

**SERMON
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH WAUWATOSA
OCTOBER 1, 2000**

8:45AM AND 11:00AM

TEXTS: BAPTISM 1 COR 12:13

“FOR IN THE ONE SPIRIT WE WERE ALL BAPTIZED
INTO ONE BODY – JEWS OR GREEKS, SLAVES OR FREE—
AND WE WERE ALL MADE TO DRINK OF ONE SPIRIT.”

LORD’S SUPPER LUKE 22:19-20

“Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had
given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them,
saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do
this in remembrance of me.’ And he did the same
with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup that is
poured out for you is the new covenant in my
blood.’”

**FOCUS: OVERVIEW OF SACRAMENTAL
HISTORICAL, THEOLOGICAL, CONTEMPORARY
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME IN THE YEAR 2000?**

LET US PRAY:

**GOD OF UNFATHANABLE GRACE,
WE COME THIS MORNING TO HEAR YOUR WORD.
FILL US WITH YOUR PEACE WHICH IS BEYOND OUR
UNDERSTANDING.
AS WE ARE ABOUT TO HEAR THE GREAT STORIES,
WE PRAY FOR INSIGHT AND GROWTH FOR A PORTION OF
UNDERSTANDING, OF WHAT THESE SCRIPTURES HOLD FOR
US.
AS WE EXPERIENCE YOUR WORD MAY WE BE FILLED WITH
YOUR AWE AND MYSTERY AS THE TEACHINGS SOMEHOW
FILTER INTO OUR MINDS AND SOULS.
GIVE US WISDOM TO ASK, SEEK, AND KNOCK AS WE
EXPERIENCE YOU IN OUR DAILY LIVES.
IN THE NAME OF YOUR SON JESUS THE CHRIST. AMEN.**

LATE THIS SUMMER I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND
THE BOSTON SEMINAR,
A PART OF THE CONGREGATIONAL FOUNDATION
FOR THEOLOGICAL STUDIES,
WHICH WAS HELD AT
THE CONGREGATIONAL LIBRARY IN BOSTON.

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY, I WISH
EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU
COULD TAKE PART IN.

YOU CAN SEE A SHOT OF THE CONGREGATIONAL LIBRARY IF YOU
TUNE INTO THE ALLY MCBEAL SHOW ON MONDAY EVENINGS.

ALLY'S LAW OFFICE IS IN THIS BUILDING.

WELL AT LEAST, TV GIVES YOU THE IMPRESSION
THROUGH THE POWER OF TELEVISION AND IMAGINATION.

THE TV SHOW ALSO PANS THE BOSTON NEIGHBORHOOD
OF THE OLD COURTHOUSE
WHICH STANDS IMMEDIATELY DOWN AND ACROSS
THE STREET FROM THE LIBRARY.

WHAT YOU DON'T SEE IS "KING'S CHAPEL",
WHICH WAS THE FIRST EPISCAPAL CHURCH
ALLOWED IN BOSTON.

PROBABLY DATING BACK TO THE 1700'S.
SUBSEQUENTLY THIS BECAME
THE FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH IN BOSTON.
THIS IS JUST OFF TO THE RIGHT OF YOUR TV SCREEN.

OH WELL, SO MUCH FOR THE GEOGRAPHICAL
IMAGERY OF AMERICAN HISTORICAL,
DENOMINATIONAL, HERITAGE.

MY WEEK OF STUDY WAS LIMITED TO
THE PRUITAN/CONGREGATIONAL BEGINNINGS.
IT SOON BECAME EVIDENT THAT CHURCH HISTORY
ACROSS THE DENOMINATIONAL BOUNDARIES
WAS AN INTRICAL PART OF OUR UNITED STATES HISTORY.
WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO WALK THE BOSTON STREETS
AND VISIT NOT ONLY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES
BUT, TOUR VARIOUS CHRISTIAN, AND
OTHER RELIGIOUS PLACES OF WORSHIP.

TODAY IS WORLD WIDE COMMUNION SUNDAY.
THINK ABOUT IT JUST A MOMENT.
DO YOU REALIZE THOUSANDS EVEN MILLIONS OF CHRISTIANS
ARE SHARING IN THIS SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

EACH DENOMINATION
EACH INDIVIDUAL CHURCH,
EACH INDIVIDUAL HUMAN BEING
IN BIG CITIES, SMALL TOWNS, MOUNTIAN PASSES
AND COUNTRY VALLEYS
ARE SINGING, PRAYING, AND LISTENING TO THE BIBLICAL
WORDS WHICH WE JUST HEARD.

