

61ST ANNUAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

GOD REIGNS, LET EARTH BE GLAD!

*“Let the rivers clap their hands,  
let the mountains sing together for joy”*

—PSALM 98:8

# The CONGREGATIONALIST

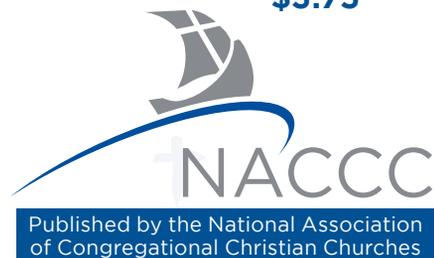
Magazine of the Congregational Way since 1849

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SALT LAKE  
**MEETING**  
Preview

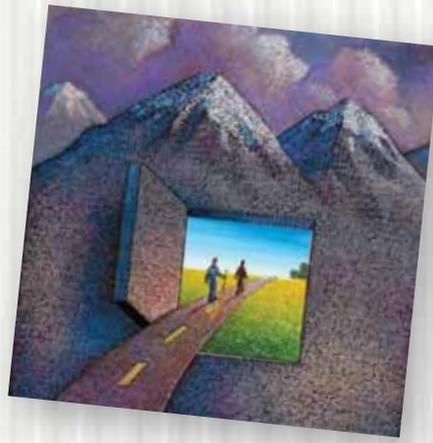
THE MEANING  
**OF EASTER**

PILGRIMS  
IN **ISRAEL**

THE  
**CHALLENGE**  
OF ISLAM

THE NA'S  
**NEW**  
WEB SITE

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# “I’M A PASTOR, NOT A FINANCIAL PLANNER. THANKFULLY, MY *benefits consultant understands me.*”

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## Lyman Beecher (1775-1863)

Beecher was born in 1775, [the son and grandson of] blacksmiths. But he attended Yale, and he fell under the influence of Yale's president, Timothy Dwight [and under Dwight's influence experienced a dramatic conversion to the Lord during his junior year].

Beecher was ordained in 1799. The first church he served was a Presbyterian church, but Beecher was eventually tried for heresy by the Presbyterians. He had attacked a teaching popular among Presbyterians at the time, who said that if it was God's will for a person to go to hell, the most pious thing that person could do was to accept his fate and go there quietly and without protest. After Beecher was acquitted of the charge of heresy by the Presbyterians, he afterward served mostly in Congregational churches.

Starting in 1810 in Litchfield, Connecticut, Beecher conducted what he called "continuous revivals." ... [He opposed Unitarian doctrines that were sweeping many important Congregational churches at the time,] complaining that the Unitarians "sowed tares while men slept and grafted heretical churches on orthodox stumps."<sup>1</sup>...

At first, Beecher was against the movement in the New England states to remove Congregationalism as their established church, but later he said ... that disestablishment was "the best thing that ever happened," because "it cut [them] loose from dependence on state support and threw them wholly on their own resources and on God."<sup>2</sup>

... Beecher was fervently anti-slavery. In 1827, he preached, "Still [the flame of freedom] burns, and still the mountain heaves and murmurs; and soon it will explode with voices, and thunderings, and great earthquakes. And then will the trumpet of jubilee sound, and earth's debased millions will leap from the dust, and shake off their chains, and cry, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.'"<sup>3</sup>

Later, Beecher became president of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati. Despite his earlier experience, for some reason he accepted a call to a Presbyterian church there, and he was tried for heresy again, for supposedly not adhering closely enough to the Westminster Confession. Again he was acquitted, but he then retired and lived the rest of his life with one of his thirteen children, the famous Henry Ward Beecher.

<sup>1</sup> John Von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism, 1620-1957* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1992), p. 253.

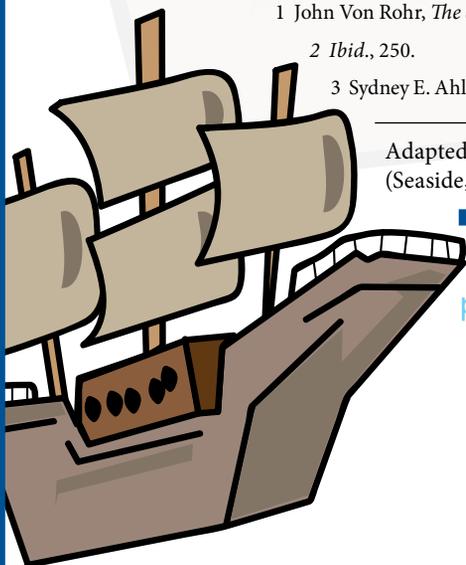
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>3</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 646.

Adapted and reprinted, with permission, from *The Congregational Minute*, by Robert Hellam (Seaside, Calif.: Robert Hellam, 2012)

All these died in faith, and received not the promises, but saw them afar off, and believed them, and received them thankfully, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

—HEBREWS 11:13 (Geneva Bible)



# The CONGREGATIONALIST

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# EDITORIAL STATEMENT

All content in *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* appears by the authority of the editor. We reserve freedom of expression to our authors and freedom of opinion to our readers.

Except for service information clearly sponsored by the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches or its component parts, content does not necessarily reflect policies and opinions of the National Association.

Neither *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* nor the National Association has a creed or holds positions on social or theological issues; but we recognize the authority of each local church to do so for itself, if and as it wishes, and we encourage thoughtful and respectful discussion of our agreements and differences.

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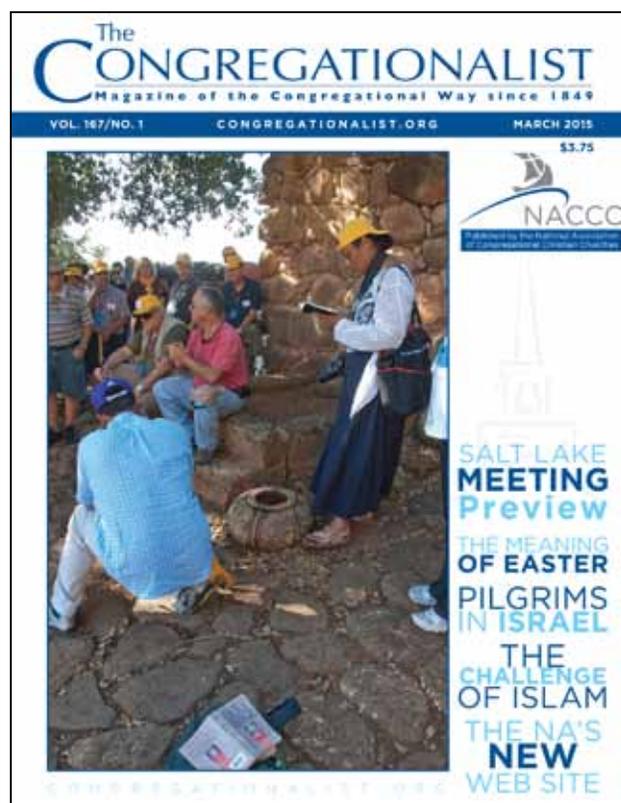
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## Faith, Freedom, Fellowship

by Casey vanderBent

A letter came in the mail recently, from a member church withdrawing from the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. Any withdrawal saddens me because it represents a diminishing of our fellowship; one less voice in our collective conversation.

However, I disagree with the reason this particular church gave for its departure. It is the same reason given by a couple of other churches that have recently withdrawn: One or more articles in *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* magazine expressed theological perspectives different from theirs, and they decided that they could no longer be part of an association in which those views were endorsed. In my opinion, such a stance misconstrues the magazine's intent and the very nature of our Congregational fellowship.

*THE CONGREGATIONALIST* magazine is not, and never has been, a mouthpiece of the association, attempting to express the shared beliefs of all of our member churches. It is, rather, a place where Congregationalists with diverse beliefs can come together to talk about things that matter. This diversity of belief exists within the churches of our association, and the magazine, among other things, tries to reflect it by publishing articles that show a variety of faith experiences. In short, our magazine reflects our membership.

The companion misunderstanding is the notion that we are, or should be, uniform in our beliefs within the NACCC. This has never been the case. We are united by Christ alone, not by any one set of spiritual beliefs. There is no "doctrine of the NACCC" any more than there is a faith statement to which a church must subscribe in order to join. We value the diversity within our fellowship. It provides an opportunity for great conversation as we share our beliefs and learn from one another. Our diversity is a strength to be thankful for, not a defect from which we should flee.

I continue to support the right of each church to decide for itself how it will express its faith and with whom it will be in fellowship. For those churches that have left, I pray the Lord's blessings upon their continued ministries. For those churches that remain, I pray that you will embrace the diversity of our Congregational fellowship even as you continue to embrace your own unique expression of our shared faith and heritage.



CASEY VANDERBENT  
*Executive Secretary*

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH CONTINUES

**The Board of Directors of the NACCC has extended the application deadline for the Executive Director Search to March 31, 2015.**

Rev. Dr. Betsey Mauro, who has chosen not to apply for the position, has agreed to stay on in her executive capacity through the end of June to assist in the transition and provide continuity until the new executive is hired.

If you are interested in receiving information about the position or would like to submit your confidential application, please contact the Rev. Dawn Carlson, Secretary of the Search Committee.

(E-mail [dawncarl@aol.com](mailto:dawncarl@aol.com); phone: 812-249-4389  
20 McKinley Blvd., Terre Haute, IN 47803)



## EDITOR SOUGHT FOR THE CONGREGATIONALIST

We are looking for a person of integrity, with mature judgment, strong language and organizational skills, and both knowledge of, and experience with, the Congregational Way. Copy-editing skills essential. Magazine production experience a plus. This is a part-time position; the editor works independently in his or her home location.

The job description will be available May 1. Applications accepted after that date. Please contact Randy Asendorf, [rasendorf@gmail.com](mailto:rasendorf@gmail.com).

### Search Committee members are:

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Randy Asendorf, *Recorder—Sun City, AZ*  
The Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Bingham—*Pomona, CA*  
Becci Dawson Cox—*Stillwater, MN*  
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**Letters to the Editor** are welcome. All letters may be edited for clarity and length. We regret we cannot publish or respond to all letters.

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Single copies may be purchased from the National Association office for \$3.75 plus \$3.20 to cover shipping and handling.

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The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches  
*Bringing together Congregational Christian Churches for mutual care and outreach to our world in the name of Jesus Christ.*

*The National Association unveils a new and improved way for you  
and your church to get the information you need.*

# Ready ... Aim ... **CLICK!**

by Dawn Carlson

If inquiring minds want to know, this is the place to go: ***The new nacc.org***.

Way back in a previous century, the National Association contracted with a third-party vendor to create and maintain its Web presence. The resulting site proved expensive, difficult to update, and not all that user-friendly. A complete redesign was needed.

Rather than hiring another outside vendor, the association assigned it to the Center for Congregational Leadership as an in-house project. Using their own intelligence, experience, and common sense, plus an inexpensive Web-based application called Weebly, Betsey Mauro and Marie Steele built a brand-new site—greatly improving functionality and saving the association untold thousands of dollars.

For this review, we gathered the NACCC Tech Task Team (which reports to the Growth Ministry Council) and pooled our input. As regular Internet users, we have lots of thoughts on the new site. Many thanks to team members Sarah Gladstone, Seth Jones, Ed Backell, and Chris Meirose for their insights, which are included in what follows:

The first thing you notice about the new NACCC Web site is how clean it looks. Developed in a blog-style format, it's easy to read and navigate. Just enter [www.nacc.org](http://www.nacc.org) in your browser, and the homepage downloads quickly. The homepage and internal pages are readable, clear, and easy to understand. None is cluttered with too much text or too many images, and the font size is always large enough to read. ■

While the homepage doesn't all fit on one screen, you don't have to scroll down too far. A few "hot" items are grouped under "Cool Clicks" at top center, and the all-important navigational links (the "meat" of the site) are easily accessible on the left. Most of



these navigational links have pop-out submenus that list the internal pages related to the link.

