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Bible Lecturer

Barbara Brown Taylor

Harry R. Butman Chair of Religion, Piedmont,
Among *TIME* Magazine's 100 Most
Influential People in 2014



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The CONGREGATIONALIST

Magazine of the Congregational Way since 1849

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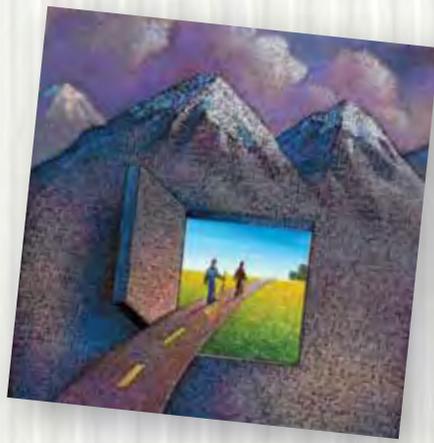
**NEW TIMES
DEMAND**
NEW APPROACH

**SHIFTING
BOUNDARIES**

**JUDAISM &
CONGREGATIONALISM**

**REFRAMING
THE ATONEMENT**

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Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887)

The most famous of Lyman Beecher's thirteen children was Henry Ward Beecher. Harry Butman calls Beecher "the emperor of American preachers."¹⁸⁹

His ministerial career began in Kansas, where he raised money in his church to buy what were called "Beecher's Bibles"—rifles for the abolitionist cause. He and his brother-in-law once rescued a free black woman from slave traders. After pastoring for a while in Indianapolis, he became famous as the pastor of Plymouth Church, a Congregational fellowship in Brooklyn, New York.

Plymouth Church was a very wealthy and influential church. Famous abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and others spoke there. Charles Dickens read from his novels in the church building. President Lincoln and President Grant, happy that Beecher was a Republican, both attended services at Plymouth Church. Beecher himself gave at least fifty public lectures every year, in addition to preaching on Sundays. As the saying went, if you wanted to hear Beecher, "Just take the ferry to Brooklyn and follow the crowd."¹⁹¹

Science and religion must not be enemies, insisted Beecher. He was convinced that Charles Darwin was correct, and he called himself "a cordial Christian evolutionist."¹⁹³ He also minimized the authority of the Bible. In his words, "It is the human race that has been inspired; and the Bible in every part of it was lived, first, and the record of it made afterwards."¹⁹⁴

Unlike his father, who was a solid Calvinist, Beecher rejected the theology of the Westminster Confession. By 1882, because of so much criticism from other Congregational ministers, Beecher led his church out of the Congregational denomination into independency.

Oddly enough, Beecher's theological liberalism was not matched by what in our time would be called political liberalism. Like many other nineteenth-century thinkers, he applied Darwinism to political science and economics. He believed in the survival of the fittest, and that those who were poor deserved their lowly condition. In his words, "No man in this land suffers from poverty unless it be more than his fault—unless it be his sin. . . . If men have not enough, it is owing to the want of . . . industry, and frugality, and wise saving."¹⁹⁵

189 Butman, "Henry Ward Beecher: Emperor of American Preachers," *The Congregationalist*, April 1987, 4, in Larson.

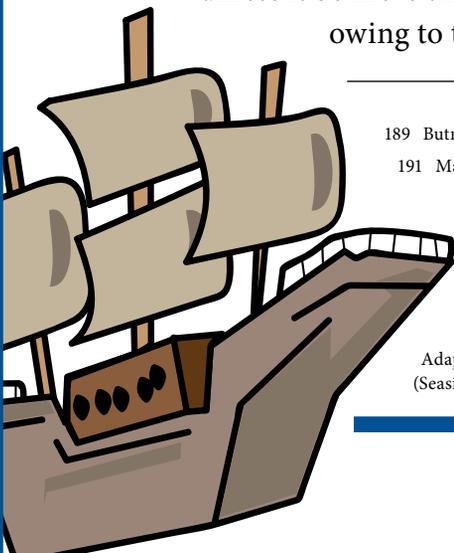
191 Marshall and Manuel, *Sounding Forth the Trumpet* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 261-262.

193 *Ibid.*, 323-324.

194 Henry Ward Beecher, *A Treasury of Illustration*, eds. John R. Howard and Truman J. Ellinwood (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1904) <<http://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/henry-ward-beecher/a-treasury-ofillustration-ccc/>> (accessed 29 Apr 2012).

195 Von Rohr, 328.

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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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ON THE COVER:

Stuart Congregational Church combines tradition with innovation. See p.12.

