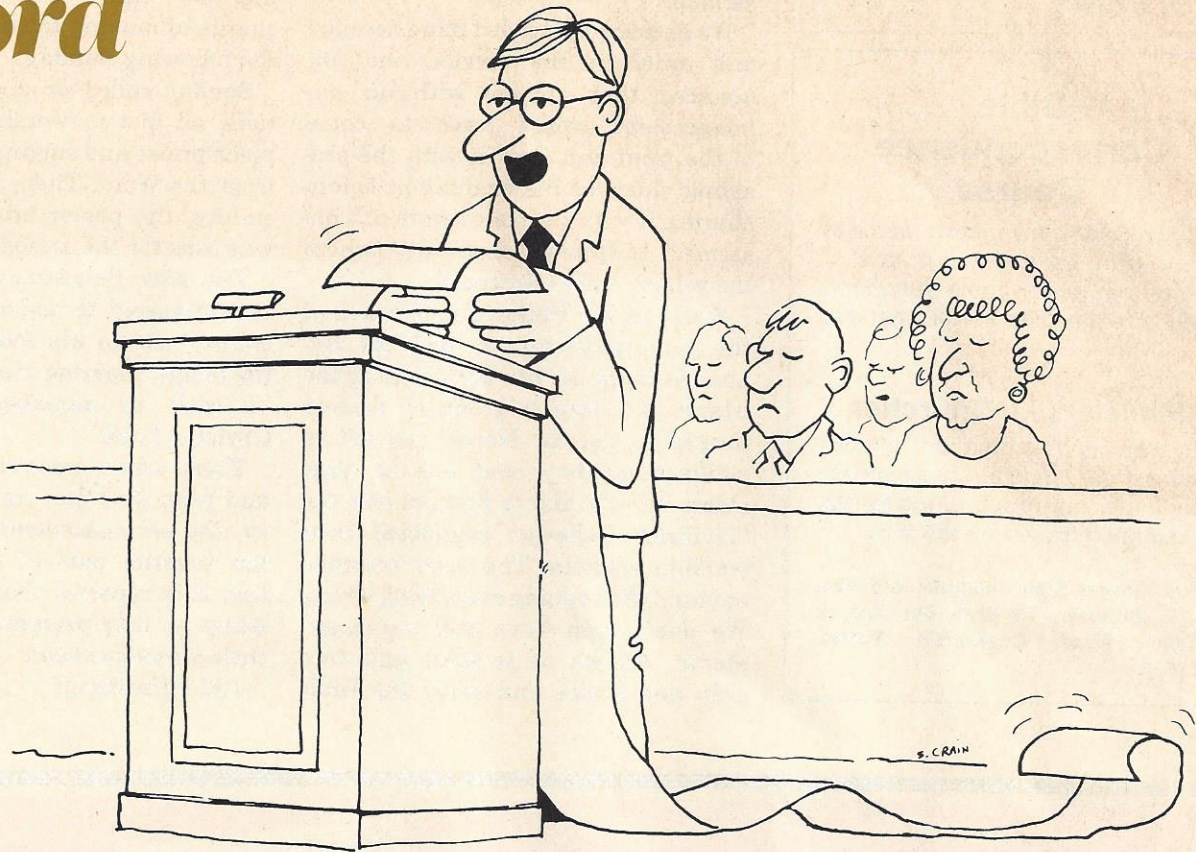


# the last word



"and now for a few announcements . . ."

## Jamie Buckingham

FOR YEARS CHURCHES have been plagued with something in the order of worship called *announcements*. Like vaccinations and haircuts, they are seen as necessities which at best can only be tolerated.

The importance of *announcements* can usually be graded by the person who is called upon to make them. Certainly no pastor, especially if he wears a robe, would make an *announcement* about the plugged drain in the men's room. Such *announcements* are best made by one of the lay leaders in the congregation under the guise of discipleship training.

Where to put the *announcements* was always a problem with me. As pastor of a large church several years ago, I determined they should always occupy the place right after the opening hymn and just before the pastoral prayer. Since people were still trying

to get their kids quieted down, replace their hymn books in the racks and put their purses on the floor, I figured we'd fill the void by making *announcements*.

I always worked on the theory that nobody ever listened anyway. One morning I deliberately *announced* that we would not have a water baptism service that night as planned since there was an alligator in the tank. The only alert person in that congregation of almost a thousand people was an eight-year old boy who came up to me after the service and offered to catch the 'gator' for me. He said if I'd get down in the tank and thrash around the 'gator' would come out of his hiding place and then he could catch him with a special stick with a rope loop on one end.

Nobody else had ears to hear.

One pastor used to brag that he never made *announcements* in the worship

service. "We're not here to make *announcements*," he said with dignity. "We are here to worship the Lord."

It all sounded like a grand concept until I attended one of his services and heard his pastoral prayer. "O Lord, bless the women's meeting which will be held in the church social hall Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. And Lord, bless Miss Susie Short, that wonderful old retired missionary from Japan who has just returned from a trip around the world as she speaks following the covered dish supper . . .".

Now I am involved in a different kind of church that doesn't have a formal order of worship. This has presented a problem because we never know where to make the *announcements*. For a while we let everybody in the congregation stand up and make his own *announcements*. This was about as terrifying as trying to walk across

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a lake on thin ice. We never knew when somebody might announce a meeting of the local Klu Klux Klan or some brother might use the time to stand up and preach a forty-minute sermon.

We decided we needed more decency and order in the service and *announced* that anyone with an *announcement* would have to come to the front and clear it with the presiding elder for his evaluation before sharing it with the congregation. This seemed scriptural, especially where the women were concerned.

While in the Philippines I heard of the *announcement* to end all *announcements*. In the far north of the island of Luzon a group of natives formed a church. Never exposed to civilization, they sent one of their elders into the city to find out how the "civilized" believers conducted their worship services. The elder returned saying, "We're doing everything wrong. We don't even have any *announcements*. All we do is meet and worship and praise and study the Bible

and exhort one another to walk in the Spirit."

"Very well," the church decided, "then we must have *announcements*." And forthwith they appointed one of the new native Believers to be in charge of making the *announcements* the following Sunday.

Sunday rolled around and the natives all met to worship. There was much praise and singing and speaking from the Word. Then, with great solemnity, the pastor arose and said it was time for the *announcements*.

The new Believer, who had been commissioned to make the *announcements*, rose to his feet and came to the pulpit. Clearing his throat he said, "I wish to *announce* that Jesus Christ is Lord."

There was a great roar of applause and from that time on, so it is reported, the *announcements* have become the favorite part of the service. In fact it is reported that sometimes as many as fifty persons stand to make their *announcement*.

Ah! Refreshing!