For example, the link "News for You" pops out five submenu links: *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* magazine, the Year Round Delegate Newsletter, the NACCC News, Missionary News & Needs, and the most recent all-churches mailing. You don't need to click through list after list to find what you are seeking. It's all there, just one click away.

Navigational links exhibit some redundancies—meaning you can get "there" from "here" in several different ways. That makes the entire site more intuitive for first-time users; and "intuitive for users" is a very good thing.

Optimized for mobile access, the new Web site is easy to read and navigate on your mobile device—something 63 percent of smartphone users do.

To compare the new Web site with the old one, we ran a test using several questions. The first question was: “I was just elected chair of our church’s search committee; how do we start a pastoral search?” Navigating the old site would have required at least four clicks, starting from a rather messy and overly-full home page. On the new site, one click after first hovering over “Services—Member Churches” brought up the “Pastoral Search Process” submenu, which includes all the required information. Incidentally, the handbook *Calling a Congregational Minister*, available under this submenu, can also be accessed from the “Handbooks” submenu under the “Church Resources” link.

Another question was: “I’m moving to Florida. Where are the NACCC churches?” On the old Web site, three clicks would have gotten you to the database where you could see a list of Florida member churches. (In case you were wondering, there are 15.) But if you wanted to look at each of those churches, every time you finished looking at a church’s information, the back button would kick you completely out of the database, forcing you to start the entire process over. If I had to begin my search 15 times, I might quit looking for NACCC churches! The new Web site, by contrast, takes you in one click to a downloadable PDF file listing all NACCC churches. A quick search in the PDF takes you to the complete Florida list.

Getting from “here” to “there” in the fewest clicks possible is one of the beautiful aspects of a well-designed Web site, and the new [naccc.org](http://naccc.org) fits the bill!

Overall, the new site provides a great deal of quality content, arranged in a non-cluttered way and with a simplicity of access that makes the site extremely user-friendly.

Are there changes we’d like to see? Of course. The Tech Task Team isn’t crazy about the overall color scheme, the least ugly among limited options

provided by Weebly; but the beauty of an easily-created and easily-maintained site is that things can change without huge costs piling up. It’s a good thing to live with a site for a while and discover what changes are needed. And it’s exciting to know that the NACCC has a professional, interactive, and user-friendly Web site.

Check it out. You’ll find more than you imagined, and just about everything you need.



**THE REV. DAWN CARLSON** is pastor of First Congregational Church of Terre Haute, Ind. She served on and chaired the NACCC Communication Services Committee and now serves as the Growth Ministry Council’s representative to the Leadership Council, and also as a member of THE CONGREGATIONALIST’S Editorial Advisory Team. She lives in Terre Haute with her husband, John Kraft.

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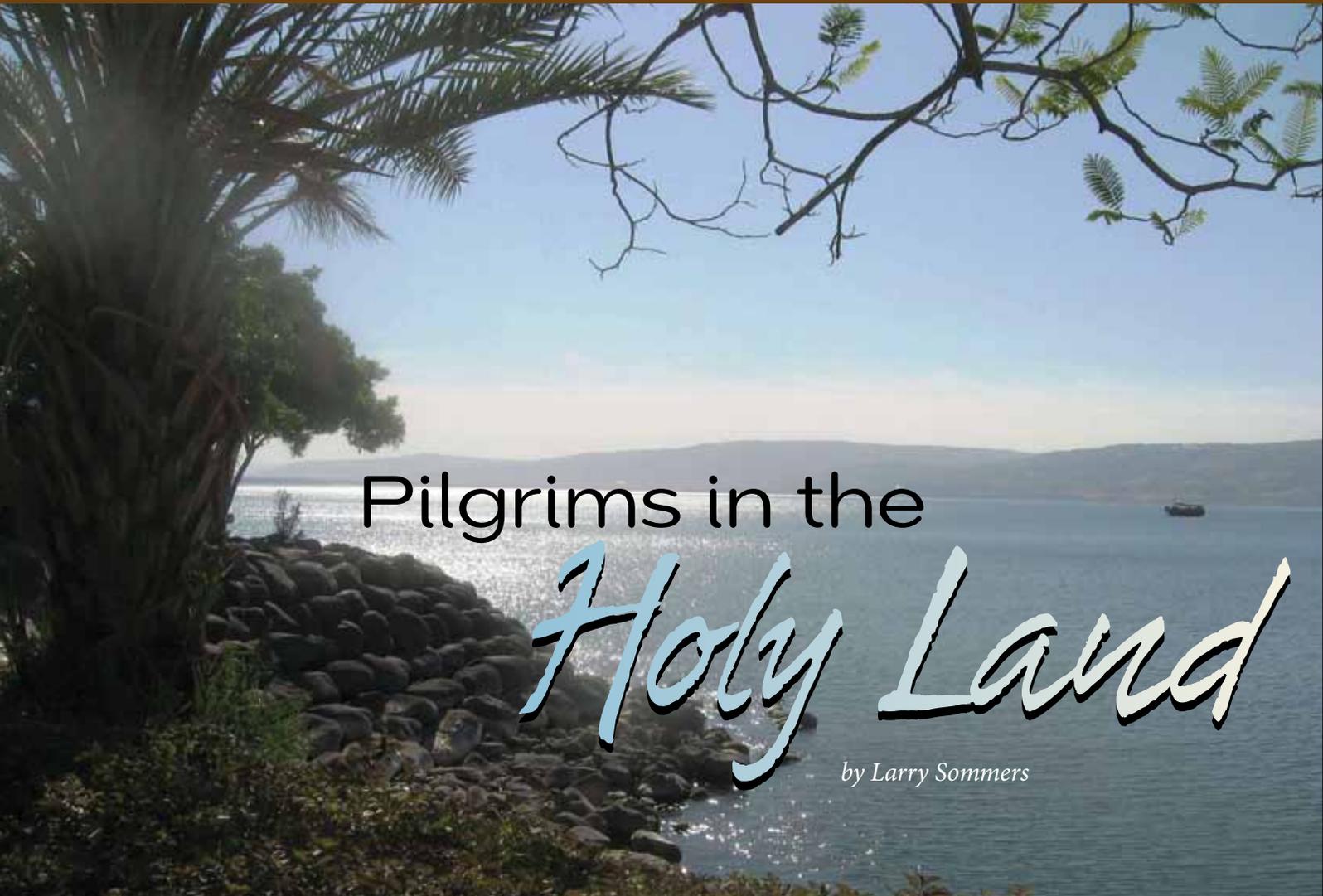
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*One Congregationalist's impressions of the Holy Land—a single visit could enlarge your perspective on the Bible and the Christian faith.*



# Pilgrims in the *Holy Land*

*by Larry Sommers*

*The Sea of Galilee.*

**S**now falls winter and spring on Mount Hermon, in the fractious border zone of Syria, Lebanon, and northern Israel. Through the year, it melts and seeps into porous limestone, re-emerging in springs at the base of the mountain, gathering into three small streams that feed the Jordan River.

The Jordan flows south into Lake Tiberias, an irregular oval some 13 miles north-south by eight miles east-west. This sparkling, fresh-water lake is the famous “Sea of Galilee.” At its south end, the water flows out and continues its trek toward the somewhat larger Dead Sea just 65 miles farther south.

This flow of water, from Mount Hermon to the Dead Sea, is the central hope and blessing of life in a dry part of the world.

The water is blue as the sky overhead. We scout the gravelly beach at Capernaum, where Peter and Andrew lived. It’s easy to visualize Jesus walking this shore, saying, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people”—even with our tour group and dozens of other pilgrims milling about. I pick up a small stone, pocket it. Perhaps the Israeli tourism ministry hauls in new gravel three or four times a year to replace what we pilgrims steal; still, it’s a piece of the Holy Land to take home—a small reminder that Something Big happened here.

Capernaum itself is a ruin—an archeological site, where stands the skeleton of an old, white limestone synagogue, from the third or fourth century of our era. But this ancient limestone rests on an even older course of black

basalt stones, thought to be the old foundation of the synagogue where Jesus cast out a demon (Mark 1:21-28).

Also in Capernaum is an excavation that was likely the house of Peter; and, hovering above it like a spaceship from the distant future, a modern Franciscan church built in 1990 as a memorial to St. Peter.

## A Very Small Land

Capernaum is on the north shore of the lake, just west of where the Jordan river enters from the north. Jesus spent most of his ministry here and in nearby villages—places you could walk to in a day or two from Capernaum.

It's a very small land. From Capernaum in less than an hour you can reach Megiddo, another ancient archeological dig, or *tell*, that was the site of many battles. Megiddo stood at the junction of two important valleys. It was inhabited, from about 7,000 up to 586 B.C., by 26 different cultures, each preserved in its own layer of earth atop the ruins of the last. "Armageddon," the putative assembly site for the final great battle (Revelation 16:16), is simply a Greek term for "Mount Megiddo."

But we did Megiddo yesterday. Now, it's on to a delicious fish dinner, and then a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. There are 34 of us, led by the Rev. Karl Schimpf, pastor of North Shore Congregational Church, Fox Point, Wis., and his wife, Dottie, assisted by the Rev. Dr. Betsey Mauro and her husband, Paul Smith. Our way is smoothed, and our experience enriched, by Elisha Ben-Yitzhak, owner of Heavenly International Tours of Milwaukee, by his assistant Jan Brewer, by our omniscient Israeli tour guide Moshe Malka, and by our reliable bus driver Bader.

Karl and Dottie have been here eight or nine times.

"A trip to Israel [is] the ultimate adult Bible class," Karl wrote in an e-mail to me. "Despite the fact that so many variables go into how we experience being there; it really does bring the Bible to life in ways that can impact the rest of our lives. It has always been the great joy of my ministry to share that place with people who choose to accompany us there."

## Through Israel

We arrived at Tel Aviv on Tuesday, Nov. 4, and after a brief evening tour of Jaffa—the Biblical port of "Joppa," from which Jonah departed in his vain attempt to flee God's call—we stayed overnight at a nice hotel in Netanya.

The next day, our bus took us north along the Mediterranean to the ruins of Caesarea Maritima, a major construction project by the landscape-altering King Herod the Great (74-4 B.C.), which soon became the Rome's headquarters in the Galilee, the home base of military governor Pontius Pilate. Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, may have been one of many local stonemason/carpenters who labored to build Caesarea.

"Where there is water there is life and where it is absent there is desert," notes the Rev. Jack Brown of Olivet, Mich. "When Herod built Caesarea as a new port it was in a place without water so he had an aqueduct built that brings water from Mt. Carmel, many miles away. The ruins of that aqueduct still stand; it is quite an engineering feat. The area now is full of green houses—mostly growing bananas for export."

Our journey through the Galilee is an incredible rush of new sights and experiences, interpreted for us by the



*A gravel beach near Capernaum, perhaps a spot where Jesus trod.*

well-versed Moshe, and enriched by Bible readings at each historic spot along the way: Mount Carmel, from which you can see most of the Galilee, the place where Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and had them slain when their falsehood was exposed; Cana, where Jesus and his mother famously attended a wedding, and where two couples in our group affirmed or



*Left: From atop Mount Carmel, tour guide Moshe Malka, center, orients us to the lower Galilee. Behind him is the Jezreel Valley, with Megiddo, the historic site of Armageddon, in the distance at right.*

*Below: Annette Breese is baptized in the Jordan River by Revs. Karl Schimpf and Betsey Mauro.*

reaffirmed their vows; Mount Beatitudes, a hilltop overlooking the lake, where a lovely garden and a chapel mark the supposed location of the Sermon on the Mount; the Kibbutz Ginosar, where a small museum displays the well-preserved remains of an actual fishing boat from Jesus' time.

## The North

The day after our visit to Capernaum, we venture north through the Hula Valley to the headwaters of the Jordan. In a lush nature preserve watered by the cool, rushing River Dan, Moshe shares a bit of personal information: Besides his work as a tour guide (which requires rigorous study and government exams) he is a war veteran, a military reservist, and a reserve detective in Israel's national police force. We will always feel safe in Moshe's company.

Nearby, we visit the ruins of ancient Dan, northernmost city of ancient Israel. An impressive city wall and gate have been exposed, and another gate nearby actually dates from before the time of Abraham, who may have used it to enter the city.

