

Preachers on the Move

A look at the Stationing, Boundary, and Appropriations Committee of the Bible Fellowship Church

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"Start packing, we're moving!" These were the dreaded (or sometimes welcome) words heard by the Preacher's wife when her husband called home at the end of Annual Conference.

For over 100 years the preachers in the Bible Fellowship Church were appointed to the congregations they served. This is an examination of that pulpit supply system – why it was set up as it was and why it was eventually changed.

The Bible Fellowship Church began as a group of believers that came out of the New Mennonites (also known as the Oberholtzer Group). They called themselves the Evangelical Mennonites. The group they left chose their preachers by lot. When a congregation needed a preacher, several names of men in the congregation were brought to the congregation. These men then selected a hymnal from the pile; the man who chose the hymnal with the slip of paper in it was seen as God's choice to be the next preacher. If that man was not a farmer, he had to become one. Perhaps this indicated a full commitment to the community of believers, being tied to the land.

This first list of preachers appears in the fifth semi-annual conference, held in November of 1861; the list is as follows: David Henning, Abraham W Stauffer, William N Shelly, Jonas Musselman, William Gehman, Abraham Kauffman, Eusebius Hershey, Abel Strawn, Henry Diehl, Jacob Gottschall. (There is no indication in the minutes of where these men preached).

Several times in the 1860s there are discussions about and decisions concerning paying a preacher to travel and do missionary work. This seems to be like the evangelistic crusades of more recent years instead of an assignment to a particular congregation. The sponsoring of evangelists and missionaries (home and abroad) continues up to the present.

In the 29th semiannual meeting held in November of 1873, we find the first mention of the appointment of ministers. Wadsworth, Ohio asked for a preacher, so Eusebius Hershey was sent. It was also noted that "While we believe that those congregations which are without preachers are not visited as regularly as they should be, and we, by experience, are convinced that they at times have suffered want, therefore be it

Resolved: that the small congregation in Fleetwood, Berks County, be included in the district of Upper Milford and that the Brethren William Gehman and A. Kauffman shall supervise it for at least six months. However, other brethren may visit Fleetwood also if desired."

Three additional resolutions were recorded that name preachers who will have supervision over named districts. Since the assignments are listed as resolutions and not as a report, it strongly suggests that the assignments were a group decision.

In the five years following it is recorded, "the preachers were appointed for the respective places for the following years..." (Verhandlungen, p.105) followed by the list. There is no indication of who decided the appointments. In November of 1879 there was a special conference to merge with the United Mennonites of Canada, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. A few months later, in March of 1880, we read in the minutes, "the report of the Station Committee was accepted as follows:..." There is no explanation of who was on the Station Committee.

In the Minutes of the Annual Conference of February 1882 the Stationing Committee is defined. "Resolved: that a committee of four delegates be chosen (one from each circuit) to serve as the Stationing Committee. They were chosen as follows: Daniel Koch, Marks D Haws, Jacob Ruch and Joseph Schneider." (Verhandlungen, p.133) This is followed by their report, listing which preachers were assigned to which circuits and who was to assist them. The following years show the Stationing Committee growing in number as the number of congregations and delegates increased.

The Conference of February 1890 gave more power to the Stationing Committee. "Resolved: that we do not accept preachers on probation who are not willing to follow orders by the Stationing Committee..." (Verhandlungen, p.189) The presence of this resolution in the minutes suggests that some of the probationers did not like being assigned by a committee. Or perhaps they had transportation limitations.

The February 1892 conference further defined the Stationing Committee. "Resolved: that the Stationing Committee shall consist of the Presiding Elder and all delegates." (Verhandlungen, p.209) Now the Presiding Elder is on the Committee with all, not some, of the delegates. Did the church leadership not trust or respect the laymen delegates? Or was the addition of the Presiding Elder to the committee for the purpose of giving additional information on the preachers to the delegates? No one is living that can tell us. In the same meeting the Stationing Committee was given the responsibility of fixing the boundaries of the fields of service. Most of the congregations were in a circuit with other congregations, sharing a pastor. Fixing the boundaries has to do with

deciding which congregations were grouped together as a circuit and which congregations were in each district.