A Covenant People

by Michael Chittum

We proclaim that the basis of our churches is the covenant that binds all the diverse individuals in our church together. Certainly, there are other, important theological considerations we could mention, but we still would assert that it is our covenant that creates the church congregation. What does that mean for our churches today?

To begin to frame an answer to that question, here is a sample church covenant taken from Henry Martyn Dexter's *A Handbook of Congregationalism* (copyright 1880, by the Congregational Publishing Society, Boston).

A Church Covenant

We, who feel called of God to join ourselves into a church-state, having a deep sense of our own unworthiness thereof, disability thereto, and aptness to forsake the Lord and our duty to Him and to each other, do hereby, in the name of Jesus Christ, and imploring His grace to supplement our weakness to the worthy performance of our vows – solemnly covenant and agree to walk in this church in all His ways, made known, or to be made known unto us, according to our best endeavors, whatsoever it shall cost us, the Lord assisting us.

And, particularly, we covenant and agree: to seek to live supremely for God; to consecrate ourselves, our households, our property to Him; to submit to the gospel discipline of this church, and labor for its peace, purity and usefulness; to exercise and promote Christian fellowship with all sister churches of the common Head; and particularly to make ourselves by prayers, gifts, and service, constant coworkers with Christ toward the great end of human redemption, until His will shall be done in earth as it is in Heaven. AMEN.

This statement of covenant relationship emphasizes several important components, I believe. There is an acknowledgement that no individual member of the church is perfect; yet, with God's help, that imperfect person seeks to follow the way of God as best as possible, with God's help. This covenant also contains the pledges to live for God, to work to promote peace, purity, and usefulness within the body of the church, and to engage in and to promote fellowship with our sister churches.

We will all have the opportunity to join together as a broader covenant fellowship in the 2016 Annual Meeting hosted by the churches of the Southeast Michigan Association of Congregational Churches. In fact, there is a workshop available at this year's meeting on church covenants.

Looking forward to seeing all of you in Detroit at the 2016 Annual Meeting as the covenant people of the NACCC gather.

Grace and Peace, Michael



MICHAEL CHITTUM
Executive Director



The NACCC cordially invites you to a
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Where: NACCC
8473 South Howell Avenue
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Or from the convenience of your home via your desktop

When: Wednesday, August 10th at 8:00 am - 10:00 am CDT
A continental breakfast will be served starting at 7:30 am to those attending in person.

RSVP Today!

Participation in this seminar is open to any member, minister, or employee of a NACCC church that is an active member in the Association. Contact Dan Drea at 800-262-1620 ext. 1616 or by email at ddrea@nacc.org to register for the seminar at the Oak Creek office or to attend the live webinar.

For those attending the meeting in person, Dan can also schedule a one on one meeting with Paul or Jim after the seminar to discuss your personal financial and retirement needs. The meetings slots will be 30 minutes and will be scheduled on a first come first serve basis.

Paul Weers, CFP® has been with MMBB since September 2008. Prior to joining MMBB, he served more than 9 years with the American Baptist Foundation. At that time, he was responsible for preparing and implementing charitable estate plans, which enabled donors to leave a legacy through planned gifts to benefit American Baptist mission and ministry. He also counseled churches and ministry organizations as they established their own endowments for the purpose of securing permanent long-term funding of ministry goals. He brings 28 years of experience in financial services to MMBB. He has been a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ since 1991. He also has 14 years of experience as an investment broker and was a NASD registered principal.

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Rev. Jim Cook, CFP® helps extend MMBB's benefits to organizations in Kansas and Missouri. Jim brings more than 20 years of outreach and deep involvement in church life to bear at MMBB. As a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional, Jim has unparalleled expertise in comprehensive financial and retirement planning. He is also an accomplished speaker and a passionate teacher with 10 years of pastoral experience in several California churches. Jim has led seminars and workshops for years on topics ranging from transitioning into retirement to managing change in the 21st century church. He holds a B.S. in Psychology from Lewis & Clark College and a Master of Divinity degree from Fuller Theological Seminary.

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Bringing together Congregational Christian Churches for mutual care and outreach to our world in the name of Jesus Christ

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JUDAISM AND CONGREGATIONALISM:

The Reality of Diversity



By John Wofford

Prompted by the Holocaust, the 21st Century has provided an unprecedented opportunity for Jewish and Christian reconciliation. At no other point in history has it been so encouraged, even fashionable, for Christians to emphasize the Jewish roots of their faith. Most notably, many churches have declared a ceasefire on the controversial, centuries-old practice of evangelizing to Jews.