Then it's back on the bus, to a point just a couple of miles beyond Dan. We stand where Jesus and the Twelve must have stood when Peter confessed that Jesus was "the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." This is Caesarea Philippi (not to be confused with that other Caesarea, on the shore of the Mediterranean). Caesarea Philippi in Jesus' time was just outside of Israel proper and was a worship center for the pagan god Pan—a place



no devout Jew would willingly go. Jesus led his disciples here, a long walk of several days from Capernaum. Pagan worship at Caesarea Philippi centered on a massive cliff face, a solid wall of red-brown stone. There was a cleft, a natural cave from which flowed a constant torrent of water; thought to be a portal to the underworld, it was referred to as "the Gates of Hades."

After Peter called Jesus the Messiah, Jesus responds: "*Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it*" (Matthew 16:17-18).

Matthew also identifies this incident as the start of Jesus' journey back to Jerusalem to his crucifixion and resurrection. Having gone beyond the outermost limit of Israel and planted his flag, so to speak, in the pagan

"On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." The rock wall looming over us is the site of ancient Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus made this startling pronouncement after Peter identified him as the Messiah.

world, Jesus now begins the long journey home.

## Kibbutzniks and Baptizees

We stop for a visit at Kfar Blum, a *kibbutz* where Elisha Ben-Yitzhak, owner of our

tour company, was raised from childhood. Elisha feels a special calling to share this experience with us. When he was a small child, his parents fled Europe and came to Israel; the rest of his relatives stayed behind and were killed in the Holocaust.

In the 1930s and 1940s, when Elisha was young, *kibbutzim* were organized on a distinctly socialist model. Besides toiling together to farm the land, the settlers shared many things in common. Children ate in a dining hall and slept in a dormitory, went to school by day, and visited their parents at home for a couple of hours in the evening. This seemed very natural to Elisha, and he looks back on it fondly.

He proudly shows us the village's bronze bust of Léon Blum, the Jewish premier of France for whom the *kibbutz* was named. He also points out a bomb shelter in which he and others often crouched while Syrian artillery units shelled the village from the Golan Heights. Israel seized the heights in the Six-Day War of 1967, so the bomb shelter now stands disused. But it's still there.

Modern times have meant changes in the business model of the *kibbutzim*. They are no longer little socialist communes, but more like co-operative businesses, intent on preserving the solid cash flow needed for survival. Residents who opt out of *kibbutz* life have other options in the prosperous Israel of today. Kfar Blum, like other surviving *kibbutzim*, has developed profit centers, including a "pastoral" hotel and conference center billed as a great place to get away and relax, enjoying music and country living.

Elisha's nostalgia seems to show that he rather preferred the old way of *kibbutz* life. But Elisha, like others, has adapted. Besides his Milwaukee-based tourist business,



he has become a songwriter in his senior years, a card-carrying member of ASCAP (the American Society of Composers, Artists, and Performers). He sings one of his compositions for us—a plaintive song about of the lost days of youth, what else?

Late in the day, at Yardeni Gardens on the Jordan River just south of Lake Tiberias, many in our group take the opportunity to be "re-baptized" in a special part of the riverbank reserved for that purpose. Karl Schimpf and the Rev. Dr. Betsey Mauro officiate. White-robed participants reflect joy, wonder, bemusement, mystery on their faces as they emerge from the slow, green, inviting water, which flows through a grove of leafy trees.

## In the Desert

The next day, we depart the Galilee and drive south toward the Judean Desert, traveling through the Golan Heights and down the east side of the Sea of Galilee, skirting Israel's border with Jordan. Acres of modern, high-tech greenhouses dot the Jordanian hills—very similar to the greenhouses used widely in Israel. This is one benefit Jordan has reaped from its relative peace with Israel. With access to Israeli know-how and Israeli equipment, Jordanian agriculture is now flourishing in a new way.

We bypass Jericho, en route to the day's major attractions:

- Qumran, settlement site of the ancient sect of Essenes, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.
- Ein Gedi, the desert refuge where David and his men hid from King Saul's forces. It is still a place with a steady flow of water and a bit of green growth. We are charmed by cavorting ibexes, and by furry, ground-hugging hyraxes.

*On the top of Masada, our group walks a path overlooking the Dead Sea.*



## The Holy City

At the end of a long and amazing day in the desert (including a dip in the Dead Sea), we ascend to the Holy City: Jerusalem! We arrive in full dark. As the bus glides along a freeway to

- Masada, the mountaintop fortress built by Herod the Great as an emergency refuge. Looming on a mesa 1,500 feet above the Dead Sea, Masada was so well-built and so marvelously supplied that it became a stronghold for 960 Jewish rebels 70 years after Herod's death and withstood a Roman siege for several months. The rebels had plenty of food and water, but the Romans finally gained victory by building an enormous earthen ramp up the side of the mesa.

our hotel, we catch a glimpse of the Temple Mount, with the golden Dome of the Rock illuminated.

We get a much better view the next morning from the top of Olivet, the Mount of Olives. This is a prominent hill just east of the Temple Mount, with the Valley of Kidron, which we would probably call a ravine, between the two.

The Mount of Olives no longer has a rural character. Its steep face is occupied by houses, churches, and other buildings. Tour buses disgorge their passengers, gawkers from all over the world, who jostle on the sidewalk for the best vantage point.

Moshe finds us a place in one of several semi-circular viewpoints built into the brow of the hill; from there he points out features of the Old City of Jerusalem spread out before us. Then we walk down the steep hill to Gethsemane.

“Gethsemane” is an old Greek word, derived from Aramaic, meaning “oil press.” People would pick olives and bring them down the hill to be pressed for oil at a communal oil press. There was a garden there, near the oil press, where Jesus prayed. A small grove still stands there—a little courtyard-garden beside yet another Franciscan church. In this grove are olive trees that could be 2,000 years old, from the thickness of their trunks (ring-dating apparently does not work on olive trees). Could they be witnesses to the agony of Christ?

## Images of Jerusalem

Our three days in Jerusalem, filled with events and portents, blur together in retrospect. Some sharp memories do stick out:

We file down a stairway under a church where Caiaphas the high priest probably had his house, and in a small underground room carved from bedrock,

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and [www.NACCC.org](http://www.NACCC.org)

## *I Felt His Presence There*

I visited the city where our Lord was born,  
And I felt His presence there.

I stood on ground where our Lord may have stood,  
And I felt His presence there.

I stood on ground where our Lord may have taught,  
And I felt His presence there.

I was on that Sea in Galilee, the water upon which  
our Lord had walked,  
And I felt His presence there.

I was immersed in the waters of the Jordan River, as was our Lord,  
And I felt His presence there.

I saw the city, over which our Lord did cry,  
And I felt His presence there.

I saw the garden of Gethsemane where the Lord had prayed,  
And I felt His presence there.

I saw where our Lord's body may have been placed,  
And I felt His presence there.

I visited the land where our Lord lived, died, and lives again,  
And I know His presence is everywhere.

God bless you today and every day.

Jerry Turner  
*Arbor Grove Congregational Church*  
Jackson, Mich.

we sing “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?” Our three dozen voices fill the deep stone chamber. This dark dungeon may be in fact the place where Jesus was kept in the wee hours, after being questioned by the priest and before being taken to Pontius Pilate (John 18:12-28).

Later, we sing “Amazing Grace” in St. Anne’s church in the north part of the Old City, along the Via Dolorosa. It’s a very old church, built by the Crusaders in a very simple, proto-Gothic style, and the acoustics are superb. Other pilgrims in the church are moved to tears by our singing.

We visit Yad Vashem, the Jewish Holocaust memorial in a wooded area on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Moshe asks us to define the term “Holocaust survivor”; we fumble in our responses. Moshe then provides the answer: “Every Jew alive today is a Holocaust survivor,” he says. “The object was to kill all the Jews; those of us who are still alive are survivors.” The memorial displays many objects and many filmed interviews with those who survived; and a large, circular room filled floor-to-ceiling with black binders identifying each individual known to have died in Hitler’s extermination program. A separate gallery remembers a million children who died, with recorded voices speaking their names; it takes months before the list repeats.

In the Old City, we visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. As a meetinghouse, it is a study in arcane ecclesiology—an uneasy armistice among Eastern Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Roman Catholic, Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, and Syriac Orthodox churches, with a complicated arrangement known as the “Status Quo” governing who controls and uses which parts of the building when. Fistfights have been known to break out

*Continued on p. 33*



*Jerry Turner*

*Our God suffered the hardest trial any parent ever faces—for our sake.*

# A Father's Love

*by J.R. McAliley*

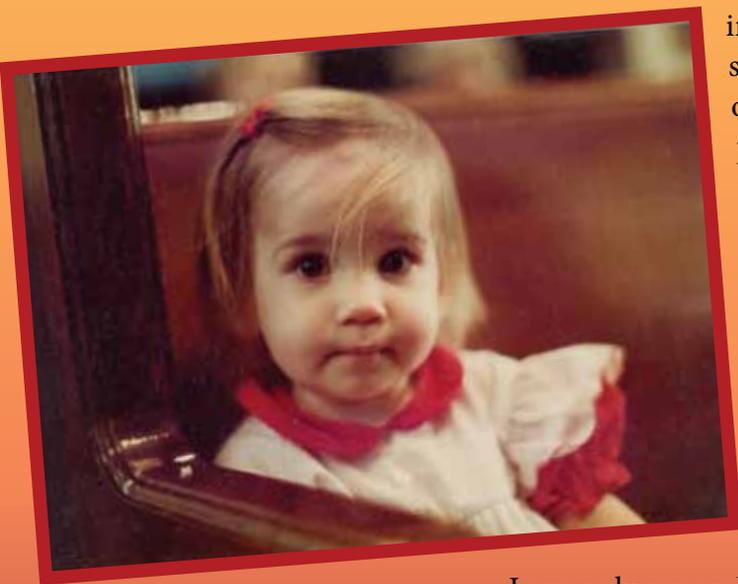
**D**ecember 9, 1979, I left my shipmates who were headed to Hong Kong for Rest and Recreation leave and went ashore at Subic Bay, Philippines. I was hoping for a flight to get me back to my home in Yokohama, Japan, so I could spend some time with my expectant wife and soon-to-be-2-year-old daughter. Some friends ferrying an admiral's jet gave me a hop, and I landed late in the evening on December 11 at Yokota, an air base far from home.

With no idea how to get home from Yokota, I walked out the base gate and happened to encounter a man who spoke no English, but recognized “lost” on a sailor's face. This stranger took me to a train station, paid my fare, then led me for over two hours and two transfers to finally get me to my station in Negishi Heights. At each juncture he only nodded and said “*Hai*” (roughly meaning “yes”), then followed me onto each train. On reaching my platform I thanked him profusely and watched in amazement as he returned to the train to go back to Tokyo!

The help of this unknown “Samaritan” enabled me to reach home before midnight on my first daughter's birthday; and three days later Number Two arrived. Rebekah Mae entered our lives on December 14. We waited until Easter 1981, when we were back in the States with family and friends, before having her baptized—never realizing that barely two months later, at just 17 months of age, Rebekah would die of meningitis.

I can only remember how helpless I was as her life slipped away.

At 28 I had served as a weapons officer and nuclear safety officer in the U.S. Navy—a scary powerful role for a young person. And we had the best



*Rebekah Mae*

medical staff of the University of Kentucky available at St. Joseph's Hospital in Lexington; but no human power could keep her little body alive. I would have done anything, would have given anything, to keep her with me.

Three days later, as we prepared for her burial back in my home in Georgia, I was awakened with a new realization—God was a Father with only One Child. And He let His Child die for me, for Rebekah, for all of us. I know I could never have “let” my daughter die for anyone—but I had no power to stop her passing. Yet God, our Father and the Father of Jesus, did have the power to stop His Son's suffering and death; but He didn't, even with no guarantee that anyone would ever care.

Since that moment, Easter for me has been about our Father's Love, Love He has for each of us even before we can comprehend it and even when we rebel against it. If I surrender my life to God, Easter is God's promise that I don't need to fear anything in this world, not even death itself.