IT IS AN AWESOME CONCEPT.
LORD'S SUPPER IS ONE OF THE SACRAMENTS.
TODAY AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL.

WE ARE NOT ONLY GOING TO HAVE COMMUNION
BUT WE WILL BE HAVING 3 BAPTISMS AT THE 11AM WORSHIP.
AND DO YOU REALIZE
AS YOU SIT HERE IN THIS SPECIAL PLACE, YOU CALL YOUR HOME.
PEOPLE ARE SITTING IN THEIR SPECIAL PLACES
WHICH THEY CALL THEIR HOME...
AND THEY ALSO ARE IN MANY INCIDENTS
TAKING PART IN
THE ADDITIONAL SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.
AGAIN AN AWESOME CONCEPT!!

AND SO I RETURN TO THE CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY

AND POLITY COURSE OF THIS PAST SUMMER....

I CANNOT FATHOM THAT THE PILGRIMS OF 1627

WHO LIVED AT PLYMOUTH PLANTATION

EVER COULD EVEN IMAGINE THAT THEIR BRAVE JOURNEY

TO THE UNITED STATES, WOULD EVER BE AT THIS MAGNITUDE.

AND YET I WONDER:

THEY WERE GREAT SCHOLARS OF THE WORD:

AND MATTHEW 28: 19

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING

THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE

HOLY SPIRIT.”

SO WITH LIVING IN COMMUNITYCAME BAPTIZING

AND LIVING IN COMMUNITYAS PAUL SAID

IS LIVING AS THE BODY OF CHRIST.

SACRAMENTS CAME CENTURIES BEFORE THE PILGRIMS LANDED

ON AMERICAN SOIL, AT PLYMOUTH ROCK IN 1620.

THIS MORNING WE WILL BE EXPLORING THE SACRAMENTS

WITH EMPHASIS PLACED ON OUR HERITAGE OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY.

LET US STEP BACK IN TIME.....

SOMEONE STATED:

**“A SACRAMENTAL MOMENT IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN
IS WHEN WE CELEBRATE GOD’S LOVE
AND PRESENCE IN A SPECIAL WAY.
IT IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP,
INSTITUTED BY CHRIST
AND CELEBRATED BY CHRISTIANS VISITED BY GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT
CHRIST IS RE-PRESENTED: IT IS AN INCARNATIONAL MOMENT.”**

**FOR THE FIRST 12-13 CENTURIES THERE WERE TWO SACRAMENTS.
EASTER WAS THE TIME FOR BOTH THESE SACRMENTS
TO BE ADMINISTERED.**

**IN 1341, THE COUNCIL OF TRENT,
IN AN ATTEMPT TO RESPOND TO THE SACRAMENTAL NEEDS
OF THE PEOPLE,**

INSTITUTED FIVE MORE SACRAMENTS:

**PENANCE, WHICH IS REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS:
HOLY ORDERS, WHICH IS ORDINATION;
MATRIMONY;
CONFIRMATION;
AND EXTREME UNCTION, WHICH IS HEALING.**

DURING THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION,

MOST CHURCHES RETURNED TO THE TWO SACRAMENTS.

FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

FIRST: THEY WERE INSTITUTED BY CHRIST

SECOND: CHRIST COMMANDED US TO OBSERVE THEM,

(REFERENCE TO THIS IN MATT 28:19,

LUKE 22:19-20; ACTS 2:28; 1 COR 11: 23FF)

THIRD: THEY ARE ESSENTIAL TO US AS DIVINE ACTS.

ONE PROTESTANT CHURCH TODAY,

ALSO RECOGNIZES FOOT WASHING

AS A SACRAMENT OF SERVANTHOOD. (JOHN 13:5FF)

THERE IS NOTHING DISTINCTIVELY 'CONGREGATIONAL'

IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY

---EXCEPT THE GREATER EMPHASIS UPON THE COVENANT IDEA.

IN THE PURITAN/CONGREGATIONAL MOVEMENT

THE NATURE OF THE SACRAMENTS

STAND IN THE CLASSICAL REFORMED CHRISTIAN TRADITION

IN MATTERS OF DOCTRINE.

BOTH BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

WERE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL LORD'S DAY SERVICE.

THE PROTESTANT MEANING OF THE SACRAMENTS
COMES OUT OF REFORMATION THEOLOGIANS:

JOHN CALVIN

LUTHER AND ZWINGLI

THESE MEN HAD NUMEROUS

AND I WOULD ADD...HEALTHY THEOLOGICAL DEBATES.

CALVIN STATED.....