Yet, despite the efforts to celebrate Jewish and Christian unity, one surprising link has remained unexplored: the striking parallels between Judaism and Congregationalism.

Describing Congregationalism as a singular worldview is essentially impossible, and it's actually here that the similarities with Judaism begin. The Congregational model, which values submission to God rather than ecclesiastical authority, as well as an individual conscience and moral living over creedal confession, is immune to simple axioms. As the Puritan minister Rev. Samuel Ward once wrote, "Faith finds its lustre in action, and not just in notion. It enters our hearts and not just our heads." Congregationalists, then, are often described by what they do as much as, if not more than, what they believe.

So it is with Judaism, a faith that began, not with creeds, but with a call to action: God to Abraham: "Go." Later, the Torah provides the "watchword" of the Jewish faith, the *Sh'ma* - the call to listen: "Hear, o Israel - the Lord your God is One." The beauty of this *t'filah*, this prayer, is partially due to the flexibility of its language. And into this flexibility, Jewish teachers have imposed a host of assertions and possible meanings - including even skepticism and disbelief. The result is a plurality that is built into Jewish religion, inseparable from it.

The key to protecting this pluralism is in leadership. Jokingly put, there's no Jewish pope for the same reason there's no Congregationalist pope: no one would listen to them. All those differences? All that dissonance? No, thank you.

There's an anecdote about the Rabbi Maimonides, one of the figureheads of rabbinic Judaism, who was accused of teaching heretical ideas about God. In response to these accusations, Maimonides composed the Thirteen Statements of Faith, a short outline of Jewish confessions, in an attempt to dispel the notion he was a heretic. Yet, perhaps to Maimonides' surprise, this document was also controversial – not for heresy, but for Maimonides' alleged “hubris” in codifying Jewish beliefs.

Today, Jewish and Congregational leadership work similarly: elected leaders are given (limited) powers to provide resources to congregations, train new leaders, and speak as respected members of the community. In most cases, member congregations aren't required to endorse or adhere to the suggestions of their leadership beyond certain (extremely) broad parameters.

For an example of such a broad parameter, congregations describing themselves as 'Messianic synagogues' (that is, Christian churches which embrace Jewish symbols but profess Christ) are typically barred from membership in Jewish denominations on the grounds they are in fact Christian, not Jewish. Beyond that, however, it may surprise many to learn that the explicit beliefs of congregations (and, by extension, their members) are generally discerned by local leadership, with no obtrusive denominational oversight. One is as likely to sit next to an agnostic as a traditional believer in a contemporary synagogue.

Much like Judaism, Congregationalist ideas exist within a certain range: Torah or the New Testament; Moses or Christ; Jewish history or Christian history, respectively. Yet within that range is a rich soil from which new and dynamic ideas may spring. Rather than

The takeaway is that there is no single way to 'do Judaism' or 'do Congregationalism.'

resisting this openness, many Congregationalists, like many Jews, thrive on it.

The takeaway is that there is no single way to 'do Judaism' or 'do Congregationalism.' The possibilities are virtually endless and depend on the willingness of the individual to listen to their conscience, support the community, and commit to learning and prayer.

These similarities to Judaism should be encouraging to Congregationalists. In a growing climate of Jewish and Christian dialogue, Congregationalism is in a perfect position to relate to the Jewish community more deeply than even some of our other Christian sisters and brothers — to relate, not as a monolithic whole, but rather as a conglomerate of deep and wide-stretching diversity.

What's more, as fundamentalism and intolerance increases, perhaps Jews and Congregationalists share a beautiful calling: to demonstrate, in our teachings, in our practice, and in our personal lives, the reality of diversity among us, and the beauty of it.



JOHN WOFFORD is an author and educator who has written for *The Jewish Daily Forward*, *The Humanist Magazine*, and Donald Miller's *Burnside Writers Collective*. He has taught *Contemporary Jewish Philosophy* at Darshan Yeshiva, a modern, independent Jewish training school. A former student rabbi, John is now a Christian who, together with his wife, a Jewish woman and the descendant of Holocaust survivors, works to build understanding between Christians and Jews.

NACCC Welcomes New Development Head

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC) is pleased to announce that Debby Fulton has accepted the position of Director of Development and Communications. Her office is located at NACCC headquarters in Oak Creek.

Debby began her professional career working for agencies and corporations in the for profit sector, providing expertise in advertising, public relations, marketing and communications. Dedication and service to her community led her to the non-profit sector, where she has worked for over 18 years. As a capital campaign consultant she trained and supported volunteers to raise building funds for additions to a local hospital, museum, school and performance center. Debby noted that she is “proud of my Christian faith and use it as a road map in my personal and professional life.”

