DEWEY
Minister, Congregational Church
of Birmingham

An unfortunate article appearing on the church page of the July 8 Birmingham Eccentric under the title "Five Churches Will Not Join United Church" ought not to go by without comment.

The author is the associate moderator of the National Association of Congregational churches, and long on record as an anti-merger figure.

It purports to be news; an interpretation of local reaction to the formation in Cleveland recently of the United Church of Christ. Actually it is a mixture of fact and fancy and loaded with opinion disguised as news. At points it is

inaccurate. It is highly presumptuous. Since it concerns matters long in dispute among Congregationalists, it hardly seems fair that so much of its glaring errors go without correction.

COMMENT MUST BEGIN with the title, "Five Churches Will Not Join United Church." This is not true. Four churches have not voted to oppose the merger. Perhaps the author of the article has been authorized to speak for those churches. (First Congregational Church, Royal Oak, of which he is a member, Community Congregational Church, Lathrup Village, North Congregational Church, and

First Congregational Church, Pontiac. He has most certainly not been invited, nor did he consult with the Congregational Church of Birmingham, which has not yet decided what its relationship to the new United Church shall be. In the article's first sentence the author declares that "South Oakland County's five Congregational Churches intend to remain Congregational for an indefinite period." The inference is clear. Churches which do not take some definite stand to remain outside the United Church cannot be considered Congregational.

HOWEVER DEVOUTLY the author wishes this were the case, it is not. It is an interpretation from a very definite point of view; not a fact. And it ought not to be paraded as such in an article which purports to be news.

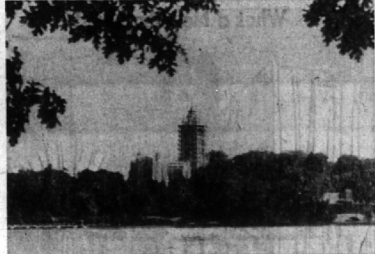
Most unfortunate is the author's readiness to speak for the Congregational Church of Birmingham. After listing the four avowedly anti-merger churches in Oakland County, he continues "The Birmingham Congregational Church has voted to protect its free position for an indefinite period." By using the word "also" he lumps the five churches together. By using the words "protect their free position" he implies the Congregational Church of Birmingham acted in response to some attack or some threat.

This is highly misleading. The action of the Congregational Church of Birmingham was quite different from that of her sister churches across the nation, the Congregational Church of Birmingham passed a resolution which called for further study of the merger and reserved to herself the right to determine what her relationship to the United Church would be.

AT THE MOMENT, the church is completely neutral. It may remain outside the United Church, it may not. However much the author of the article might wish for the former action, it has not been chosen, and he has done the people of the Birmingham church a disservice to imply that it has.

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WORK CONTINUES on the undamaged steeple at Kirk in the Hills church, which now presents a majestic view from across Island Lake. Photo was taken at lakeside residence of Chrysler corporation Vice President W. C. Newberg.

Repairs to Begin on Kirk in the Hills

Construction workers used their concrete buggies to remove beautifully hand-carved wooden beams, now blackened and warped, from the Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian church.

It was the first step in repairing damage to the partially completed Gothic structure in a grim fire June 13. The entire roof must be removed before repairs can actually begin.

The author of the article proceeds immediately (third paragraph) to speak for "these churches." Few readers will mentally determine that he means only the four churches that have acted to remain outside the United Church, and that to include The Congregational Church of Birmingham in his remarks. "These Churches," says the author, "see in the Basis of Union which will govern the new United Church, a presbyterian type of government that threatens the rights of independent Congregational churches."

THIS IS HIGHLY presumptuous, for two reasons. In the first place, if there is one thing the anti-merger point of view agrees about it is that no Congregationalist can speak for any other. By a strict view of Congregational policy, each must speak for himself and it is authoritarian for one to presume to speak for many. Yet the author speaks for "these churches," some 5,000 local Congregationalists. Furthermore, he ignores the many who are convinced, in good conscience, that the Basis of Union is fundamentally a Congregational document; those who do not feel the government of the new United Church will be traditional presbyterianism.

The author of the article knows that in the five local Congregational churches there are intelligent, conscientious persons whose opinions vary greatly with regard to the merger. At least this is true of the Congregational Church of Birmingham. Some are opposed to it and would agree with the author of the article. Some are in favor of it. Some are neutral. Some are quite indifferent. For the author to hold an opinion is certainly right. For him to pose as an objective spokesman for five churches and 5,000 Congregationalists is certainly presumptuous.

IT IS SURELY difficult for the author to step out of his role. The group he represents is a collection of some 150 to 160 Congregational churches across the nation (by the author's count) whose one reason for being in opposition to the merger. If he speaks for this group, as it would appear he does, let him say so.

The article which he gave to The Eccentric (which was not solicited) is heavily slanted in the direction of his own wishes and opinions, and I protest the claim it makes to be an objective news report reflecting the total reaction of five local churches to the formation of the United Church.



A WORKMAN ADDS ruined oak beam to burning pile outside the church on W. Long Lake road. Most of the delicately hand-carved oak ceiling beams were destroyed in the million dollar fire.

Local Girl Serves Mennonite Agency's Mexico Workcamp

CUAUHTEMCO, Mexico—Martha Kraft, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence W. Kraft of 544 Oakland, Birmingham, is scheduled to participate in a workcamp here this summer sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee of Akron, Pa., an agency for world relief and other services.

The 13 American participants in the workcamp assembled at El Paso, Tex., July 4 and go to Cuauhtemco by bus. They will develop a variety of community development projects. MCC has medical and agricultural service projects here.

Miss Kraft teaches at Toledo, O., and is a member of First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham.

Associate Will Preach At North Church

Rev. John W. Metler, associate minister of North Congregational church, Northwestern highway and Lahser, will preach at 11 a.m. worship service for the next three weeks. His topic Sunday will be "Lo, He is Here in The Midst," July 21, "Handling Our Hates," July 28, "When Death Strikes." There will be a discussion of the sermon held in the women's lounge directly after the service.

Nursery through kindergarten children will be cared for during the worship service.

The summer day camp at the church numbers 92 children and will carry through until July 19. Mrs. Frank C. Retz is director of the camp.

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ne at Bloomfield Hills high school, where 850 members of the congregation attended services the first Sunday after the June 13 fire.

"**WE ARE TREMENDOUSLY** gratified by the loyalty of the people to their church," Dr. DeWitt said. "Like a married couple that feels a stronger bond after going through a shakedown together, our people have been welded together in a splendid spirit of unity and concord."

"**THE HUGE STONE** buttresses will have to be peeled down part way from the top and replaced with a good many of the arches on the inside have been pretty badly ruined and will have to be demolished.

"All this involves getting stone to replace what has been ruined, and each stone is tailored to specifications," Dr. DeWitt said.

"The thing that will delay us the longest will be replacing the elaborately hand-carved oak beams. It will be at least one and a half or two years before we will get into the edifice.

Even moving back into the undercroft for worship services, he said, will probably be impossible for six months.

INABILITY TO USE the undercroft for services, where they were held before the fire, stems from the need to remove the roof.

A tar roof originally covered the undercroft. It was removed after the roof of the new church was completed. When the ruined roof is removed, the inside of the church will be exposed to the elements, and rain will seep through to the undercroft.

Meanwhile, services will continue in the undercroft.



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