SACRAMENTS ARE SEALS OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

THEY ARE VISIBLE SIGNS

THAT GOD HAS GIVEN, TO CONFIRM TO THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON,

GOD'S COVENANT PROMISES MADE THROUGH GOD'S WORD.

IN THE BAPTISMAL THEOLOGY IT SIGNIFIES THE WASHING AWAY OF
SIN AND THE RISING TO NEW LIFE IN CHRIST.

ADDITIONALLY CALVIN STATES:

**"SACRAMENTS ARE MEANS BY WHICH GOD STRENGTHENS AND
DEEPENS THE FAITH OF THE BELIEVER IN RESPONSE TO THE WORD."**

A PROMINENT EARLY PURITAN/CONGREGATIONAL

TEACHER AND MINISTER....

WHO LIVED IN HOLLAND IN THE 1620-30'S

WAS WILLIAM AMES.

AMES HAS STRONGLY INFLUENCED OUR PRESENT DAY
UNDERSTANDING OF SACRAMENTS IN THE CONGREGATIONAL WAY.
“THE PRIMARY END OF A SACRAMENT IS TO SEAL THE COVENANT.
AND THIS OCCURS NOT ON GOD’S PART ONLY
BUT SECONDARILY ON OURS,
FOR NOT ONLY ARE THE GRACE AND PROMISES OF GOD
SEALED TO US BUT ALSO OUR THANKFULNESS AND OBEDIENCE
TOWARDS HIM.
A SECONDARY END IS THE PROFESSION OF FAITH AND LOVE.
TAKING THE SACRAMENTS SYMBOLIZES THE UNION WE HAVE WITH
GOD IN CHRIST
AND THE COMMUNION WE HOLD WITH ALL THOSE WHO ARE PARTAKES
OF THE SAME UNION...”

I HOPE BY NOW, I HAVEN’T LOST YOU ENTIRELY.....?
YOU HAVE JUST HEARD A LOT OF WORDS AND THEOLOGY.
I ENCOURAGE YOU TO HANG IN THERE A LITTLE LONGER...

I RETURN TO AMES WORDS.

HE STATES THE KEY UNDERSTANDING IS:

“THE UNION WITH GOD IN CHRIST”
THAT IS SYMBOLIZED IN THE SACRAMENTAL ACTION.
THE SACRAMENTS BAPTISM AND LORD’S SUPPER

BECOME THE VISIBLE REMINDERS
AND MEANS OF CONFIRMING THE CONDITIONAL COVENANT
BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANITY.”

THE CLASSICAL CONGREGATIONAL UNDERSTANDING
OF SACRAMENTOLOGY

IS FOUND IN

“THE CONFESSIONAL OF FAITH OF THE SAVOY DECLARATION” ...1708

“IT IS DOCTRINAL CONFESSION LONG CONTINUED A RECOGNIZED
STANDARD FOR THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES IN AMERICA.”

THIS DOCUMENT STATES:

“SACRAMENTS ARE HOLY SIGNS AND SEALS OF THE COVENANT OF
GRACE, IMMEDIATELY INSTITUTED BY CHRIST TO REPRESENT HIM AND
HIS BENEFITS, AND TO CONFIRM OUR INTEREST IN HIM, AND SOLEMNLY
TO ENGAGE US TO THE SERVICE OF GOD IN CHRIST, ACCORDING TO
HIS WORD.

...IN EVERY SACRAMENT THERE IS A SPIRITUAL RELATION, OR
SACRAMENTAL UNION...”

THESE WORDS ARE QUITE SIMILAR TO WILLIAM AMES WRITINGS
OF 1633.

THE QUESTION, I AM SURE IS DARTING THROUGH YOUR HEAD,...
.... IS.... **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?**

THE WORDS TO REMEMBER

FROM THE AMES STATEMENT ON SACRAMENTS ARE:

--SEALS OF THE COVENANT

--GRACE AND PROMISES OF GOD

--FAITH AND LOVE

--UNION WE HAVE WITH GOD IN CHRIST

--UNION WE HOLD WITH ALL THOSE WHO PARTAKE.

MAYBE SOME OF YOU HAVE FAMILY CHURCH HERITAGE

OUT OF DIFFERING TRADITIONS.

SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN ON YOUR PERSONAL FAITH JOURNEY

AND YOU ARE STILL FORMULATING THE

THEOLOGY OF SACRAMENTS.

TODAY WE SIT IN OUR CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

WE ARE LOOKING AT A RICH THEOLOGICAL HERITAGE.

THE QUESTION CONTINUES TO BE....

WHAT ARE THE SACRAMENTS?