The majority of Debby’s work in the non-profit industry has been as Director of Development and Marketing, providing her the opportunity to strategically plan, direct and implement all aspects of fundraising and marketing for diverse organizations including the Girl Scouts, Gift of Adoption Fund, Gilda’s Club and, most recently, Schlitz Audubon Nature Center. She is experienced in working with key leadership, staff, community volunteers, and Boards of Directors to reach both financial and marketing goals.



Debby Fulton

Continued on p. 30

COME GROW WITH US!



First Congregational Church of Clarkston is located in beautiful North Oakland County, Michigan and serves the surrounding communities of Clarkston, Independence and Springfield Townships.

We’re a growing congregation, and we’re looking for someone to share their talents with us and lead us into the future! Our facilities are top notch; we have a full size sanctuary, narthex, fellowship hall and outdoor pavilion, as well as an indoor gym and youth loft. We also have a beautiful pond, with gardens and a Prayer Trail. We need someone with the right skills to help grow our numbers and lead us in our community, while immersing us in the word of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

If you think you’re the right person for the job, please contact us... **we’re ready for you!**

**Contact RT Harris,
Search Committee Chairman
248-554-5666
fccclarkstonsearch@gmail.com**



Can You Hear Me Now?

by Dawn Carlson

As I sit and write this, I'm in Ireland, enjoying time with family and friends and getting ready to kick off my sabbatical time. Today, I've visited the Museum of Country Life and the Foxford Woolen Mills. I've also video conferenced with my brother and sister-in-law in Texas and spoken to my son in Indiana and my 95-year-old mother - at little or no cost.

If you're traveling - for study, a mission trip or a much-needed vacation - the ability to communicate with family back home or the folks in the office has become pretty much mandatory. Verizon Wireless wants \$1 per minute plus \$40 a month to call home with their international plan. AT&T will charge the same, but only assess a \$30 monthly fee. Since my usual "daily calls" add up to three, four-minute calls, that would run me about \$12 a day. Thanks, but no thanks.

Instead, I can call, as often as I like and talk for as long as I like via Skype, all for the flat fee of \$6.99 per month. Of course, I have to have internet, but that's available almost anywhere. And I can make those phone calls from my cheap, just purchased, "in country" cell phone, my laptop or my Kindle. All I need is the Skype app and an account I set up (and here's the critical piece) before I left home.

There are lots of ways to communicate with the folks you've left behind and with folks on the other side of the world. What you have to do is a little research and a little planning ahead.



Google Hangouts and Facebook Messenger allow video conferencing between two or more people with the same software or app installed. The Pacific Northwest Regional Association has used Google Hangouts to bring together their geographically diverse group for their annual meeting. Skype also allows video conferencing between two people who have the same free app. The beauty of Skype, and its global \$6.99 per month fee, is that you can call landlines as well as mobile lines. That helps when you need to field a call from the church facilities director or see how your mom's doctor's appointment went.

There are other great apps and strategies for staying connected. It just takes a little exploration and investigation and a willingness to try things out before you leave home.

Keeping in touch in the 21st century is much easier than it used to be. Just check out what's available and give it a try. You'll save yourself (or your church's budget) some big bucks. All that being said, just remember, folks do love to receive a postcard now and then.



THE REV. DAWN CARLSON *pastors First Congregational Church of Terre Haute, Ind. Like many in ministry today, she finds herself having to grasp as much tech stuff as possible. If you have technology questions, you can e-mail her, dawncarl@aol.com, or write to Dawn Carlson, 630 Ohio, Terre Haute IN 47807.*

THE ADAPTIVE CONGREGATION



By Rev. Dr. Timothy D. Roberts

The 21st century local Christian congregation in America exists in a culture that has largely dismissed its value and voice. Unlike the bygone era of the 1950s when going to church and heeding its message was the norm, the Church today is increasingly dismissed as being irrelevant. No longer does the Church hold a prominent place of authority and influence in the American ideological landscape.