In February of 1895, the committee on charges investigated a problem concerning preacher M. D. Haws. Not finding him a man according to I Timothy 3:4,5, the Committee on Charges requested the Stationing Committee not give him a charge for the present. The Committee on Charges did not have power over the decision of the Stationing Committee but could pass along recommendations. A similar situation occurred concerning preacher M. A. Zyner in the same conference. Also in 1895 the committee had a name change, reflecting an addition of responsibilities. The committee was now known as the Stationing, Boundary, and Appropriating Committee.

In the February 1897 conference minutes there is more information concerning the "Appropriating" responsibility of the committee. "Resolved: that the Delegates from the Missions who expect support from the conference shall not be members of the Stationing Committee." (1897 yearbook, p.14) Apparently, the conference was sending money to mission churches to help them get started and grow. The delegate from the mission church was not to sit on the Station, Boundary, and Appropriating Committee because of an obvious conflict of interest.

Another change to the Committee came in 1901. "Resolved: that the three Presiding Elders and the delegates of the circuits and stations constitute the Stationing, Boundary, and Appropriating Committee." (1901 yearbook, p.17) H. B. Musselman was the Presiding Elder over the Schuylkill Valley District, C. H. Brunner was over the Lehigh Valley District, and over the General Missionary District was W. B. Musselman, Missionary Presiding Elder of the Gospel Worker Society.

In 1903 yet another change was made. The committee now consisted of the Presiding Elder, H B Musselman; the President of the Gospel Herald Society, C H Brunner; and the President of the Gospel Worker Society, W B Musselman; along with the delegates. These were the same three men designated in 1901 but with different titles. The Stationing, Boundary, and Appropriating Committee was to divide up the offering that the President of the Gospel Herald Society collected from each charge.

In 1905 a special request is recorded. "Resolved, that this conference desire the Stationing Committee to station H. B. Musselman to Bethlehem at the beginning of its session, and after that he shall be on the Stationing Committee to help station the remaining ministers." (1905 yearbook, p.20) H. B. Musselman was a Presiding Elder going into the conference which means he would be on the committee. For some reason, it was desired that he be the pastor of the Bethlehem church, which he was for two years, but still be on the Stationing Committee for that particular conference. This

entry in the minutes suggests that the church leadership had opinions about where the pastors were stationed. Credit is given to them for going through proper channels. But how could the committee say "no"?

Also in 1905 is a line for moving expenses for preachers that were re-assigned, listed by name. This was included in the list of appropriations for which the committee was responsible. This continued for many years.

The Conference was growing in number of churches. Accordingly, the list of pastoral assignments was also growing. Now the report of the committee was several pages instead of a sentence or two.

In 1915 it was noted that "only two pastors were changed. J. C. Roth was appointed to Emaus and Macungie, and E. E. Kublic to Lehighton and Weissport. The Gospel Herald Society turned Shamokin Mission over to the church and H. A. Kauffman was appointed there as Pastor." (1915 yearbook, pp.29,30) Usually there were more changes, but not for 1915, or for 1916 either. The pastors generally served three or four years then were re-assigned. Why was this done? The Pennsylvania Conference of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church was part of a larger body, called the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, which consisted of Conferences from other states and parts of Canada. They met every four years. In 1900, it was resolved, "No minister shall have charge of the same field longer than three years in succession except by two thirds vote of the annual conference" (General Conference minutes of 1900). A proposal to extend the time of ministers from the term of three years to a term of four years was introduced in 1904 but was not accepted. Finally, in 1916, at the request of the Indiana-Ohio Conference, the General Conference "Resolved, that we interpret the Discipline to mean that the stationing Committee may reappoint a minister to his field for the fourth year or longer upon a two-third vote of the annual conference" (General Conference minutes of 1916). Starting in the 1920s we see preachers remaining at their church longer, some for nine or ten years.

