

Question

The *Manual of The Mother Church* specifies the following in regard to a Christian Science association of pupils whose teacher has passed on; "Those beloved brethren whose teacher has left them, can elect an experienced Christian Scientist, who is not in charge of an association of students and who is ready for this high calling, to conduct the meeting of their association" (Art. XXVII, Sec. 2, p. 86). Can an individual address only one association? The *Manual* doesn't seem to stipulate.

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It's interesting that one time when Jesus was preparing to depart by boat for rest, he saw a multitude of people coming to him. Instead of continuing on his way to find a restful location, the Bible says, he "was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34).

In some ways an association whose teacher has left them is like the people Jesus saw—sheep not having a shepherd. He responded with the shepherding love of God in teaching and ministering to them.

Anytime I was invited to conduct the meeting of an association, I always viewed that as a "shepherding" opportunity. For me, each day leading up to that meeting gave me the precious opportunity to pray in support of that association and consider their unique needs. Maybe sometimes that shepherding included supporting those who were moving toward the public practice of Christian Science healing or those who were seeking prayerful support because of one difficulty or another.

What a joy to be shepherding them along on their spiritual journey! I like to think that preparation for addressing a Christian Science association is a continual witnessing to the shepherding love that Jesus so beautifully expressed.

Now, a shepherd has one flock that he cares for daily and continuously. If he has other flocks, the needs of everyone will be neglected. A shepherd stays with his one flock of sheep and lovingly and faithfully watches over them alone.

Just as a teacher has only one association of students and devotedly supports their spiritual progress, it seems in keeping with the spirit of the *Manual* to address just one association a year.