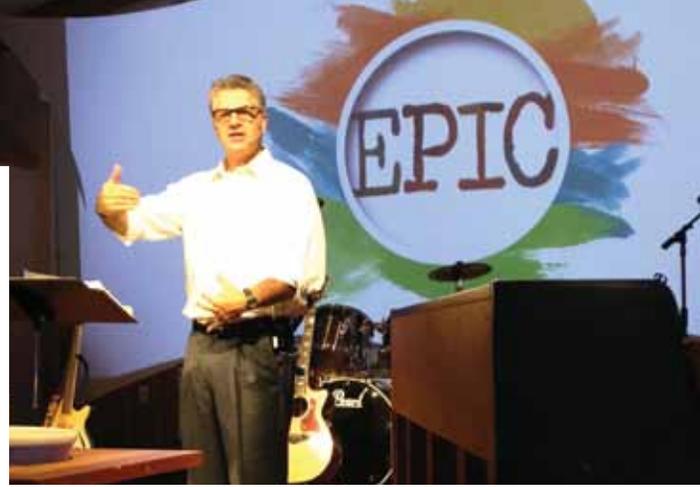
Researchers are categorizing and quantifying people-groups who dismiss the Church and the faith it preaches. Pew Research Center discovered a sizeable portion (roughly 20%) of the American population that does not affiliate with any religious tradition. They are called the “nones,” and according to the Washington Post, the American church is losing ground to this trend. The “nones” are the un-churched who reject the Church’s claim of moral or religious authority. Alarming, the largest percentage (36%) demographic of “nones” is the Millennial Generation (born between 1990-1996). Many college-aged young adults flatly dismiss the faith of today’s Church.

Yet another group has decided to give up entirely on the organized Church. They are called the “dones.” The “dones” have an affinity for the Christian faith, but they are de-churched people hurt by or tired of the stagnant

bureaucracy, excessive moralism, backbiting, judgmental gossip, and spiritual shallowness they discern in the local congregation. They decided to manage their faith without the institutional Church. They left. They are done! Whereas the “nones” avoid the Church based on ideological differences, the “dones” abandoned the Church out of preference for self-regulated spirituality. The rise of the “nones” and the “dones” indicates a changed cultural environment to which the local congregation must faithfully and effectively respond. But how?

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

Dr. Leonard Wong teaches the U.S. Army about the need to adapt to foreign and constantly changing environments in the theatres of war. When a military force enters a culture different from its own it must learn to adapt, if a successful mission is to be accomplished. In his book, *Developing Adaptive Leaders: The Crucible Experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Dr. Wong writes, “Adaptive leaders learn to live with unpredictability. They spend less time fretting about the inability to establish a routine or control the future and focus more on exploiting opportunities.” Just as the military must adapt to achieve its mission, so must the Church adapt to the ever-changing and increasingly “foreign” environment of 21st century America.



Stuart Congregational Church designs its additional Epic worship service for those who are unchurched.

The local congregation no longer has the power to trump “rival” cultural forces. The local congregation is awash in a cultural environment that is unpredictable, rapidly changing, unsupportive of its mission, and which it cannot control. The Church must adapt. Adaptive leaders do not try to fight the change. Adaptive leaders embrace the change and discern avenues through which they can travel. Adaptive leaders help their congregations adapt to culture shifts and lead them into new opportunities to accomplish the mission to which Christ Jesus charged them.

A LESSON FROM THE PAST

Ironically, we can reach 1600 years into the past to find a helpful example for the Church of today. St. Cyril of Jerusalem was a leader who was faithful to the Gospel while being effective in adapting the Gospel message to a radically changing cultural environment. Cyril was an adaptive leader.

As Bishop of Jerusalem, Cyril witnessed the epicenter of Jewish tradition and Hebrew culture become Hellenized. That is, Greek culture, language, customs, and religious practices dominated Jerusalem in the 4th century. Cyril responded to his Greek audience by finding new opportunities to accomplish the mission of Jesus Christ. Instead of insisting on traditionally cerebral Hebrew forms of teaching the faith, Cyril embraced the patterns of initiation and terminology found in the Greek mystery cults, of which his audience was most familiar. He spoke their “language.”

The Greek mystery religions initiated their faithful through melodramatic rites filled with symbolism that appealed to the senses. In the year 350 AD, Cyril developed his baptismal instruction for new converts by incorporating elements of Greek mysticism. Cyril maintained faithfulness to the Christian tradition while communicating through forms and mediums that were culturally familiar to his Greek audience. He adapted and, instead of trying to control the future, Cyril exploited a new opportunity. As Hughes Oliphant Old says, “Cyril is doing what a good teacher always does. He is starting out with what people understand in order to explain what they do not understand. He is trying to explain Christian worship in terms of pagan worship.”

Cyril was faithful to the Christian tradition while innovating new ways to teach faith and to experience worship. As Old says, “For the Christian Church this is the beginning of a totally new approach to teaching and preaching.” Adaptive leaders, and congregations, innovate.

