



# **Decent and in Order: Conflict, Christianity, and Polity in a Presbyterian Congregation (Religion in the Age of Transformation)**

*Ronald R. Stockton*

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This is a systematic study of how a congregational conflict involving allegations of sexual harassment and power abuse against a minister was seriously mishandled by church authorities. The conflict escalated to entangle regional and national authorities and worked its way into the civil courts. Stockton focuses on the interaction of organizational dynamics and ill-defined Christian concepts (such as reconciliation and discipline), showing that in conflict situations the ideals of pastoral care are squeezed by an organizational mentality. Key themes involve the role of women in the church, the complex question of sexual harassment, and the interface between church law and civil law. The narrative, which is based on interviews and official documents, captures the human dimensions of the story while simultaneously giving unique insight into congregational disputes and organizational behavior.

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