

CONGREGATIONALISM'S PRESENT AND FUTURE?

What can twenty-first century Congregationalists do well, perhaps better than others? What human spiritual and psychological needs do we fulfill? What spiritual problems can we help solve?

There is a great hunger to connect with the powers greater than ourselves. Connection to God is made when our approach is regular and focused. Connection to other people works the same way. It must be done both individually and communally. Intentional affirmation of our connection to God and others in covenant strengthens our bonds as well as gives substance and content that people need to sustain their relationships. Common worship, done with uncommon energy and excellence, fills human needs.

Using both tradition and creativity soothes the human soul at the same time it energizes. The good news of the love and justice of God must be made real. The balance between law and Gospel must be skillfully managed.....Teaching about freedom must go beyond platitudes and be made concrete. Teaching responsibility must affirm as well as challenge. Leadership must offer religious and psychological rewards that meet the needs of the people of God.

The question must be asked, "Are WE pilgrim people?" Are we like those brave souls of centuries ago who did things that pilgrims do. They ventured to places they had never been before. They acted out their faith, hope, and courageous impulses. How much pilgrimage is in your soul and the soul of your Church? How much can you claim to be the light that warms the hearts of God's people?

(Excerpts from "Psychology and Self in 21st Century Congregationalism," NACCC's 3rd Theological Symposium by Rev. Will Lange.)