EMBRACE THE PRESENT

I am privileged to minister at the Stuart Congregational Church in Stuart, Florida. Our aim at SCC is to maintain biblical integrity and faithfulness to the Congregational Way, while effectively reaching into the changing culture around us. Much like the experience of other mainline churches, most newcomers we encounter are unfamiliar with our traditions. We have “nones” and “dones” in our community, some of whom actually make their way

into our ministry. For instance Ron, the owner of a local bar and musical venue recently sat in my office with his mother. Her husband, Ron's father, passed away. Ron's mother recently began worshipping with us, but not Ron himself. He is out quite late on Saturday nights! Ron represents a demographic averse to the institutional Church. The opportunity we are exploring with Ron is to use his bar and musical venue to hold a sunrise Easter service. If it works well, perhaps we will explore a regular worship service there on Sunday mornings. Undoubtedly we

In my interview with the SCC pastoral search team, they were attracted to a single phrase I used: "bless and add." I learned that simple phrase from Dr. Stan Ott of Vital Churches Institute. The "bless and add" concept makes space for innovative initiatives to co-exist alongside long-time traditions. For example, we bless the two existing tried-n-true traditional worship services, making them as excellent as possible, while we added a new Epic worship service. The Epic service is designed to "speak" to the un-churched and de-churched. It is a non-threatening environment, artfully designed with



Fishing camp, surfing camp and music camp engage local young people and their parents.



will appeal to a different crowd in our community in that unorthodox venue. We are trying to adapt to new challenges and seek new opportunities.

At Stuart Congregational Church we made adaptive changes to summer youth outreach. The traditional approach had always been to host a week of Vacation Bible School. Our intense efforts, we noticed, simply provided baby-sitting services for children whose parents already attend a neighboring congregation. So we made the decision to drop VBS entirely. Instead, we now host a week of surf camp, music camp, and two weeks of fishing camp. The result is we are now drawing from the "nones" and the "dones" in our community. They would never send their children to VBS, but they are fanatical about fishing or surfing. We are building bridges to a hard-to-reach demographic through adaptation and innovation, and it is working.

backlit calligraphy panels along the sidewalls, colorful theatrical lighting overhead, multiple screens and multimedia, an engaging band and high-energy worship. We are clearly speaking a different "language" at Epic even as we teach a traditional faith. We are using unorthodox means to reach an unorthodox crowd. We "bless and add." That's what Cyril did in Jerusalem, Israel. That's what we do in Stuart, Florida.



REV. DR. TIM ROBERTS is a graduate of Flagler College, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Columbia Theological Seminary. He is married to Lisa, and together they are blessed with four children and three grandchildren. Since 1988 Tim has served churches in Virginia and throughout Florida, and is currently the Senior Pastor at the Stuart Congregational Church in Stuart, Florida.

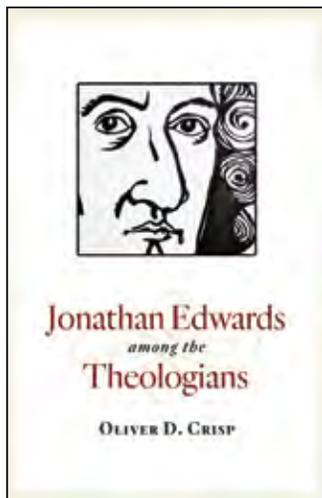
Congregational Preaching, Old and Not-So-Old

by Steven Blackburn

The three ministers reviewed here represent a wide range of Congregationalist thought and history, from a familiar 18th century colonial American divine, to a 19th century Scotsman who preached in English Congregational churches, to a 20th century African American, now retired, engaged in wide-ranging aspects of ecumenical ministry.

Jonathan Edwards among the Theologians.

Crisp, Oliver D. Eerdmans, 2015



As noted in this column recently, Edwards studies have experienced a strong revival in the last few years. This particular volume draws upon the extensive corpus of Edwards' sermons to reflect upon various aspects of his theological views. Crisp notes that these sermons have been relatively neglected in favor of Edwards' treatises, leaving

many with the impression that Edwards was little more than a "hellfire preacher, wrapped in the black folds of a Geneva gown, terrorizing the inhabitants of his Northampton parish with lurid sermons about ... damnation..." But Edwards' weekly orations to the faithful prove that his reputation is little more than a caricature, and that his doctrine as reflected in

his homiletics was not merely abstract propositions upon which he would expound. Rather, they were "a catalyst for moral and spiritual change."

While 18th century rhetorical style may no longer be in vogue, the Case Study on "The Excellency of Jesus Christ" on Revelation 5:5-6, from the high point of Edwards' preaching career (1738), exhibits the power of words to change minds and hearts, even if Edwards "may not have had the hortatory presence of Whitefield in his open-air rallies." Almost 300 years later, many of us still have something to learn from the Sage of Northampton.