Personally I'll know I've reached heaven if I hear “Hi, Daddy!” once more. But I also know that we cannot even begin to comprehend the fullness of His eternal blessings—all because of what He did on that cross and then in the resurrection.

We live in a highly volatile period of history, when the world seems bent on stumbling into a new “religious” war. I am grateful that Jesus lived and ministered the Gospel to us in the midst of just such circumstances, because it reminds me that He knew the frustrations and crises we would face. His Amazing Love and Grace are desperately needed by each person we meet, and He will give us the strength we need to share that gift with them.

May God bless your Easter with a fresh knowledge of your Father's Love.

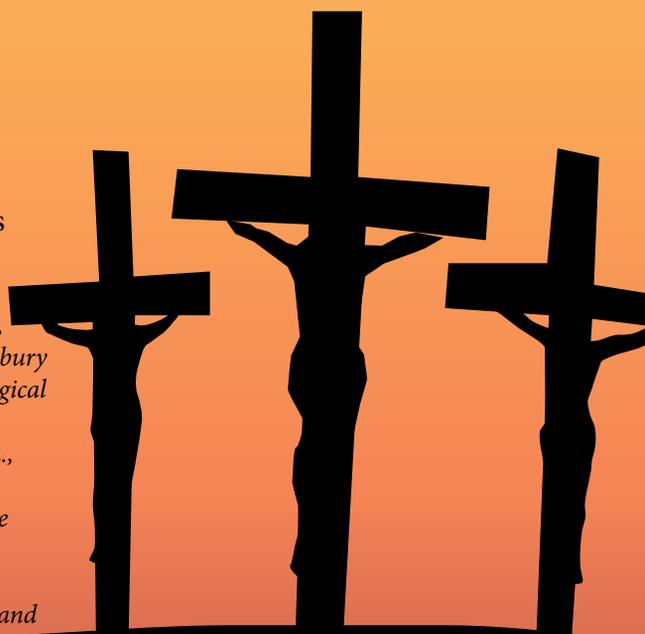
*And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior's blood!  
Died He for me? who caused His pain!  
For me? who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*  
“Amazing Love,” by Charles Wesley  
(*Hymns for a Pilgrim People* #332)

“God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”—Romans 5:8



**THE REV. J.R. MCALILEY III**, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, served six years as a line officer in destroyers before entering Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Ky. After completing his theological education, he became a Naval chaplain, retiring in 1995. Since 2004 he has served Center Congregational Church, Atlanta, Ga., as pastor. He is moderator of the Alabama-Georgia Association of Congregational Christian Churches, a past-chairperson of the NACCC Missionary Society, and current vice-president of the Missionary Society Alumni Association. He and his wife, Mary, between them, have five children ranging in age from 27 to 42; and three grandchildren, 6, 3, and 1.

He knew the  
frustrations  
and crises we  
would face.



*These Congregationalist pioneers upheld their Christian faith in a difficult environment.*

# Keeping the Faith

by Michael Chittum

## for 150 Years in Salt Lake City

*Can Any Good Come Out Of Nazareth?  
Come and See.*

That was the title of the first sermon preached by the Rev. Norman McLeod at Daft's Hall in Salt Lake City on Sunday, Jan. 22, 1865. This marked the beginning of Congregationalism in Utah and was the founding service of what would become the First Congregational Church.

The Rev. McLeod had arrived from Denver—sent by the American Home Missionary Society—having been invited to Salt Lake by the Young Men's Literary Association, with the active support of Brig. Gen. Patrick Connor, to bring the gospel of Jesus the Christ to Utah. McLeod doubled as chaplain for Connor's troops at Fort Douglas, preaching in the hall located over Daft's Store on Sunday mornings and at the nearby fort on Sunday evenings.

### **MORMONS VS. GENTILES**

These events were part of the tension that existed in Utah in the mid-19th century. Members of the Latter-day Saints church, known as Mormons, had emigrated to Utah, reaching Salt Lake City in 1847, in order to escape the control of the United States government. They sought their own promised land, and to a large degree they succeeded. By 1864 the Territory of Utah had 50,000 inhabitants, fewer than one percent of them outside the LDS church.

In 1857, though, the U.S. government had ordered troops into Utah, setting in motion the "Utah War" of 1857-1858. Although no real battles were fought, the troops strengthened federal presence in the area, heightening tensions



*The Rev. Norman McLeod, founding minister of the First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City.*

between the non-Mormons, known as "Gentiles," and the members of the LDS church.

Such was the social context for the founding of "The First Church of Jesus Christ (Congregational)." Because of, or in spite of, this tension, the church grew. The Rev. McLeod often preached to crowds as large as 150 on Sunday morning. The church purchased land and built its own meetinghouse, finished in November 1865. This building, "Independence Hall," stood just south of the area staked out for the Salt Lake City Temple of the LDS church.

**"INDEPENDENCE HALL"**  
"Independence Hall" proved to be an accurate name. The church

freely opened its building to other religious groups and for benevolent, social, and political causes. The hall was used by the Utah Lodge No. 1 of Odd Fellows and by the first Masonic lodge in Utah. Episcopalians, Methodists, Roman Catholics, and Jews worshiped in the building from 1866-1867 until they could secure their own worship spaces.

The congregation's future looked bright. McLeod's sermons continued to attract hearers. Sunday School classes, for both children and adults, continued to grow. The discovery of silver, gold, and other minerals sparked a rush of miners into the area. In 1869, the transcontinental railroad was completed when the Golden Spike was driven at Promontory Point, northwest of Salt Lake City.

The future looked so bright that Rev. McLeod left for a fund-raising trip in the East to expand the work of the church in Salt

Lake City. During his absence, the church community suffered a devastating blow. Sunday School superintendent J. King Robinson, a surgeon, was murdered one night in October 1866 while responding to a call for his medical services. This event led church members to advise McLeod not to return to the territory, out of concern for his safety. The loss of their minister, and the shrinking of the Army's presence, led to a downturn in the life of the church.

### PERSISTENCE PAYS

Church members labored on, however, and saw a turn for the better in December 1873, when the Rev. Walter M. Barrows arrived. Like McLeod, he was appointed under the auspices of the American Home Missionary Society. His eight-year ministry was marked by several significant advancements.

First was the establishment of the Mount Olivet Cemetery. At that time, non-LDS church members had a difficult time finding appropriate, or even any, space to bury their dead. An act of Congress, signed by President Grant in 1874, established the Mount Olivet Cemetery, under the stewardship of any local churches willing to assume the responsibility. The Congregationalists joined with Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and American Baptists to form its original Board of Trustees. This responsibility has continued to the present day for the first and only public cemetery in the United States established by an Act of Congress.

Second, Barrows moved to



FCCSIC

*The Rev. Elmer I. Goshen, pastor of First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City 1903-1937.*

reorganize the church in 1874. A new constitution was written, and the church was reincorporated as "The Congregational Church of Salt Lake City."

The last major action taken under Barrows' leadership addressed school reform. Education of children was centered on ward houses around Salt Lake City, with classes held under the direction of the local LDS bishop of the ward. This effectively limited or denied education to the children of "Gentiles." The Congregational Church responded by adding school rooms to Independence Hall and opening the Salt Lake Academy and other schools in September 1878. These schools provided free education for all children, leading the way to the 1890 act in Utah that provided free and accessible education for all children under the framework of the state's authority.

In 1891, under the leadership of the Rev. J. Brainard Thrall, church members laid the cornerstone or a new church building on the eastern side of downtown. The building was fitted with an impressive organ



*Independence Hall, Salt Lake City, photographed May 1, 1881.*

FCCSIC

and dedicated on Jan. 22, 1893, the 28th anniversary of the first service under Rev. McLeod.

## LONG MINISTRY

In 1903, the Rev. Elmer I. Goshen was installed as pastor, after four years at the Congregational Church of Ogden. Goshen became the longest-serving minister in the history of the church, serving the Salt Lake City congregation for 34 years. An eloquent speaker and liberal minister, Goshen attracted many to attend services and to join the church. Some records indicate that membership in the church was over 900 at this time.

Goshen was deeply involved in social causes. He was a founding member of the Charity Society Organization of Salt Lake that provided social services to needy

Girl Scout troop and Alcoholics Anonymous chapter in the church.

## DECISION TIME

From 1958-1967, the church was led by the Rev. Frank Blish. During his tenure, the congregation had to address the proposed merger of the Congregational General Council with the Evangelical and Reformed Church. In a March 14, 1948, vote on the original documents presenting and proposing the merger, the congregation voted 205 to 8 against it. As a result, the church sent a member, B. Z. Kastler, as a delegate to the 1955 Hotel Fort Shelby meeting in Detroit, affirming its desire to join the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. The Rev. Blish served on the NACCC Executive Committee from 1963 to 1966.

During this time the congregation conducted a self-study to chart its future path and after much deliberation resolved to leave its downtown location and move to a new place. The plan was to occupy the new building as part of the centennial celebration of the congregation. The Easter service, in April 1965, was held in the new building on Foothill Drive.

## MODERN ERA

Ministers leading our church in its commitment to the Congregational Way since that time have included the Rev. Dr. Doug Lobb (1969-1974), the Rev. Karl Schimpf (1974-1983), and the Rev. Art Ritter (1999-2007). The Rev. Dr. Betsey Mauro was ordained by First Congregational on July 12, 1987.

In recent years, First Congregational Church has reaffirmed its commitment to some of its early principles. Just as the early church opened its doors to support the work of other religious groups in the city, First Congregational was an integral part of the interfaith group that provided religious support for the athletes competing in the 2002 Olympics. The current Interfaith Roundtable was formed out of that effort, and FCC continues to be a strong part of that organization. FCC honors its early commitment to education through annual efforts to support the Salt Lake Education Foundation in providing needed supplies to children. We care for those on the margins of our society by providing sandwiches for the homeless; by supporting the 4th Street Clinic, which provides medical and dental care for homeless and low-income residents; and by working with the Utah Food Bank and other organizations in our city.

The history of Congregationalism in Utah is long. Our church was the seedbed of that. That is why we are so excited to invite our sister churches to join with us June 20-23, 2015, in celebration of our 150th Anniversary, at the NACCC Annual Meeting.



**THE REV. DR. MICHAEL CHITTUM** has served as senior minister of the First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City since July 2008. He received his B.S.

degree from the University of Tennessee and his M.Div. and a Ph.D. from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.



*The Rev. Frank Blish, pastor of First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City 1958-1967.*

families, especially to women and children. He operated a free employment agency in the church. Goshen also started the first Boy Scout troop in the city and a

*Need your spirit refreshed?  
Don't miss out on Utah's unique recreation options.*

# Salt Lake City

## *More Than You Imagine!*

*by Carol Price*

**S**alt Lake City—Home of the Mormons ... host city of the 2002 Winter Olympics. But this bustling metropolis of nearly one million people has so much more to offer! Whether your interest is in art and culture, shopping, dining, or recreation, you will find plenty to explore, all within walking distance or via quick trips on convenient public transit.

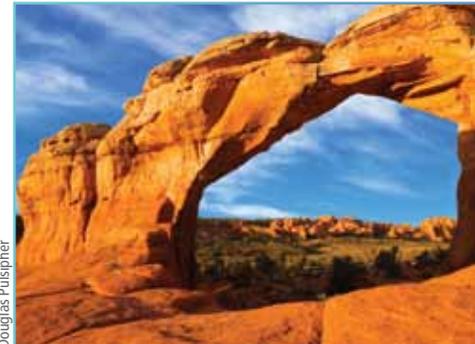
Visual arts are your passion? Visit the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art downtown near Temple Square, or take a quick train ride to the University of Utah for the Utah Museum of Fine Arts. Plan some time also at the Natural History Museum of Utah. The newly-built facility, also at “the U,” has wonderful exhibits plus spectacular views of the Salt Lake Valley and the Wasatch Mountains. Red Butte Garden, still on the university campus, offers a stunning array of natural beauty.