The committee members faithfully discharged their duties in the 1930s and into the 1940s. In 1944 it is recorded: "We, the Stationing, Boundary and Appropriating Committee, do hereby recommend that no Pastor shall be permitted to hold the offices of Pastor in conjunction with that of Presiding Elder. This recommendation to be effective at the next Annual Conference convening October 1945.

"We unanimously recommend in lieu of the above resolution that no change in assignments of Pastors be made at this session of Annual Conference.

"The adoption of this resolution will require major changes in pastoral assignments throughout both districts at the next Annual Conference to be held October 1945." (1944 yearbook, p.46)

The first part of this recommendation seems aimed at B. Bryan Musselman. Not only was he the pastor of Bethel Mennonite Brethren in Christ in Allentown, but he was also a Presiding Elder and President of the Gospel Herald Society. Certainly, it was seen as a conflict of interest to have a pastor on the Stationing Committee even though he would have been on the committee because of his position as Presiding Elder and President of the Gospel Herald Society.

A comparison of the pastoral assignments between 1943 and 1944 shows no changes. By October 1945, the war had ended and so had gas rationing. The list of pastoral assignments for 1945 shows many changes from 1944. I am not sure why this is so.

The congregations continued to grow in numbers. In 1946, the Stationing Committee reported "Whereas, the congregation at Hatfield has through their Quarterly Conference expressed a desire that they be considered self-supporting and receive the status of a station by this Conference, therefore, Resolved, that their request be granted and that their delegate, Daniel K. Ziegler, be permitted to sit on the Stationing, Boundary and Appropriations Committee." In the ensuing years, other congregations would request their own pastor, rather than being part of a circuit. This, of course, would require more pastors. Sometimes a congregation's request for their own pastor was denied, only to be granted the following year. Was it a matter of having a pastor available?

The year 1949 saw two changes concerning preachers. "Resolved, that we establish a time limit of nine years duration for our Pastors and Presiding Elders." "Resolved, that this plan be retroactive." (1949 yearbook, p.28) There is no record in the minutes of the sixty-sixth annual conference as to why this was instituted.

The other change we note is as follows: "Resolved, that at the last session of each local conference the members present vote by ballot as to whether they desire a change or not of their Pastor. The ballots shall be tabulated by the Presiding Elder and the Delegate to the Annual Conference and the ballots shall be held by the Presiding Elder. The results of this vote shall be kept in confidence by the Presiding Elder and Delegate. The Presiding Elder shall impress upon the local conference the fact that this ballot is suggestive but by no means binding upon the Stationing, Boundary and Appropriating Committee of the Annual Conference." (1949 yearbook, p.32,33) The congregation's voice is officially heard, but not necessarily heeded.

In 1958 Spring City and Royersford requested to be separate, but their request was denied. "Conditions with respect to housing and with regard to manpower make it desirable to postpone action on the Spring City – Royersford petition at this time and we so recommend." The decision to break up a circuit depended on having preachers available to fill each pulpit, and that each should have a place to live.

The Gospel Herald Society, besides being an evangelistic work, also served as a training ground for pastors. Men in the society were single. It was thought that married men should have their own church. If a Gospel Herald wished to marry, he had to gain permission from Home Missions to do so. One man requested that permission three times before it was granted. The granted permission coincided with a church needing a pastor.

In 1959 Zionsville was no longer part of a circuit. "Because of the potential for further growth in the area of Zionsville, Pa., the Committee recommends the assignment of a fulltime pastor to this church, with an appropriation from the Home Mission Offering to assist until this church has added strength." (1959 yearbook, p.74) This is an example of some of the appropriation of funds responsibility of the committee.

