

the media shelf

A review by Huey A. Bridgman

Church Administration

Programs, Process, Purpose

Robert N. Bacher

Michael L. Cooper-White

Church Administration is a scholarly testimonial of two eminently qualified ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Bacher and Cooper-White have served both at the local church level and in denominational positions and write from a broad range of experience.

The book is true to its basic premise: “church administration is a profoundly holy calling, and activities commonly called administration are part and parcel of most ministries.” It is the authors’ stated belief that “one whose work is primarily administration is no less a faithful servant than those who mostly preach, teach or counsel.”

Church Administration provides what is surely to become the basic text for seminaries and universities providing training for pastors and church staff members who will be working in the area of church administration.

While the writers are Lutherans, they have done an excellent job in making each subject applicable to those ministering over a broad range of denominations and faith groups. Spiritually and biblically based, the ideas and suggestions will be helpful to all seeking to provide an effective ministry regardless of denomination.

The text is a must read for all clergy within their formative years of ministry, providing guidance in both what to do and how to do administrative functions within

the context of the local church. No doubt, it will soon become a much-used resource for seasoned senior ministers as well.

Salaried church staff members, deacons and other volunteers will have their minds stretched and their hearts stirred as they learn ways to make their endeavors more fruitful as well as enjoyable.

Chapter 3, “Boards: Blessed Balladeers,” is a discussion concerning ways to enhance the effectiveness of church organizational boards such as deacons. This chapter alone is well worth the price of the book.

Subjects such as church planning, developing annual budgets and stewardship campaigns are all treated with careful attention to detail and a sensitivity that indicates the authors’ awareness to possible dangers a young pastor might encounter in working within these areas.

Improper staff supervision and conflict within church staffs have been the cause of much anxiety and reason for the downfall of many good pastors. A chapter relevant to these situations deals with the ramifications of the supervisory process. Topics such as preparation for hiring, employing, conducting performance reviews and even dismissal are discussed with valuable methodologies provided. An entire chapter is devoted to the subject of coping with conflict in the church.

While the authors make it clear they are not providing legal counsel or advice, they

do an excellent job of discussing the ever-increasing demand for churches to have attorneys available who are capable of providing sound practical legal guidance.

In the last chapter, “Afterword: The Church Administrator as Person,” the authors take a final look at the church administrator and the role he or she is called to fill.

“Equipped with a degree of understanding and corresponding skills, it is possible to do administration and do it well, with full knowledge that it won’t be neat and without pain.”

“The administrator who ceases to learn is in danger of being overtaken by developing events and emerging needs. Part of being on top of things involves an open attitude toward learning that never stops.”

Church Administration is an excellent resource for those working in the church, at whatever level, to continue growing in this field that is ever expanding in both size and complexity.

The 13 appendices provide samples of many of the subjects discussed and serve as valuable resources for pastors or persons called to serve within the administrative arena. **BT**

—*Huey A. Bridgman is a former church administrator at First Baptist Church of Columbus, Ga., and currently serves as a director of Baptists Today.*



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