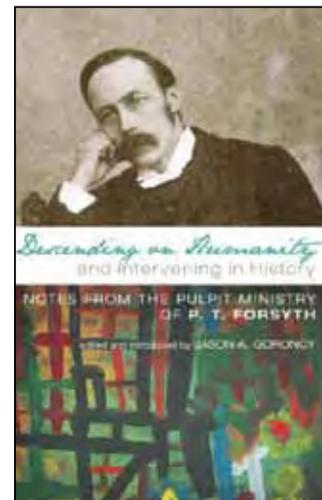
Descending on Humanity and Intervening in History: notes from the pulpit ministry of P. T. Forsyth.

Forsyth, P. T.;

Jason A. Goroncy, ed.

Pickwick, 2013.

This collection of four dozen sermons, over half of which are previously unpublished, is edited and introduced by a scholar who sees in Forsyth "a pastor to pastors." Spanning the period of 1876–1924, these sermons were selected for their relative inaccessibility (no sense reproducing earlier "readers" on this preacher). It is clear that Forsyth was no great admirer of some of the more "progressive" aspects of Protestant theology, especially those emanating from Germany; in this



he may be said to have anticipated Karl Barth, at least in some respects. To be sure, Forsyth studied at Gottingen under Ritschl. But Aberdeen, where Forsyth attained his earlier degree, was perhaps then, as much as it now, a bastion of traditionalist Reformed thought.

Forsyth was not simply a pulpit preacher, although he graced some of the most important British pulpits of his time, including Clarendon Park Congregational in Leicester. He was invited to Yale to deliver the Lyman Beecher Lectures (1906-07) as well as addressing the Congregational Union of England and Wales (1909 and 1918). His influence among other non-conformist church bodies in Britain was considerable, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Wales declaring that “no one ever made the Cross more real and central to me than [Forsyth] did.” Eventually, Forsyth went on to become the Principal of Hackney College, London, an institution with strong Congregational roots with a calling to train clergy, even while Forsyth was careful to distinguish between preaching and lecturing.

While the world in which Forsyth flourished seems quite distant to some, his mark on Reformed thought in Britain and the United States proves to remain considerable. This sermon collection gives us some idea why.

Crossing Barriers and Building Bridges.

Polk, Robert L., with Cecile T. Lampton. CNG, 2013

Polk (b. 1928) is a 1955 graduate of Hartford Seminary, where he was a classmate of Andrew Young and Henry G. Wyman, the latter of whom served NACCC and independent Congregational churches in Rhode Island and New York in the late 20th century. A protégé of the Rev. Charles Rush (in whose name an award is given out by

the NACCC annually), Polk served, inter alia, at New York’s Riverside Church (1960-66, 1969-1976). The author clearly discerns the hand of God in guiding him throughout his ministry. Anyone with knowledge of this period will recall the turmoil that characterized the United States in terms of race relations, generational infighting, assassinations, and political upheaval. It is against such a background that Polk, an African-American, “worked out his own salvation” in the contexts of parish and ecumenical endeavors. The hand of providence was certainly welcome in a world where Polk could be threateningly characterized as “that new nigger from New York City.”

That epithet stemmed from Polk’s involvement in academia. Called as Dean of the Chapel at New Orleans’ Dillard University, founded by Congregationalists soon after the Civil War, Polk served an inter-racial community at Dillard beginning in the mid-1960’s, when the country was in the throes of the Civil Right movement. While many might suggest that the world fifty years ago is quite different from our world today, the Chapel at Dillard was destroyed by fire – raising ominous echoes with the many church burnings that continue to plague parts of the United States today.

Polk’s perseverance through injustices and injuries is testament to an enduring faith. This autobiography is inspiring.



THE REV. STEVEN BLACKBURN, PH.D., is Hartford Seminary’s Library Director. He has served Congregational Christian Churches in Connecticut and Massachusetts, and was elected to three terms as executive secretary of the Connecticut (now Northeast) Fellowship. He has also chaired the NACCC’s World Christian Relations Commission.

Yes, We'll Join You!
No, I'm Afraid We can't.

INTER-RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES

by Arlin Larsen

Inter-religious boundaries exist on many scales. Take civilizations – Christian, Confucian, Buddhist, Islamic. Or great divisions within traditions – Catholic/Protestant/Orthodox, Reform/Conservative/Orthodox, Sunni/Shiite, Hinayana/Mahayana. Or denominations within the Christian tradition. We in the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches have defined ourselves very explicitly as “definitely not United Church of Christ or Presbyterian,” as closely related as we are. Adding national or ethnic incarnations at any level reveals additional layers of complexity, as do large ecumenical organizations, such as the World Council of Churches.

