

Part 4: My Personal Journey- leaving the past, moving on

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Finally, there was the matter of contemporary worship music. This was not a major issue in itself like the others, but feelings were hurt and that seriously effected some of those relationships we have mentioned above. This added greatly to the tension and friction during the last year. To begin with, the large main room in the church was built as a multipurpose room. That means the acoustics were poor, with sound reverberating off the plain walls with every gathering, not only Sunday Worship. We installed audio equipment we hoped would help and hung some banners and drapes. But the problem remained and made it difficult for some people to hear and particularly painful for some people who also had real trouble with the type of music and instruments that the Praise team began to use. If we had moved to Phase Two, that problem could have been eliminated in a new Sanctuary. The larger issue was not the sound, but Praise Music itself and the kind of worship that goes with it. There are probably thousands of churches that have waged the so-called "worship wars". They were not unique to our church. There were some serious confrontations over this matter and a number of people had their feelings hurt enough to leave the church. I honestly tried to seek a middle road and I tried to be supportive of the youthful leader and members of the Team (although some did not believe I was trying to do that). It was a no-win, polarizing situation. We could not please everyone. Some churches have not resolved this problem, but the contemporary praise music and worship seems to be the dominant style every where today.

One of the decisions I made after leaving that pastorate was never to get involved again in a contemporary evangelical church. I do have a problem with the music and the very informal atmosphere of the Service and the emphasis upon experiential Christianity. Years before we went to Vermont, I had become a confirmed Reformed Anglican. I determined to set aside what I liked about that in order to minister in the Vermont church. I loved to preach and teach the Bible and I loved being a Pastor. This church offered me the opportunity to do these things I loved, so I honestly tried to be simply a mainstream Evangelical in keeping with the Denomination's standards. (We even lost some members over that as a few became involved in Pentecostalism and left to join the local Church of God- again rendering relationships).

I am glad we went to Vermont. Some real good came from it all, but the experience definitely ended my desire to continue in a Church as a Pastor and ended the 45 year career which began when I was 20 and still in college. We now worship in an evangelical Episcopal (Anglican) Church which we are enjoying. I have turned my full-time attention to prayer, study and writing, seeking God's Norms in all things and trying to lay a foundation for others coming along to build their lives God's way in our world ("planting trees"). I publish my material on this website and in my almost daily Blog. I also send a Devotional Meditation out to many twice a week via email and have had a positive response to that from many. For this I am grateful. Occasionally I do supply preaching and lead small group Bible studies. I hope this rehearsal of my last pastorate will be helpful to some other younger Pastors and church leaders coming after me. I have shared some key experiences as I remember them as lessons from which others may learn. I especially pray all "people of influence" in local churches will use their influence constructively in the support of their Pastor and in pursuit of Christ's vision for his Church (the local institutional kind). Amen