

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES
GROWTH MINISTRY COUNCIL – 2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

It is both a privilege and a pleasure to chair the Growth Ministry Council (GMC) of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC). I assumed this role at the Annual Meeting and Conference in Cleveland, Ohio last June. Please Note: I have never taken a good look at The Rev. Dr. Patrick F. Hunt's feet, but they must be big, because I am trying to fill his shoes — and it is not an easy task!

It is a joy to work with our committee members. Aside from me and Patrick, we are joined by Pastor Carol Taylor, Curt Schmidt (he's a Yankees fan and we still let him be part of this group), *mom-to-be* "Princess" Mary Prendergast, Rev. Dawn Carlson (our scribe), and The Rev. Dr. Shawn Stapleton, who joins us as a representative for NA Executive Director, The Rev. Dr. Michael Chittum.

There are numerous tasks that our committee completes throughout the year. We administrate the Hurting Church Fund, through which we offer support to churches in need of fiscal assistance. We also publish the Advent and Lenten Devotionals each year. We are pleased to hear that readers utilize these devotionals throughout the year, not just in December and in early spring. If you would like to be a contributor, please contact Carol Taylor at jazzytay@gmail.com for additional information.

The GMC also oversees the Youth Conference Planning Task Team for NAPF/HOPE, the NA's teen and young adult ministries. Their dedicated leaders are currently Sarah Campbell, Ryan Prendergast, and Patrick Stewart. According to their active Facebook page, NAPF/HOPE "provides opportunity for spiritual growth through worship and fellowship."

Our committee has also helped fund the Ministry Partnership with the Center for Parish Development (CPD) to begin a Pilot Program in Church Renewal that "Grand Poobah" Michael Chittum has been working on diligently. More information on this exciting ministry will be disseminated separately.

At a recent meeting, the GMC put aside our regular business and decided to think outside the box — to ask ourselves what we aren't doing that we could and should do to assist local churches. Out of that fruitful conversation came the idea of starting an online prayer group. The Prayer Circle has been meeting online (via Zoom) every Monday evening at 9:00 pm (EST). Shawn Stapleton has been the principal organizer of the group, although others have hosted meetings. (If you would like to lead a session, please let me or Shawn know. Hosting is *not* restricted to GMC members.) People from across the country gather virtually to share concerns and celebrations. This group has been a blessing during the COVID-19 pandemic, when people are trying to create communities in which they can lift their supplications up to God together.

Speaking of the Coronavirus, we are sad, but are in *total support* of the decision leadership made to cancel the Conference and Annual Meeting in Portland, Maine this summer. This was a landmark moment for Congregational churches: the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower landing on Plymouth Rock. An alternative meeting will be held on June 27, 2020 online. Details will be sent-out shortly. Suffice it to say, that the GMC will continue to be a resource to the NACCC and our churches who need any assistance at this time when we look to the past to honor our heritage and to the future to discern God's will for the NACCC.

On behalf of the committee,
The Rev. Dr. John Tamilio III
Canton, Massachusetts