For performing arts, visit Abravanel Hall or the newly-renovated Capitol Theater. Energy Solutions Arena, home of the NBA's Utah Jazz, also hosts shows and events which add vibrancy to the downtown area. All are an easy (and free!) train ride from the Sheraton Hotel. Kingsbury Hall, another large performance venue, is on the university campus.

Be sure to visit Temple Square, the central complex of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon). Besides the famous Temple, the grounds also include the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, and many flower gardens. Adjacent to Temple Square is a 21,000-seat conference center and the towering Church Office Building. Temple Square is open to the public, as is the Thursday evening rehearsal of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

A major attraction in the Temple Square area is the Family History Library, the largest genealogical library in the world. It's free and open to the public. Whether you're just starting research on your family tree or an accomplished genealogist trying to get past a “brick wall” in your research, this is the place for you! Many of the library's resources have been digitized to make your work easier.

All of this sightseeing and research can make one hungry! Downtown Salt Lake boasts Italian, Mexican, Indian, pub grub and fine dining opportunities around every corner. There is also a food court in the City Creek shopping center near Temple Square. Take time to sample!



Douglas Pulsipher

*Scenic of Arches National Park, Utah, showing the Broken Arch formation in the Devil's Garden section.*



Sean Buckley

*City Creek Center.*



Eric Schramm

Red Butte Garden.

Need a restorative break from urban activity? Hiking trails abound in this outdoors-loving community. City Creek Canyon, an oasis between downtown and the state capitol, can be reached from a nearby TRAX train station. Venture a bit further, into the Wasatch Mountains, and you'll find Mill Creek, Big Cottonwood, and Little Cottonwood Canyons, all with extensive hiking, biking, picnicking and scenic opportunities. If your re-energizing involves golf, there are plenty of courses.

While there's plenty to do in the city, it would be a shame to miss some of the most breathtaking scenery in the world—all within a few hours of the city. Utah hosts five national parks, each unique. Bryce Canyon offers red hoodoos (rock columns) and bright blue skies. The Rim Trail affords a stunning view into the canyon, with several trailheads leading down into the canyon for a different perspective.

Zion National Park is one of the most-visited parks in the country. Ride the park shuttle into the canyon to view soaring rocks, natural springs, and the swift Virgin River. If you're undaunted by heights, take a tricky-but-rewarding hike to Angel's Landing, nearly 1,500 feet above the canyon floor, for a great "selfie!"

Steadier footing is found at Arches National Park just outside of Moab. Shutterbugs can sharpen their skills with arches and other geologic formations unlike anywhere else in the world. This park is easily accessible even if your physical capabilities are limited. Just bring a camera!

Also convenient to Moab is Canyonlands National Park, surrounding the confluence of the Green and Colorado Rivers; the rivers' impact can be seen at every viewpoint along the way. The word that will come to mind is "vast." Whether you visit the "Island in the Sky" Section or the "Needles" Section of this expansive park, you'll be wowed.

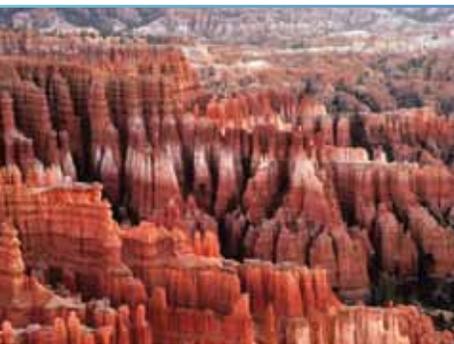
Though Capitol Reef National Park is less famous, locals know it is not to be missed. Red rock, stunning vistas and lush orchards provide a diverse mix of landscapes in this geologically unique area. The "reef" is a particularly rugged portion of the 100-mile long uplift known as the "Waterpocket Fold." Its canyons and narrows are a joy to explore.

First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City cordially invites you to our beautiful city and state. We hope you enjoy your stay and take advantage of everything that God's creation has to offer!



Visit Salt Lake

Maurice Abravanel Hall.



Visit Salt Lake

Bryce Canyon National Park.



**CAROL PRICE** is the moderator of First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City. A native of Michigan, Carol retired as a lieutenant from the Grand Rapids Police Department after 22 years of service. She is now court security director at the Utah State Courts. Carol is married to Scott Brown.

*A Congregational minister shares insights for fruitful ministry  
from his four decades of pastoral service.*

# Pastoral Perceptions

*by Larry Balleine*

## **40** *Tips from 40 Years of Ministry*

**R**ecently, as I neared the celebration of four decades of pastoral ministry, a group of younger colleagues from my “pastors’ development group” asked me to share “a presentation of my own choosing.” I compiled a list of the following 40 personal insights gleaned from 40 years of ministry.

Written by one who has experienced both the joys and trials of pastoral ministry, this list is offered with the hope that it will be not only helpful to pastors, but also informative and helpful to the congregations who have called them. Several of these tips may be particularly applicable to churches and clergy with Congregational roots, where freedom of expression and the right of each individual to wrestle with matters of faith and practice are encouraged and valued.

These tips are offered in no special order.

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**1. Don't neglect your family**—your spouse and your children.

**2. Honor tradition.** Don't worship tradition. Don't neglect it or “put it down.” After serving a congregation for a while you may tweak it or adapt it. Remember, there is almost always a good reason why something has become a tradition.

**3. The church's ministry is like an iceberg.** Ninety percent of ministry goes on beneath the surface; but that is what holds up ten percent that is visible.

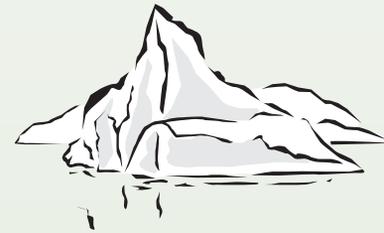
**4. Wash the dishes.** Don't be afraid to get your hands wet. Never be above any task that needs to be done in your church; don't consider yourself too important to do it. Though you may hold a theological degree from a renowned institution, you can still operate the dishwasher from time to time or join the group picking up litter from our church's assigned section of a nearby highway. Doing so has numerous benefits. It allows you to become “one of them.” You will not be viewed as a snob. Working side-by-side in some of the more mundane tasks of the church, you get to know your people at a deeper level.

**5. The tone of your voice often conveys more than the words you say.** How you say something is often more influential than what you say.

**6. God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason:** To spend twice as much time listening as speaking—listening to God and listening to our folks.

**7. Remember we are not called to be successful, but to be faithful.**

**8. Remember that the local church is not “yours.”** Neither is it Tom's, Dick's, or Harry's. It is Christ's church, and you and everyone else are privileged to serve it.



**9. Remember that your absence is often noticed more than your presence.**

**10. Only make promises you can keep.** If you say to a hospitalized person: “I’ll see you tomorrow,” you’d better appear in his or her room the next day. It is much better to say: “I’ll see you as soon as I can” or “I’ll stop by next chance I get.”

**11. It is always better to be kind than insist you are right.**

**12. The customer—in our case, the congregant—is not always right.** But instead of pointing out his or her fault, it’s usually better to lead that person in such a way that they discover for themselves the error of their way. Here, gentleness and discretion go a long way.

**13. Ministry is always more about planting seeds than about reaping harvests.**

**14. If you preach from the lectionary, spend a day reading all the biblical texts for each upcoming liturgical season.** You need not study them at this point. Just become familiar with the texts that are on the horizon. Then, in upcoming days, as ideas pop into your mind relating to any of those texts, jot them down and place them in a folder dedicated to that particular liturgical season or that given Sunday. If you do not use the lectionary but still have preaching themes in mind—such as hope, forgiveness, etc.—when thoughts come to mind on these themes, place them in folders dedicated to these themes. You will discover that some sermons are already off to a good start before you actually sit down to compose them.

**15. Often, what is heard by folks in the pews is quite different from what you intended.** That’s because from the moment the words leave your mouth, Something or Someone else takes over: the Holy Spirit. All we can do is prepare as best we can and leave the rest to God. Never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit.

**16. There will always be folks you can never satisfy.** As my late mother-in-law used to say: “They wouldn’t be happy if you hung them with a new rope.”

**17. As best as you can, exemplify on Monday through Saturday what you say on Sunday. It gives you integrity.**

**18. Don’t neglect your prayer life.**

**19. Keep reading.** Read not only the Bible and theology, but the other “-ologies”—psychology, sociology, ecology, and other disciplines as well.

**20. Keep a time for personal Sabbath.**

**21. Keep confidences.**

**22. Remember that you are never as bad as some people say you are, nor as good as some people say you are.**

**23. Honesty is an indispensable quality.**

**24. Establish boundaries;** and don’t be afraid to acknowledge hour limits.

**25. Compliment others when you see them doing or saying something that merits a compliment.**

**26. Don’t be afraid to admit that there are often “better” Christians than you are, sitting in your pews.** It keeps you humble, which, by the way, is another fine quality.

**27. Respect where each person is located along his or her faith journey.**

**28. Just being there in times of crisis is more important than having the right things to say.**

**29. Doing the compassionate thing is almost always more important than doing the sensible thing.**

**30. Exemplify forgiveness.**

**31. Spend quality time with colleagues.**

**32. Folks generally respond more to the love in your heart than to the knowledge in your head.**

**33. Don’t expect everyone to agree with you just because you bear the title of pastor.**

**34. Never speak unkindly of anyone in the congregation or community.** For that matter, don’t speak unkindly of anyone at all.



**35. Augustine's advice is still pertinent:** "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty; in all things love."

**36. Know that God works in each person in God's own unique ways.**

**37. Try to be a participant in at least some of the events of the community in which you serve.**

**38. There is little that can prepare you for the loneliness of pastoral ministry.** A pastor and his or her family go from being some of the most public persons on Sunday morning to some of the most private on Sunday afternoons. Sometimes this may be our choice, but often it is not. So cultivate good, healthy friendships whenever and wherever you are able.

**39. Although your local church may pay your salary, God is still your boss.** Not your idea of God, but God. And remember, God may still be speaking through your congregation.

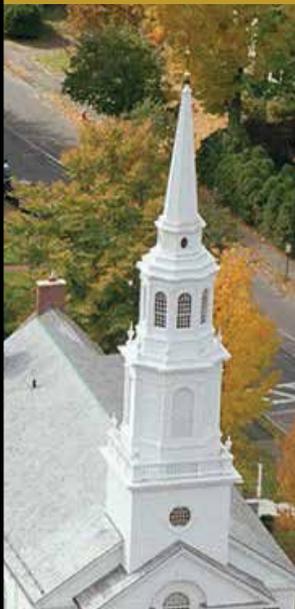
**40. Because grace, gratitude and generosity are at the heart of our common faith, to the best of your ability offer grace, express gratitude and be generous.**



*THE REV. LAWRENCE H. BALLEINE is a 1975 graduate of the Divinity School of Vanderbilt University and the Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies and was ordained the same year by his home church, the Community Congregational Church of Kewaunee, Wis. His theological education included an intern year as the pastor of the Robbins Parish of Morgan and Scott Counties in Tennessee, which resulted in the introduction of the Morgan-Scott Project to the National Association. He recently retired after serving NACCC and United Church of Christ congregations in Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin for the past 40 years.*

How old will your church be in 2015-2019? 50, 75, 100, 125, 150, 175, 200, 225, 250, 275, 300, 325, 350

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As Christians, what can we make of alarming challenges  
arising from within the Islamic world?

# Islam:

## What's a Christian to Think?



*Context is everything. Christians readily affirm that “God is great”—but does the Arabic equivalent, “Allahu akbar,” really mean the same thing when voiced by Muslims?*

by Daniel M. Evans

As Christians, we are mystified about Islam. We are told that Islam is monotheism, similar to Christianity; that Islam is peaceful; that Muslims revere Jesus Christ as a prophet; and that Muslims seriously worship God in many admirable ways.