******WHAT IS BAPTISM TO YOU SITTING HERE?**

IT IS A SACRED MOMENT OF INVITATION,

ACKNOWLEDGING WHAT GOD HAS DONE.

WATER AS A SYMBOL OF PURIFICATION,

IS USED TO MARK THE BEGINNING OF NEW LIFE,

THE CONGREGATION WHISPERS GOD'S ACCEPTANCE
BY PROMISING TO SURROUND
THE ONE RECEIVING BAPTISM,
WITH LOVE AND SUPPORT
TO ENABLE ONES JOURNEY
TOWARD WHOLENESS IN CHRIST JESUS.

LET US LOOK AT COMMUNION, LORD'S SUPPER OR EUCHARIST?
JESUS SHARED COMMUNION WITH HIS DISCIPLES.

IN COMMUNION THERE ARE OUTWARD AND VISIBLE SIGNS
AND AN INWARD AND SPIRITUAL GRACE
SIGNIFYING TO ALL
THE OFFERING AND ACCEPTING OF A RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANITY.

THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN HOLY COMMUNION
IS CHRIST RE-PRESENTED.

JESUS AT THE LAST SUPPER SAT WITH THOSE HE LOVED.

WE OUGHT TO SIT WITH THOSE WE LOVE
AND COMMIT OURSELVES TO BE THE BEGINNING OF
THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN OUR PLACE AND TIME.

JESUS ACCEPTED HIS OWN DEATH IN THE LAST SUPPER.

"I WILL NOT DRINK THIS CUP AGAIN..."

HOLY COMMUNION OUGHT TO BE A TIME

WHEN WE ACCEPT OUR DEATH;
DEATH TO SELF, AND LIVE FOR OTHERS.

NOW I RETURN TO THE BOSTON SEMINAR:
AS I SAT WITH 16 OTHER CLERGY AND SEMINARY STUDENTS
IN THE LECTURES ON CONGREGATIONALISM
THIS SUMMER,
I LISTENED AND PARTICIPATED IN DISCUSSIONS
ON VARIOUS THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES
OF THE THEOLOGY SURROUNDING THE SACRAMENTS.

***I FOUND SOME TO BE CONFUSING
AS I WOULD PRESUME SOME OF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED
LISTENING THIS MORNING.

***SOME I FOUND I COULD NOT FULLY ACCEPT

***AND SOME CAME CLOSE TO WHAT I HAVE FORMULATED.

BUT ONE THING I DID REALIZE.

WE ARE ALL ON INDIVIDUAL FAITH JOURNEYS.

WE ALL ARE AS PAUL SAYS IN PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14 AND 4:9

"I DO NOT CONSIDER THAT I HAVE MADE IT MY OWN;

BUT THIS ONE THING I DO

FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND

AND STRAINING FORWARD TO WHAT LIES AHEAD.

I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL FOR THE PRIZE
OF THE HEAVENLY CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.”
“KEEP ON DOING THE THINGS THAT YOU HAVE LEARNED
AND RECEIVED AND HEARD AND SEEN IN ME,
AND THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.

SO IF I HAVE COMMITTED MYSELF TO THE CONGREGATIONAL WAY
I MUST HOLD TO THE RICH CONGREGATIONAL
THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS AS FOUND IN
THE **“CREEDS AND PLATFORMS OF CONGREGATIONALISM”**
WHICH HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY RESEARCHED
STUDIED, AND DEBATED BY SCHOLARLY
THEOLOGIAN OF OUR HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

DURING THE YEAR, I WILL BE OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU TO
CONTINUE IN YOUR FAITH JOURNEY AND TO EXAMINE
CONGREGATIONAL PERSPECTIVES THROUGH BOOK STUDIES, PAPERS
PRESENTED AND CLASSES OFFERED HERE AT CHURCH, AT THE
NATIONAL OFFICE AND OFF SITE LOCATIONS.

I ENCOURAGE YOU TO STEP TO THE EDGE ONCE IN A WHILE, PUSH
YOUR PERSONAL ENVELOPE OR COMFORT ZONE TO SEEK
KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING FROM THE TEACHINGS WE FIND IN
THIS BOOK WE CALL THE BIBLE.

AS YOU GO FROM THIS PLACE

REMEMBER THESE WORDS...

SACRAMENTS ARE GOD'S GIFT OF GRACE

THAT COMES STRAIGHT FROM HIS HEART TO YOU AND ME.

LET THE MEANS OF GRACE

IN YOUR LIVES

BE CHANNELS OF GOD'S LOVE

FLOWING FORTH TO YOU AND THROUGH YOU

TO ALL OTHERS.

AMEN