By 1960 there were over 30 delegates attending Annual Conference. Since that many people on a committee could be cumbersome, the Committee proposed the following: "We recommend that membership on the Stationing, Boundary and Appropriating Committee be limited to those Churches or Circuits and those Missions petitioning for membership on the Committee under our rules, which received at least \$3000 in Steward offering during the year." (1960 yearbook, p.73) The proposal was accepted and appears in the by-laws in the 1961 yearbook, p.6.

Also recommended in 1960 was that a committee be formed to "study the question of financial support of our ministering brethren. This committee shall also study the feasibility of purchasing a group insurance policy covering our ministers for life insurance including health and welfare benefits." (1960 yearbook, p. 73) This is very interesting because 82 years prior the preachers were not allowed to have a life insurance policy. Preachers William N. Shelly and Henry Diehl were dismissed from the conference over this issue. It was thought that having a life insurance policy would show a lack of faith in God. Now it is seen as the responsible thing to do.

In 1965 a committee was formed to study pulpit supply, evidence of dissatisfaction with the Stationing Committee system. Also, during the 1960s, study was beginning concerning church government which would significantly affect the Stationing Committee system. The committee was renamed "The Committee on Stationing and

Appropriations" in 1967. As discussed and established in previous conferences, there was no longer two districts, so establishing boundaries was no longer needed.

The emergence of the Committee on Ministerial Candidates, Pulpit Supply Committee, and the Committee on Credentials during this decade shows a desire to improve the quality of the preachers. Gone were the days of discouraging people from higher education. The young preachers of the 1960s had a college degree and some also had a seminary degree. They met together at Annual Conference with the older preachers, some of whom had not even attended high school.

The report of the Pulpit Supply Committee in 1967 was quite revealing. Though not the Stationing and Appropriations Committee, the very existence of the Pulpit Supply Committee was sending a message that the Stationing and Appropriations Committee needed to change or cease to exist. In the minutes of the 1966 Conference it is recorded that every minister of the Conference is required to study the proposals and respond with recommendations for anything they thought would not work (1966 yearbook, p.46). It met with mixed results. We read, "It is hard to draw any inference from the failure of 24 churches to make any response, except that we are totally indifferent to the problem. Many of the replies clearly show that much thought had been given to it. The nature of most of the replies indicated that there is an almost total failure to understand the proposal. Some of the replies merely maligned the committee, charging it with being presumptuous, of using underhanded tactics, that certain individuals on the Committee were being untrue to their own convictions, or that the Committee was bearing false witness. We found no help as we looked for a solution.

"The Committee is not making presumptions. It is not using 'tactics.' It is not in a battle. It is sincerely carrying out an assignment given to it by the Annual Conference." (1967 yearbook, p.116)

This seems a bit scathing. Change can be painful, but it might be more painful to stay the way we are.

The problems of having a Stationing Committee fall into three general categories: the annual poll; the nine-year limit; and the system itself. The problems listed for these categories are too numerous to list here. However, some light was shed on the nine-year limit: "By setting a nine-year limit, as we did in 1949, or any limit, we determine by legislation what is the will of the Lord, for every individual pastor and every congregation. This legislation in 1949 was the outgrowth of abuses that arose after practically absolute power was given to two Presiding Elders. This is a harsh statement,

but two wrongs do not make a right. A nine-year limit on a pastor's service is just as arbitrary." (1967 yearbook, p.122)

The report reveals that the pulpit supply system had changed "from 'a system in which pastors were stationed' to 'a system in which pastors are called.' Since this change in procedure, the role of the Stationing Committee has been reduced to the point that there remains only the responsibility of assigning men who failed to receive a call." (1967 yearbook, p.126)

The committee made recommendations concerning congregations that needed a pastor. The Official Board of a church should consult the Ministerial Candidate Committee and the Credentials Committee to learn of suitable potential pastors. A nominating committee would then interview potential pastors. A candidate would then be presented to the congregation for their consideration. Opportunities for getting acquainted and to hear sermons would be given. Eventually the congregation would vote to call the pastor. The power has switched from Presiding Elders and delegates to the congregation. Safeguards for the pastor were proposed, giving them options to not pursue invitations from particular churches. The establishment of the Pastoral Relations Committee further protects and supports the pastor in addition to smoothing out any rough patches between pastors and their congregations. Guidelines for the pastor's compensation and housing were spelled out. A procedure for pastors to resign or for a congregation to release a pastor were developed.