- “Islam is a religion of peace, its teachings are good and peaceful,” said President George W. Bush, speaking on Sept. 17, 2001—shortly after the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington.
- “Like Christians, every day, over 1.3 billion Muslims strive to live by his [Jesus’] teachings of love, peace, and forgiveness,” declared a Council on American-Islamic Relations statement that ran as a paid ad in several California newspapers in March 2004.
- “... [W]e hope to continue to build peaceful and friendly relationships based upon mutual respect, justice, and what is common in essence in our shared Abrahamic tradition, particularly “the two greatest commandments” in Mark 12:29-31,” asserted 38 Muslim scholars who signed an “Open Letter to the His Holiness Pope Benedict VI,” Oct. 13, 2006.

- “No religion condones the killing of innocents,” said President Barack H. Obama, speaking Sept. 10, 2014.

Indeed, Allah and God appear to be one: “Finally, as Muslims, and in obedience to the holy Koran, we ask Christians to come together with us on the common essentials of our two religions *that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God,*” suggested 138 Muslim leaders and scholars in “A Common Word Between Us and You,” a 2007 follow-up to the 2006 open letter to the Pope, this one addressed to a wider list of Christian religious leaders.

Many similar statements could no doubt be assembled and presented here.

But there is a disconnect between pious hopes and brutal reality—Muslims are murdering Christians!

Islamic State militants are systematically expelling and killing Christians in Syria and Iraq.

On July 29, 2014, Kirsten Powers reported in *USA Today*: “For the first time in 2,000 years, Mosul is devoid of Christians. “This is ancient Nineveh we are talking



about,’ [human rights lawyer Nina] Shea explained. ‘They took down all the crosses. They blew up the tomb of the prophet Jonah. An orthodox Cathedral has been turned into a mosque. ... They are uprooting every vestige of Christianity.’ University of Mosul professor Mahmoud Al ‘Asali, a Muslim, bravely spoke out against ISIS’ purging of Christians and was executed.” About 5,000 homeless Christians from Mosul are now somewhere in refugee camps. Commentators have begun to call what is happening “genocide.”

Islamist terror has endangered the ancient Coptic Christian community of Egypt. Egypt’s seven million Coptics could be at risk.

Islamist group Boko Haram in Nigeria killed well over 1,000 people, largely Christians, in 2013 alone.

Islamist Taliban members are terrorizing Christians in Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

Islamists have recently murdered Christians and others in Somalia, Kenya, Indonesia, England, and France—including the mass murder of staff members at the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris Jan. 7.

### WHY?

We must confront a very uncomfortable truth: These killings seem to be called for in Islamic scripture.

- “... [K]ill the idolaters wherever you find them, and seize them, and besiege them, and wait for them at every place of ambush ...”—Quran 9:5.<sup>1</sup> “Fight in the way of God against those who fight against you. ... And *kill* them wherever you come upon them, and expel them from where they have expelled you ...”—Quran 2:190-191.
- “... Do not take any allies from them [i.e., disbelievers]. ... [S]eize them and *kill* them wherever you find them ...”—Quran 4:89.
- “When you meet those who disbelieve, let there be a striking of the necks. ... Those who are killed in the way of God. ... He will cause

## Mohammed, Islam’s prophet, began a tradition of religious conversion by force.

them to enter the Garden [i.e., heaven].”—Quran 47:4-6.

Medieval and present-day commentators continue in the same vein:

- “... [I]n the Muslim community, the holy war is a religious duty; because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and the obligation to convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force.”—Ibn Khaldun, a 14th-century Sunni jurist.
- “If one permits an infidel to continue in his role as a corrupter of the earth, the infidel’s moral suffering will be all the worse. If one kills the infidel, and this stops him from perpetrating his misdeeds, his death will be a blessing to him.”—Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, speech on the day of Mohammed’s birth, 1984.
- “The worst of sins are infidelity and polytheism which constitute rebellion against Allah, The Creator. To eradicate these, Muslims are required to wage war until there exists none of it in the world, and the only religion is that of Allah.”—Maulana Bulandshahri, *Illuminating Discourses on the Noble Koran* (Karachi: Darul-Ishat, 2005).

Many more such statements no doubt could be assembled and presented here.

### HOW DID THIS ALL COME ABOUT?

Mohammed, Islam’s prophet, began a tradition of religious conversion by force. Military action in the

<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations are from *The Qur’an: A New Annotated Translation*, A.J. Droge translator (Sheffield, UK: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2013). Muslim scholars often maintain that the Quran is accurate only in Arabic, a language structurally and conceptually different from English.



## Only time will tell how Muslim leaders will respond.

seventh century to force allegiance to Islam among the tribes in Arabia exploded beyond all expectations. Enthusiastic Arab Islamic armies began to conquer all of the Middle East and North Africa and most of the Iberian peninsula of Europe. Some towns resisted, and their people were killed. When an area submitted, non-believers were allowed to survive if they recognized Islam as superior and paid a tax<sup>2</sup>.

Islam enjoyed a “Golden Age” in the ninth and tenth centuries. Philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and literature flourished. At this time, science and learning were almost non-existent in most of western Europe. The Golden Age, however, lasted only until about the 11th century. Islamic leaders began to resist philosophy and learning; everything that needed to be known was found in the Quran. There would be no further need to reason. Education ceased to be a matter of searching and experiment, but rather memorization of the Quran.

A leading scholar, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111), preached this extreme form of fatalistic predestination: All things are the act of Allah, humans have no independent will and can decide nothing. Therefore, why bother to reason or improve? A Muslim no longer

thinks, but automatically obeys the teachings of Islam.<sup>3</sup>

This development leads to several problems. First, if humans have no free will, if Allah is responsible for everything—does that not make Allah responsible for evil? A fatalistic approach—everything created by Allah is good because it is from Allah—leads to belief in a god without morals.

A second problem arises because reason is a prerequisite for democracy. So is natural law, which the American Founding Fathers emphasized when crafting the Constitution. Fatalistic predestination precludes any such activity. Only Allah is sovereign, man is not.

A third problem: Because there is no rationality to explain events, Muslims tend to look at events as supernatural, which leads to belief in conspiracies. Muslims become victims. Muslims suffer from a pronounced sense of grievance and humiliation. Since they follow the most perfect religion and have the most perfect relationship with God, why does the world show them such disrespect? This is the culture of resentment which feeds the followings of militant imams.

All of this leads Islamic purists to a “Salafist” solution: Muslims must reject the modern (i.e., Western) world, return to the ways of Mohammed and his Companions, and establish the “caliphate” as the new world order. All Muslims (and others) in the caliphate are to be ruled by the law of *Sharia*, based on the Quran and on seventh-century social mores of Arabia. Non-Muslims must submit or die. Free-thinking democracy is an evil, and therefore America is the “great Satan.”

Anti-western Islamist violence is not merely an unfortunate distortion from a peace-loving faith; it is based in scripture. This may be a very uncomfortable truth, but is an existential threat.

Islam has very little organization, no hierarchy, no pope, few senior leaders. Every cleric (*imam*) controls

2 A history of early Muslim military conquests is found in Hugh Kennedy's *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2007).<sup>3</sup> See Robert R. Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Crisis* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2010).

3 See Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 45, 151-160.

a smaller or larger mosque, preaches every Friday, and commands a following based on his (never her!) popularity. Every imam can emphasize a more moderate or a more militant twist to Islam. One imam may choose to emphasize peaceful elements in the Quran. Another imam may find that he can develop a larger following among the resentful by emphasizing Salafist, militant elements of the Quran, which call for the killing of non-believers.

There are over one billion Muslims. Most Muslims may follow moderate Imams, but it is wishful thinking to hope that the peaceful majority will revolutionize Islam and rid the Quran of calls for violence against Christians. Several million Muslims follow the Salafist militants, the fanatics who dominate Islam at this point in history. They sincerely believe that there will be peace only when all non-believers are either converted or killed.

**HOW CAN WE APPROACH ISLAM?**

Because persecution of Christians is called for in the Koran, reform must be fundamental and must come from within. Appeals from Christians are not taken seriously.

As a result, we Christians face several million people who demand that we convert to Islam or die. This is not a new development; Muslims have killed Christians for 1,400 years. We cannot simply be nice and negotiate; these people have no wish to negotiate with us. We can only offer to assist any reform when requested—and, in the meantime, to resist any forced conversion.

An encouraging development came last Dec. 28 when Egyptian president Al Sisi addressed leading Muslim clerics and scholars at Cairo’s Al Azhar University, calling for “a religious revolution” in the thinking of Islam to keep it from being “a source of anxiety, danger, killing and destruction for the rest of the world.” Only time will tell how Muslim leaders will respond.

Meanwhile, we must be prepared to defend our faith, to challenge militant Islamist ideology wherever it appears. Fellow Christians, we live in challenging times!



**DANIEL M. EVANS** studied *International Relations at Pomona College and law at the University of Southern California. He was a Fulbright scholar in Göttingen, Germany, and served three years as Army intelligence operations officer, also in Germany. From 1967 to 1992 he practiced international business law in Los Angeles. He taught international business at San Jose State University*

*and, after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, lectured at eastern German universities in Greifswald and Frankfurt (Oder). Dan is a past moderator of Oneonta Congregational Church in South Pasadena (twice) and serves on the Board of Governors of the Congregational Foundation.*

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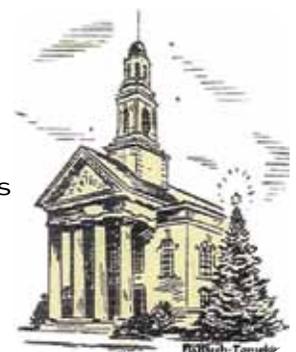
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*Welcome to an island paradise where the Congregationalists hold sway!*

# Congregationalists in *Paradise*



by Giovan  
Venable King

Can you imagine a state that is 95 percent Congregational? It exists!

That state is the island of Kosrae (pronounced *Ko-SHRAI*), a 42-square-mile island in the Federated States of Micronesia, located between Guam and Hawaii. It has a population of about 6,500 and has five Congregational churches, one in each municipality of the island. Congregational churches were the only churches on the island from 1852 until about three decades ago, when Assemblies of God, Seventh Day Adventist, and Mormon missionaries began to arrive.

I first became acquainted with Kosrae and other Micronesian islands while a student at Harvard Divinity School in the 1980s. In Congregational history class, we studied about the famous 1820 mission from Boston to Hawaii<sup>1</sup>. I also learned that about 32 years later, six New England missionaries,

accompanied by four native Hawaiian missionaries, made the trek to the Micronesian islands. I wrote my Masters of Divinity thesis about the Congregational missions to Hawaii and Micronesia, with a focus on what Hawaiian mission successes and failures might have taught missionaries to Micronesia who traveled three decades later<sup>2</sup>.

## **OUR TRIP TO KOSRAE**

In 2011, my husband, Tom, and I moved to Hawaii. This past fall, the time seemed right to make our (first) trip to Kosrae, where the Congregational missionaries were the most successful, beginning in 1852 with the Rev. Dr. Benjamin



Katrina Adams.

*Congregationalists at Malem, Kosrae, celebrate Christmas.*

and Lydia Snow and Daniel and Doreka Opunui<sup>3</sup>.

Kosrae has existed as long as have most Pacific islands. The United States has had a relationship with Kosrae since World War II, originally administering the island as part of a Trust Territory. The Federated States of Micronesia were formed in 1979 and include Kosrae, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Yap. The Federated States entered into a Compact of Free Association (COFA) with the United States in 1986. Under its terms, in return for military access, the United States provides financial support, and Micronesians are able to immigrate to and work in the United States.

While on Kosrae for a week, Tom and I stayed at Kosrae Village Resort, nine thatched huts that are replicas of traditional Kosraean homes—but with the

modern conveniences of running water, electricity, and a great restaurant! Tholman Kilafwasru, a resort employee, picked us up at the airport and drove us to the resort. Along the way, we learned that his father, the Rev. Nena Kilafwasru, is a Congregational pastor at the Malem Church. (The five Congregational churches are known by the townships they are in; there is no need to name them by denomination since, for most of their existence, they have been the only churches on the island). Tholman was surprised to learn that we had come to Kosrae because of its Congregationalism. Most people go to Kosrae for the scuba diving.

### THE CHURCHES

Tom and I visited the four churches accessible by the island's perimeter road. While each has its own personality, the worship spaces, and the worship itself, are pretty uniform. The fifth church, the Walung Church, is only accessible by boat and, alas, we did not arrange time for that trip, which involves gauging high tides.

