



## Did you know Samuel J. Mills...

“American missions, both home and foreign, owe more to Samuel J. Mills than to any other one person in American religious history.” Mills was a student at Williams College in 1806 when he and a number of other students took cover under a haystack, seeking shelter from a fierce storm. This would become famous as “the Haystack Prayer Meeting,” because the students prayed for the conversion of people in Asia.

While at Andover Seminary, the group of friends communicated their dream to the faculty and to other Congregationalist leaders, and in 1810 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was established. According to Harry Butman, one opponent of this project “objected to the export of religion when we had so little of it for foreign consumption,” but a supporter countered with these words: “Religion is a commodity of which the more we exported the more we had remaining.”

Mills and his four friends were ordained in 1812, and soon the four (without Mills, who was ill) were on their way to India. (Two of the men became Baptists on the journey, perhaps God’s way of allowing Congregationalists to play a role in the beginning of Baptist foreign missions.) Samuel Mills, rather than go to India, decided to do home mission work on the American frontier (which seems hardly less challenging than traveling to Asia).

Mills would be instrumental in founding the American Home Missionary Society. He and Lyman Beecher and others founded the American Bible Society in 1816. Historian Sydney Ahlstrom says, “In countless ways the Haystack Prayer Meeting continued to have repercussions throughout the world.”

## ...was a Congregationalist?

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AMERICAN  
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### Call To Worship

L: Redeem the time O God, before it’s gone and lost

**C: When hearty pilgrim souls measured the cost**

L: And made the long voyage with hopes of something new

**C: We come to worship expecting something new!**

### Invocation (in unison)

As we celebrate our heritage, gracious God, teach us to be people who move fences and walls. Teach us to open doors and hearts to you and to Your people; to those who are the other, the strangers. Teach us to see You in the faces of those who do not look like us, who worship and pray from different texts and in different postures, and in different sacred spaces than we do. Teach us to move or remove fences that we might truly know those beyond our borders, borders that are made by humanity. This we pray in order that we might truly know people, who, in all their differences, seek dignity and peace. Amen

Historical story by: Rev. Robert Hellam

Liturgy by: Rev. Tom Richard