These proposed changes were not readily accepted. The Pulpit Supply Committee reported in 1968, "The committee notes the repetition of old difficulties and the occurrence of some new problems as evidence of the continuing inability of the present system to cope with our pulpit supply problems.

"The Committee has become aware of a group of men who feel the present system can be adequately revised. The Committee itself did not share this opinion. However, to allow progress it recommends that a committee of five men who believe the present system can be made adequate by revising it be appointed by the Chairman and that it be given the assignment of preparing such a revision and to present it to the Adjourned session of the 85th Annual Conference." (1968 yearbook, p.108)

In 1969, as part of the ongoing change in church government, the following was proposed as transitional legislation. "In September 1970, the present responsibilities of the District Superintendent in Pulpit Supply shall be the responsibility of the Credentials Committee" (1969 yearbook, p.85) (This rule will apply only to 1970 and will need to be enacted annually to keep it in force until a new system of pulpit supply makes other provision). By this time the office of Presiding Elder was replaced by District

Superintendants. This proposal is worded as a declaration that change to the pulpit supply system will be enacted. The question remains as to when and to exactly what.

In 1970, a pulpit supply system was adopted as a substitute for the existing pulpit supply rules in the Faith and Order (1970 yearbook, p.19ff). On the first reading it was approved with 63 yes and 16 no votes, and 2 abstentions. Details were spelled out for procedures for churches to follow when needing a pastor. The Ministerial Relations Committee and the Credentials Committee would be involved. In the same yearbook is a report with parallels and differences between two proposals for pulpit supply (1970 yearbook, p.104-106). There is still a report of the Stationing Committee. Besides the list of churches and who is appointed, it includes this statement, which had appeared for several years before this: "We approve the choice of pastor made by each particular church under the Pulpit Supply System." (1970 yearbook, p.109).

The following year the Pulpit Supply System was approved at the second reading with 68 yes and 10 no votes. Also in 1971, the Ministerial Relations Committee adopted the following resolution: "That we declare that our Pulpit Supply System shall be effective at the adjournment of the 88th Annual Conference, October 15, 1971. This means that all relationships established at this Annual Conference shall continue indefinitely. It also means that each of the churches that is without a pastor has the privilege of invoking all of the provisions of our system immediately." (1971 yearbook, p.26) The other resolution declares that the "form of call" be used and that the churches make sure the pastor is paid a certain amount. The Stationing Committee made its last report, having approved the choice of pastor made by each particular church.

How did the Stationing Committee system affect the pastor's family? There are not many pastors still alive that can tell their stories but some of their children are still breathing. Jim Hartman, son of Ernest B. Hartman, said that every year during Annual Conference they got the barrels out just in case they had to start packing dishes and other items for moving. Jim noted that every year at camp meeting there was an opportunity to hear other preachers. He wonders if people "shopped for" a pastor that way. Jim shared that his only sibling, his sister Janet, was born deaf. He noticed that at each appointment his father had there was access to a school for the deaf. He likes to think that was by design. Jim thinks it is better for a pastor to stay a long time rather than be moved often. He never heard his father complain about the Stationing Committee system.

