



The United Church of Christ in the Shenandoah Valley: Liberal Church, Traditional Congregations

H. B. Cavalcanti

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While congregational studies have expanded our understanding of American religion, little is known about the local practices of a single denomination at its smallest jurisdiction. This book explores how national denominational commitments are affecting the practices of local United Church of Christ congregations inside a single association in the Shenandoah Valley. Nationally, the UCC defines itself as a united and uniting church in its ecumenical work; as multiracial and multicultural in its diversity; as accessible to all in welcoming those with disabilities; as open and affirming for its LGBT members; and as a just peace church in its support of social justice. So, how fully have local congregations embraced these commitments? Might congregations be more attached to their older identities, particularly in areas where the church's predecessors were strongly rooted? Or are the national church's commitments being lived out at the grassroots level? The book measures congregational life in one of the UCC's oldest and smallest associations. Books on congregational studies either focus on a case study of a particular congregation, or large-scale surveys of U.S. congregations that explore aggregate data to explain their work. This book looks instead at a group of local congregations inside a small judicatory (the Shenandoah Association) of the United Church of Christ to explain religious life at the grassroots level.

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