I met with Tholman's father Saturday evening. He is concerned about how the Church responds to religious groups that have come to Kosrae in the last 20 or 30 years. Pastor Nena says the aggressiveness of some of these groups is confusing to those who have known Congregationalism to be synonymous with Christianity. There is also the issue of how

to deal with divorce, which the Congregational churches on Kosrae do not recognize.

Tom and I attended the Malem Church on Sunday morning. In each church, morning services begin at 10 a.m., as they have since the missionaries arrived, with men on one side of the aisle and women on the other. The children meet in another building.

There is a large empty space between the preacher and congregation, and this space is used by an excellent a cappella choir, which sits in the congregation during the sermon and comes up to sing at various times in the service. Elected congregational leaders sit along the sides near the front. The hour-and-a-half service was in Kosraean, and there were about 500 adults in attendance; about the same number of children were in a second building. If each Church had that level of attendance, then 77 percent of Kosraeans were in their Congregational church that morning!

The people then gathered, or went home, for a meal that was probably prepared the day before—since there is, and has been since the 1800s, no cooking on Sundays. The people return at 2 p.m. for “prayer meeting,” at which time they usually discuss the morning's sermon. There is also an evening service.

Nothing else happens on Sundays! No recreation. No cooking. No fishing. Everything else is closed, except for the small number of resort

1 In 1820, the first company of seven missionary couples, dispatched by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, arrived in Hawaii aboard the ship *Thaddeus*, inaugurating a long period of successful missionary activity, largely by Congregationalists, in the South Pacific.

2 Giovan Harbour Venable, “The Gospel in Hawaii and Micronesia.” M.Div. thesis. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Divinity School, 1983.)

3 Harvey Gordon Segal, *Kosrae: The Sleeping Lady Awakens* (Tofol: Kosrae State Government. 1989), p. 93.



Photo courtesy of The Congregational Library, Boston, Mass.

The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Snow.

restaurants; and even there, on Sundays, it is illegal to buy, serve, or drink alcohol. Sunday is a day of rest and focus on God and Church.

On Sunday, most women wear white dresses; men wear long pants, dress shirts, and ties. During the week, women are dressed in skirts that hang below the knee and blouses that cover part of the arm. Men wear long shorts and shirts.

### KOSRAE'S CONGREGATIONALISTS NOW

I believe Dr. Benjamin and Lydia Snow, as well as Hawaiians Daniel and Doreka Opunui, would be pleased (although they might expect to see churchgoers attired more in the styles of the 1800s) were they to drop in on Kosraean society today. They would also recognize the Sunday worship as little changed from that established by Dr. Snow in the 1800s.

Dr. Snow was the primary missionary for Kosrae from 1852 until 1877; Daniel Opunui died within the first year. The first native Kosraean ordained was Lupalikkun, 29-year-old son of the island's king, in

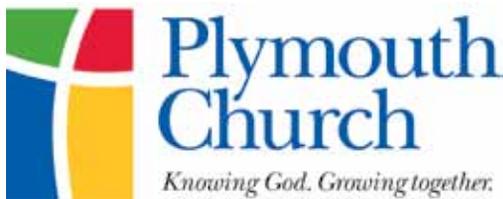
1869. While there were American pastors on Kosrae until the early 1960s, there have always been native pastors as well, from 1869 on. More than thirty Kosraean pastors have led the churches in Kosrae since American pastors departed<sup>4</sup>.

There have been young Kosraean pastors, but there have also been men as old as 72 ordained to the ministry. The average age of ordination has been about 50. Pastor Nena was ordained at age 50 in 1992. Only men are ordained to ministry. The ordination of women does not seem to be an issue.

I understand that Kosraean pastors have concerns about issues facing their congregations, as do we all. I understand criticism about the strictness of the Congregational missionaries and the current Kosraean clergy. However, overall, I am impressed with the fruits of their labors. Kosraean pastors may long for what they think of as their "good old days." On returning to Hawaii, I was almost immediately reminded of children's soccer games, NFL games (that air live in Hawaii on Sunday mornings), and other Sunday distractions.

I recall my Sunday in Kosrae, and it was somewhat reminiscent to me of our "good old days." If any of you long for such days, they are waiting for you in Kosrae.

<sup>4</sup> Elden M. Buck, *Island of Angels: The growth of the Church on Kosrae, 1852-2002* (Kosrae: Department of Education, 2005), pp. 566-571.



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**THE REV. GIOVAN KING** was a Congregational minister in Los Angeles for 23 years before becoming an Episcopal priest. In 2011, she became rector of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Kailua, Hawaii.

over perceived violations. As architecture, it is an unlovely old medieval house that had rooms added willy-nilly over the years. The interior is dim, murky, and mysterious—the perfect setting for a Dan Brown novel—and is densely populated by ardent pilgrims of all stripes, including a



Larry Sommers

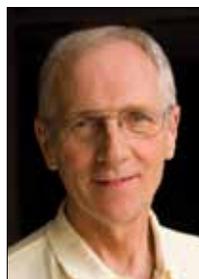
We wait in line to view a possible resting site of Jesus' body, in the Garden Tomb.

long queue of people patiently waiting to see the actual tomb of Jesus.

Unsurprisingly, Anglicans and Protestants doubt that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is truly built on the site of Christ's crucifixion and burial. For us, a spot called the Garden Tomb holds more attraction; although it's hard

to be certain it is more likely the Tomb of Christ than the one at Holy Sepulcher. The Garden Tomb does have the advantage—to modern American tastes—of not having had a memorial church built over it. The tombs at this site—and no doubt they are ancient tombs—are still in an openly exposed rock face and are surrounded by a pleasant contemplative garden. Here, after hearing a docent speak and actually visiting the hole-in-a-cliff tomb that may be possibly “the” tomb, we gather under trees and partake of the Lord's Supper on this, the last full evening of our scheduled itinerary.

Michael Hammer, Waunakee, Wis., probably expressed something many of us felt, writing, “I was struck by how Israel is truly a mixture of so many different peoples. But no matter who we are or where we come from, we all have in common the same needs, beyond just the basic needs for survival; things like the need for respect, for harmony, to belong, to love and be loved, and to grow to be the best person we can be.”



LARRY SOMMERS is the editor of *The Congregationalist* and a seasoned world traveler who last November had the amazing experience of visiting Israel for the first time.

## LETTER

### MORE ON LOBB VIEWS

I was so impressed with [the Rev. Dr. Douglas Lobb's initial article ["Following Jesus," December 2013, pp. 21-23], thinking that the NACCC really does have no dogma and allows articles like this to be printed. I agreed with it so much, but feel at my own church, that even though they say “no official dogma,” they do have their own private dogma and it's official in their eyes, so I basically keep my mouth shut. I wonder how many others feel this way.

Then I was so disappointed in subsequent issues of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*, when so many negative articles

came out. Thank you, Doug Lobb, for responding intelligently and calmly.

I feel that the Spirit works within my heart and my brain as I try to comprehend the infinite. It's a continual life-long struggle. I do look forward to meeting Doug at the annual meeting and hope that possibly time/space could be allotted so that others could discuss their journey.

**PHYLLIS AGERS**  
Salida, California

## NEWS

### MOMC TO TENNESSEE

In November 2014, the Mission and Outreach Ministry Council spent three days at the Morgan-Scott Project in Deer Lodge, Tenn. Council members helped build a



*MOMC members build a deck in Tennessee.*

deck on a trailer, visited the mission's new clinic, and deliberated the missions budget and other agenda items.

### MEDICAL CRUSADES

**Fishers of Men (Mexico)** plans medical crusades every month in 2015. They especially need volunteer doctors, dentists, nurses, hair stylists, optometrists, children's workers, massage therapists, physical therapists, pharmacists, and others in the medical field. Also needed are willing hands to set up and tear down, clean dental instruments, help in the kitchen, keep medical workers supplied with water, and simply to serve Jesus with a smiling face and a loving heart! Go to [fishersofmenmexico.org/fishersofmenmedicalmissions.html](http://fishersofmenmexico.org/fishersofmenmedicalmissions.html) or contact Linda Miller at the NACCC office.

### CHRISTMAS VIOLENCE

**Indian Community Fellowship (Northern India)** reports that on Christmas day, churches and homes were burned down and Christians were killed. Eighty-nine of those who lost their lives were from the mission's Bible study groups—cell group leaders and attendees—and there were 35 survivors, who lost relatives, their homes, and all of their material possessions.



*Pastor Amarjeet with children who lost their parents in the Christmas violence.*

Pastor Philip Malakar requests

prayers for the survivors and for Pastor Amarjeet and his congregation as they await the next developments. Despite the violent opposition, three more people were baptized five days after the massacre.

### VISIT TO MENAUL SCHOOL



*Menaul students.*

In November, the Rev. Patti Haaheim visited **Menaul School (New Mexico)**. "I was impressed with the work being done and enjoyed interacting with the students," she reported. "It is good to note that they are reaching out to international students as well as those in the Albuquerque area. They provide scholarships to a majority of the student body who still come from the minority populations of Hispanic origins along with everyone else. The thing that I thought was really good to know was their ability to have work groups come and help them. They have a dorm set up that could feed and house up to 30 in a group. They have a good program that our churches might be able to get involved with projects at the school as well as in the community. They also have several cottages that they have used to house senior citizens who have come to stay on the campus during the year and have been involved with the work of the school. I thought that was really interesting."

### INNOVATIVE IDEAS

**Pilgrim's Presence (Kenya)** operates in 29 villages with a total population of 42,000 people. With no electricity in the area, 38,000 people use firewood for lighting their

houses; 6,000 use tin lamps and about 800 use hurricane lamps. Heavy use of firewood strips the landscape of trees and produces excess smoke, causing chest and eye problems for thousands; and paraffin for lamps is very costly, pushing families below the poverty line. So the mission is initiating the hut solar lighting project: a 15-watt solar device, one small battery and two bulbs for each benefiting household. For a total of \$200, one household can get rid of smoke, soot, and the cost of lamp fuel.



Pilgrims Presence is also in partnership with Keringet School for the Deaf to support pupils with basic needs. People with hearing or other disabilities are neglected

and shunned as being under a curse or spell. They mission hopes to build one classroom, with reading and writing materials, to help this growing population of about 60 pupils.

The mission operates among the Pokot and Turkana communities who have been in conflict, conducting four reconciliation retreats each year for youths (warriors), elders, women, and elites from both communities.

### OTHER MISSION NEWS

The Piney Woods School (*Mississippi*) is featured on the Harvard University's Graduate School of Education Web site, in a podcast available at [hvr.d.me/Ibc9Q](http://hvr.d.me/Ibc9Q).

The Rev. Charles Nyane of **Word Alive (Ghana)** was able to purchase a used van through the generosity of the NACCC family. Rev. Charles uses this van to visit various areas of the mission.

### NEEDS

#### BUS NEEDED IN NIGERIA

A bus has been an ongoing need for **Christ to the Villages (Nigeria)**. If they can get a used bus or if someone donates a bus, it could be shipped to Nigeria. If you have any ideas about this, please contact Linda in the NACCC Office.

#### PRAYERS FOR REV. GOSSETT

The Rev. Tom Gossett of **Indian Trails (Arizona)** is stable in health right now but still needs prayers.

#### PRAYERS OF THANKS

The Rev. Charles Sagay of **Mission School of Hope (Cameroon)** finally made it home after waiting two months in Nigeria, while the borders were closed due to the Ebola outbreak. Thanks to God for prayers answered.

### Thank you for your support!

For more information on any of these missions; or to make a donation to any of the above projects; please contact Linda Miller at the NACCC office, 800-262-1620, ext. 1618 or [lmiller@naccc.org](mailto:lmiller@naccc.org).