Lois Plows, wife of preacher Keith Plows and daughter of preacher Wilbur Hartman has experience with both systems of pulpit supply. She remembers being told of the stress and suspense at Annual Conference, the preachers not knowing if they were going to

move. She and her mother would wait to hear from her father at Annual Conference to find out if they were moving that year. When she was in the third grade the family had to move to Easton. There she was not able to read the teacher's writing on the board because she had not yet learned to write in cursive. Her teacher helped her catch up. Lois found herself in yet another school six years later when her father was assigned to Emmaus. There were more children at that church; her adjustment there was a good one.

Ethel Herb, daughter of preacher E. E. Kublic, says she attended school in Stroudsburg from first grade through grade 11, then her father was stationed at Lebanon. She was disappointed that she could not graduate from high school with all her friends. She thought it was inconsiderate of the Stationing Committee to move the family at that time.

Pastor LeRoy Heller said it would take the Stationing Committee a whole day to figure out where everyone would be. When a move was required, they had to preach at the new assignment the following Sunday. They had to pack up quickly. The harder part was detaching emotionally and not having a chance to say goodbye. It was difficult.

LeRoy also shared that some delegates were told by their congregations to be sure to come back with a different preacher, that they needed a change. The Stationing Committee system did not give an opportunity to see what was a good match of gifts and needs. Some assignments were successful and some not so much. As for the yearly congregational vote to keep the pastor or not, pastors would walk on eggshells the three months prior to the vote. One pastor actually was bedridden with back pain for several days before Annual Conference because of the stress of potential rejection.

R. C. Reichenbach said of the Stationing Committee that there was a lot of politics and favoritism. The District Superintendents had favorites and "promoted" some over others. There was a lot of political maneuvering, and the committee could not be totally objective. It was not always pleasant to learn that you were edged out of a nice assignment. When Thomas Turnbull was assigned from Graterford to Philadelphia Wissinoming, he saw it as a step down. He attributed it to his not being in the inner circle among the favorites. He found he was not able to support his family on the meager offerings at the Philadelphia church so he left and joined the Evangelical Congregational church. When the pastoral assignments were announced, it was thought that if you got sent to Mount Carmel, you must have done something wrong.

Preacher Carl Cassel's father, Byron Cassel, was a delegate from Philadelphia Salem for many years. The individual congregations were expected to accept whatever pastor was assigned to them. However, one year the Bethlehem church said they wanted Bill

Heffner to be their pastor; that was the only condition on which they would sign the report. They got what they wanted. Bethlehem was a bigger church, throwing their weight around. Byron saw the writing on the wall and declared, "if we let that continue, we're going to have to do it differently."

In the early 1900s, the Quakertown church would not accept the pastoral assignment and they went to court. The church split, the departing faction incorporating as Evangelical Mennonites. They did not want to lose their pastor, Milton Zyner.

Pastor David A. Thomann, son of Pastor David E. Thomann, shares that his parents were moved from Northampton and Nazareth to Jersey City, New Jersey, when Polly was pregnant with their daughter Beverly. Polly cried for three months. Polly went to Philadelphia and stayed with her sister-in-law until Beverly was born. When David E. Thomann was assigned to Harleysville, he made the drive from Quakertown for several weeks until the family could move. It is the Thomanns' observation that doing away with the Stationing Committee took the tension away from Annual Conference. David A. Thomann says he does not want to go back to having a Stationing Committee.

Barry Kauffman's grandmother was Esther Gehret whose first husband was preacher Horace Kaufman who died in 1918 in the Spanish Flu epidemic. Her second husband was preacher N. H. Wolfe. She shared with Barry that she did not like moving around. She did not like the week of Annual Conference of not knowing if she was moving, then having to pack up quickly if she was.

Pastor Gene Smith came into the Bible Fellowship Church late in his career, in 1990. He said if the Bible Fellowship Church had a Stationing Committee, he would not have joined. Gene thinks it takes three or four years to get to know the congregation to the point where pastor and congregation work well together. At the seven year mark, if the pastor suspects he may be re-assigned, he would lose motivation for doing anything new at the church. What would be the point?

