



400 YEARS OF *Faith*
AMERICAN
CONGREGATIONALISM
SINCE 1620

Did you know Henry Martyn Dexter...

Born in 1821 in Massachusetts, Henry Martyn Dexter was one of the most prominent Congregational pastors in his time. He was also a respected historian, an expert on such important figures as Robert Browne and on the beginnings of Congregationalism. Dexter was a strong exponent of the Congregational Way. One of his books had this ponderous title: *Congregationalism, What It Is, Whence It Is, How It Works, Why It Is Better Than Any Other Form of Church Government, and Its Consequent Demands*. One might wonder whether it would be necessary to read the whole book after having absorbed that title!

Dexter was one of the editors of our magazine, *The Congregationalist*. He also wrote and translated hymns. A hymn called "Shepherd of Eager Youth" was written by Clement of Alexandria in the second or third century and translated into English by Dexter. It must be admitted that Reverend Dexter had some views that nearly all of us would reject today. In addition to opposing the ordination of women, he also claimed that they did not even have the right to vote in the congregational meeting or in the meetings of regional or national associations.

Dexter fiercely defended the freedom that believers have in Congregationalism, warning that we must always be vigilant against any temptation to drift into a Presbyterian form of church government. (This would have echoes much later, in some of the discussion surrounding the founding of the NACCC.) Perhaps Henry Martyn Dexter's most famous words were these, his definition of Congregationalism as "an ellipse with two foci: local autonomy, and fellowship."

...was a Congregationalist?

Celebrating 400 Years of American Congregationalism
Learn more about our Congregational History at naccc.org

Call To Worship

L: Each day will have its trials

C: Each day we'll see God's grace

L: For God has promised surely

C: To bless us in our place

L: May we live with a pilgrim's spirit

C: This hour and every day

L: To cast our lot upon the Lord

C: In work, in worship, and in play

Invocation (in unison)

We thank You, good Lord, as we pray, for your blessings on this day and this hour of worship. We thank You for the pilgrim spirit which You have instilled in us from the beginning of the Christian Church, through the time of the Pilgrims of our shores 400 years ago, and into this congregation. May our worship honor their faith and their spirit. In Christ's name, we pray, Amen

Historical story by: Rev. Bob Hellam

Liturgy by: Rev. Tom Richard