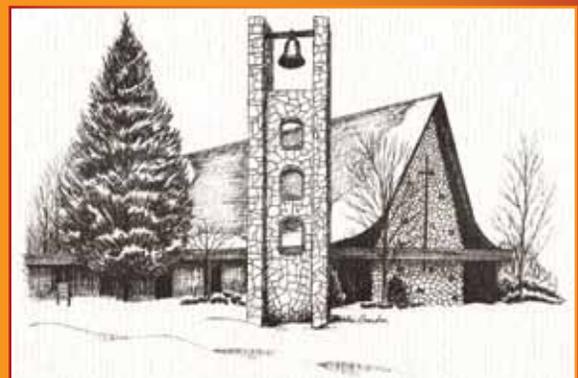
The Mission and Outreach Ministry Council, **NACCC**  
PO Box 288, Oak Creek WI 53154

For a complete listing of NACCC Mission Projects, please go to our Web site, [www.naccc.org](http://www.naccc.org), and click on "Missions."

## McGraft Memorial Congregational Church

Muskegon, Michigan

Located in Western Michigan on the shore of Lake Michigan



*SeekinG Full-TiMe Senior PaStor*

### *our Purpose Statement*

*Celebrate God through worship and praise.*

*Care and serve in Christian love.*

*Lead people to Christ and into the family of God.*

*Encourage spiritual growth.*

See our Church Information Form on the NACCC.  
Also see our Web site at [www.mcgraftchurch.org](http://www.mcgraftchurch.org).

## News from the fellowship of churches

### Good And Faithful Servants

*North Shore Congregational Church, Fox Point, Wis.*, honored the **Rev. Karl Schimpf** and his wife **Dottie**, on their retirement. The Sunday service Jan. 25 included a special liturgy, conducted by the **Rev. Dr. Betsey Mauro**, acknowledging the pastoral transition and encouraging the congregation to look to a new ministerial team for spiritual guidance. The service was followed by a luncheon, at which the Schimpfs were given a bird feeder, a Bible, and a painting of the North Shore meetinghouse. A celebratory dinner Jan. 29 brought forth 165 guests. Schimpf received the honorary title of pastor emeritus and a monetary gift.

Karl served three NACCC churches—*Mayfair Plymouth Church, Toledo, Ohio*; *First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City, Utah*; and North Shore. All three were represented at the dinner. Son **David Schimpf** noted that Karl's ministry included 2,212 Sunday sermons, 516 weddings, 521 baptisms, and 521 funerals, among the many other duties of a busy pastor.

Dottie, who has served North Shore as parish nurse and a Stephen Ministry leader, in addition to her manifold duties as pastor's wife, was also honored by those present.



*Karl and Dottie Schimpf share a private word during the Jan. 25 service.*

**MAY HIS TRIBE INCREASE**—NACCC stalwart **Jim Hopkins** was Rhode Island's Outstanding Philanthropic Citizen of 2014. He was honored in a breakfast ceremony Nov. 25 for three decades of volunteer service and financial support at two Rhode Island hospitals; the University of Rhode Island, his alma mater, and its alumni association; the *National Association of Congregational Christian Churches*; the *Congregational Library and Archives, Boston*; the Anthony Lyceum Library Association, East Greenwich, R.I.; United Way of Southeastern New England; and *Riverpoint Congregational Church, West Warwick, R.I.*

Jim has served on the NACCC's Congregational Church Development Division, the Executive Committee, the program committee for the 2004 Annual Meeting,



*Jim Hopkins chats with Elizabeth Zima, right, and Betsey Mauro, left, and, most recently, on the Congregational Foundation Board of Governors.*

He was nominated for the honor by **Elizabeth Zima**, executive director of the Kent Hospital Foundation.

The Rev. Dr. Betsey Mauro, Dean of the Center for Congregational Leadership, wrote a letter of support and represented the National Association at the ceremony.

**NEW CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**—Last September a new “Confidentiality Statement” appeared on the Trello board (a Web-based storehouse of working documents) of the NACCC Board of Directors. The statement read: “All information, with the exception of approved, public minutes, on this Trello board is confidential and is posted with the understanding it will be held confidentially among the members of this Trello board.”

**Larry Sommers**, editor of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*, objected to this statement as a departure from the official openness of the Executive Committee in the previous association structure. After discussing the issue in its Sept. 4 teleconference meeting, the Board deferred action.

On Dec. 4, following informal consultation with members of the Board, executive secretary **Casey vander Bent** replaced the original confidentiality statement with a longer substitute: “It is the policy of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches that its elected bodies will operate with transparency and that ideas, concerns and feedback from our member churches are valued and sought. Further, it is the policy of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches that its elected bodies will disclose to our member churches the record of all actions taken and seek input and guidance whenever practical. We recognize, also, that there are certain matters (including some personnel

and financial issues) that must always remain strictly confidential. In order to maintain a balance between appropriate disclosure and the need to create a safe place for new ideas, or to temporarily withhold the details of some unfinished tasks until they are finalized, all documents on this Trello board that have not yet been approved by the Board are considered confidential. These documents are posted with the understanding they will be held in confidence among the members of this Trello board until approved by the board, or in instances where maintaining confidentiality could result in harm to any party or to the organization. However, issues by themselves are not considered confidential unless they have been or will be addressed in executive session, for example, any document or discussion of a specific employee or volunteer, property sale, actual or potential civil or criminal suit, or such.”

No further action has been taken.



**JUST CHECKING**—*First Congregational Church of Naples, Fla.*, and its member **Frank Rostron** present a check for \$90,015.00, raised through a charity golf tournament Oct. 25, to the **Miracle Limbs Foundation** started by *First Congregational* member **Bob Ayres**. *Miracle Limbs* helps people who need prosthetic limbs and cannot afford them. Pictured from left are Ayres, Rostron, the **Rev. Dr. Les Wicker**, and **Jonathan Lombardi**.

## CORRECTION

**Nancy Asendorf**, *Congregational Church of Sun City, Ariz.*, informs us that the cash bequeathed by the defunct *Southwest Inter-Mountain Fellowship of Churches*, half of it to be used for the Salt Lake City Annual Meeting and Conference, was actually \$591.06, not \$791 as stated in our “SWIM into Cal-West” news brief [September 2014, p. 39].

**SHARON L. LINDVALL**



Sharon Lofberg Lindvall, 68, died Jan. 23 at home in Bridgeview, Ill. She was a lay minister of Tinley Park Community Church, Tinley Park, Ill., where her husband of 45 years, the Rev. Richard M. Lindvall, is senior minister. The two met at Rosemoor Community Church in Chicago at age 8 and have been actively involved in church life together ever since. Besides the Tinley Park church, they served four other churches, in Illinois, Michigan, and Nebraska.

Sharon “wore all the hats” at one time or another, teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, and serving as a trustee, as a deacon, and on other boards and committees. She was her church’s delegate at a number of National Association meetings and was also active in the Iowa-Nebraska Association and the Midwest Association of Congregational Christian Churches.

Besides church work, she loved travel, gardening, and cooking. Her husband, Richard, said, “She was unassuming, delightful, faithful, cheerful, and friendly, with a great sense of humor. She was loved and will be greatly missed.”

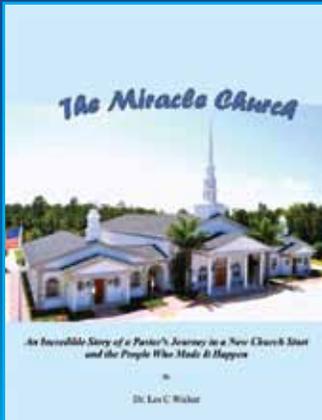
A celebration of her life was held Jan. 31 at the Tinley Park church.

*“It was pure enjoyment from beginning to end.”*

—Jeannie Hart, Naples, Fla.

*“What you accomplished in Florida was indeed a gift from God and the book tells it all.”*

—Grace Faison, Plymouth Church, Brooklyn



This award-winning new book by Dr. Les Wicker tells the journey of the pastor and people who stepped forward to embrace a new Congregational Church in Naples, Florida. Reading this incredible story, you will understand why people refer to this church as “The Miracle Church.”

Outskirts Press, 204 pages.  
\$12.95 paperback.

**AVAILABLE NOW** at  
[amazon.com/The-Miracle-Church-Incredible-Pastors/dp/1478731109](https://www.amazon.com/The-Miracle-Church-Incredible-Pastors/dp/1478731109)

**First Congregational Church** of Clear Lake, Iowa, seeks a senior pastor to lead us in the growth of our mission “A Passion for God, Compassion for People.”

Clear Lake is a bustling summer resort community with abundant recreational opportunities, halfway between Des Moines and Minneapolis.

**See our website, [congregationalclearlake.com](http://congregationalclearlake.com), or our profile at [nacc.org](http://nacc.org).**

Send resume to Search Committee Secretary Bill Cooney at 65 Four Winds Drive, Clear Lake, IA 50428 or e-mail [fccsearch@netins.net](mailto:fccsearch@netins.net).



**205 West 10th Avenue North  
Clear Lake, IA 50428 • 641.357.2818**

# PASTORATES AND PULPITS

## RECENT CALLS

Mayfair-Plymouth Congregational Christian Church, Toledo, Ohio, has called the Rev. Joe French as lead pastor.

LaMoille Congregational Community Church, Marshalltown, Iowa, has called the Rev. Terry Collins as senior minister.

People's Congregational Church, Bayport, Minn., has called the Rev. Linda Tossey as senior minister.

Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, N.Y., has called the Rev. Tom Lenhart as interim senior minister.

First Congregational Church, Detroit, Mich., has called the Rev. Cynthia Rice as senior minister.

Pine Hill Congregational Church, West Bloomfield, Mich., has called the Rev. Charles Packer as senior minister.

First Congregational Church of Maltby, Snohomish, Wash., has called the Rev. Tom Sorenson as senior minister.

## IN SEARCH

### SENIOR MINISTERS

Ashby Congregational Church and Hyannis Congregational Church (share pastor)

*Ashby and Hyannis, Neb.*

Colebrook Congregational Church  
*Colebrook, Conn.*

Craig Memorial  
Congregational Church  
*Paradise, Calif.*

First Congregational Church  
*Akron, Ohio*

First Congregational Church  
*Ashland, Neb.*

First Congregational Church  
*Clear Lake, Iowa*

First Congregational Church  
*Hanson, Mass.*

First Congregational Church  
*Saugatuck, Mich.*

First Congregational Church  
*Toulon, Ill.*

First Congregational Church  
*Vermontville, Mich.*

Glenolden Congregational Church  
*Glenolden, Pa.*

Little Brown Church in the Vale  
*Nashua, Iowa*

McGraft Memorial  
Congregational Church  
*Muskegon, Mich.*

North Shore  
Congregational Church  
*Fox Point, Wis.*

Orthodox Congregational Church  
*Petersham, Mass.*

Plymouth Church  
*Brooklyn, N.Y.*

Plymouth Congregational Church  
*Minneapolis, Minn.*

SouthCross Community Church  
*Burnsville, Minn.*

Union Congregational Christian Church  
*Marbury, Ala.*

Westchester Congregational Church  
*Colchester, Conn.*

## INTENTIONAL TRANSITIONAL MINISTER

Flatbush-Tompkins  
Congregational Church  
*Brooklyn, N.Y.*

## CALENDAR

**APRIL 13** - General copy deadline for *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* June 2015 issue. Contact Larry Sommers, [editor@nacc.org](mailto:editor@nacc.org) or 800-262-1620, ext. 1610.

**APRIL 20-23, 2015** - 46th Annual NACCC Ministers' Convocation—Weber Center, Adrian, Michigan. Contact Marie Steele, [msteele@nacc.org](mailto:msteele@nacc.org) or 800-262-1620, ext. 1614.

**JUNE 18-25, 2015** - Missionary Assistance Corps trip to *Misión Mazahua, Mexico*. Contact Jack Brown, [pilgrim\\_pastor@hotmail.com](mailto:pilgrim_pastor@hotmail.com) or 269-749-2631.

**JUNE 20-23, 2015** - NACCC 61st Annual Meeting and Conference—Salt Lake City, Utah. See Registration Brochure bound after p. 20 of this magazine.

## SAVE THE DATE

**JUNE 25-28, 2015** - NACCC 62nd Annual Meeting and Conference—Dearborn, Michigan