Preacher Winfred Hottle objected to doing away with the Stationing Committee because there would no longer be any security for pastors. Byron Cassel answered and said if he ceases to be productive for the Reading Railroad, he would lose his job. Same should go for preachers. This was one of the objections to the Stationing Committee, that it shielded the less competent men in the ministry. (1967 yearbook, p.126)

How was the Stationing Committee meeting conducted? Preacher Dick Ruth said it was a "puppet show and a sham." Even though each congregation voted yes or no to retain their pastor, the congregation's desire was not always honored.

Clyde Snyder was the delegate from Hatfield in the 1950s and 1960s. He says that not all the delegates were called to participate on the committee, only if their church was affected. He played football and basketball during the time the decisions were made. He suspects the pastors were making the decisions. If that was true, it was only true of some preachers. Many preachers were genuinely in the dark about their assignments until it was announced. Clyde says Hatfield was in the middle of a building program in 1954 when Preacher Bill Heffner was taken from them. The Bethlehem church wanted him.

In the 1967 report of the Committee to Study Pulpit Supply, it is revealed that "prior to the adoption of the present pulpit supply system, the Stationing, Boundary and Appropriating Committee had each delegate make a list of his first, second and third choices. This seems to be the origin of the present requirement that the Official Board list its first and second choices. This procedure limits the number of choices a particular church can make in any one year." (1967 yearbook, p.125)

The last time delegate from Quakertown Harold Shelly was on the Stationing Committee was 1966. He said, "By that time, sessions of the committee were rather pro forma." He said in 1966 he met with District Superintendent C. E. Kirkwood before conference. They had an agreement on who they would like to have and it came to pass. Harold's father, also Harold Shelly, was the delegate a few years previously. The committee wanted the Quakertown church to take someone who had some issues. Preacher Jansen Hartman advised them, "just say no." He said they cannot make you take someone you don't want. "Pop Shelly" did as suggested, things came to a standstill in the committee, but they did not get that person.

Mildred Mengle Oyler, of Blandon, in a 1997 recording of her recollections said "G. K. Himmelreich [1861-1943] was the delegate to Annual Conference...He would say 'going to conference and getting the pastor you wanted was like horse-trading.' Those days the pastors had no voice in where they were stationed."

On a humorous note, a story was shared by David Allen to Rachel Schmoyer. David's father was preacher Russell T. Allen. He shares that Frick Transport in Easton, Pa was used to transport the Lehigh Valley pastors from one church to another when the pastors were moved. Don Frick tells the story of moving the Allen family to Jersey City, New Jersey in 1955. The Jersey City church was an old factory, the church on the bottom and parsonage on the second floor. Don Frick who is 5'3" and 140 pounds was moving furniture along with Russ Allen, a very large man, a former football player. Russ' wife Dee wanted the player piano on the second floor. They decided to hoist it up with a rope since the staircase had too many turns. Don and Russ were on the

ground floor, hoisting the piano, when suddenly Russ' pants fell down! Russ decided to let go of the rope and pull up his pants. He expected the piano to crash down, but it didn't. When he stood up, he saw the piano ten feet above the ground and Don Frick holding other end of the rope, also in midair. Russ asked him what he should do. Don said grab the rope and pull!!! They had a laugh and Don said he would never forget Russ. As a side note, years later Russ' son Dave married Don's daughter Donna.

Many more stories could be shared but they all end up saying that the Stationing Committee system of pulpit supply was not good. It did not take into account the gifts of the pastor or the needs of the congregation. It was inconsiderate of the pastor's family. It shielded preachers that were not well trained or just should not have been a preacher. It took many years before a new system was considered and developed. Having a more educated clergy and laity helped. Our pastors stay longer at their churches. A loving bond forms between the pastor and the congregation. A great work is being accomplished for the Lord. Let us not ever go back to having a Stationing Committee.

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