However, when it comes to our local churches, it may be most helpful to begin with the boundary situations that arise naturally from our actual lives as congregations. This route is particularly pertinent to Congregational churches given the freedom inherent in our local autonomy, our small size and scattered nature, and, to be honest, our general lack of experience in wider arenas.

SHIFTING BOUNDARIES

During my pastoral career, I found that every setting gave rise to unique boundary questions. One that was particularly striking occurred soon after I arrived in a small town in coastal Maine. It was Independence Day, the real beginning of Maine’s tourist season and date of the town’s biggest public event, the Annual 4th of July Parade. There were emergency vehicles with their sirens, an American Legion color guard, antique cars, home-made floats, kids on bicycles and tricycles, the high school band, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, even a decorated lawn tractor or two. Food and craft booths dotted the parade route. A variety of people walked alongside the parade, handing out candy or literature of different sorts. That year, one of the pamphlets distributed was an invitation from a local church which contained a warning against “the other so-called churches in town.”

As pastor of one of the “so-calleds” I wasn’t entirely taken aback – the church handing out the pamphlets wasn’t known for its openness. But to proclaim such



rigid boundaries publicly struck me as rather brazen. Not that the other churches didn't have boundaries, but theirs intersected and overlapped in a variety of ways. For instance, the area's mainline clergy participated in a county-wide interfaith clergy association. The more conservative clergy met separately; but that didn't stop the churches from working together in various combinations on food cupboards and benefit dinners. Our church gathered with other town churches for Thanksgiving, Good Friday, Easter Sunrise, and bacalaureate services rather than with the county-wide group. Members of other churches took part in our activities and vice versa. Further, members of various churches partnered fruitfully in the whole scope of community life – schools, local government, and civic organizations.

For the most part, boundaries were understood and honored, even if nowhere written down. Clergy fellowship divided mostly on theological lines. Pastors of all persuasions respected other pastors' turf. Denominational offices didn't have much presence. Theological concerns were muted in practical cooperation. A socioeconomic divide could be seen between the mainline/evangelical camps, but it was not drastic. The community was racially homogeneous, so that local demographics didn't require much attention.

Inter-religious boundaries typically evolve without much thought, but when examined can be seen to take on amazingly different parameters depending on the setting.

For example, my experience in a medium-sized city that lies on the border with Mexico was quite different. Even though denominations had a greater presence than in small-town Maine, local clergy associations played an important role in facilitating relationships at the neighborhood and ethnic levels. The one to which I belonged consisted primarily of pastors of small to medium-sized mainline churches in the ethnically mixed east side of the city, a Roman Catholic priest and

an independent charismatic being the exceptions. Even though our city had a large Hispanic population, all the clergy and most church members within our association were Anglo. None of us gave it much thought; this was just the grouping with the most natural affinity.

When it came to faith-based community service and social action, however, these ethnic boundaries were not at all suitable. Our city's population was overwhelmingly Hispanic, and the larger Mexican city across the Rio Grande was almost entirely so. There was great poverty on both sides. Inter-ethnic and inter-religious partnerships were critical. When a leader in a mainline Protestant church serving an ethnically-mixed congregation initiated an organization for social action, he was surprised to discover that the Hispanic Pentecostal clergy associations would not participate if the Catholic Church was involved. The feeling seemed to be mutual.

WHAT DO YOUR BOUNDARIES LOOK LIKE?

Inter-religious boundaries can be theological, ethnic, geographical, denominational, personal, historical, socioeconomic, temporary and permanent. Inter-religious boundaries in Waldo County, Maine, were mostly theologically based, while boundaries in the border city involved a much wider set of parameters.

How does the life of your church intersect with that of other religious organizations in your setting? What connections and relationships does your church have with other churches, temples, mosques? What potential intersections are yet to be explored? What do the boundaries look like, and what purpose do they serve? In what ways do they overlap? Why these and not others?

A good way to get a handle your inter-religious boundaries is to take an inventory of the religious organizations in your territory (as you define it). Consider what interactions you have and don't have with the different groups on your list. Many interesting local boundary issues might come to light beyond the

usual considerations of church membership, weddings, and the like.

Here are some questions we have had to wrestle with recently in our Maine community:

- Can churches that don't have ordained clergy, such as the Friends, be part of the clergy association? We decided that lay leaders who function similarly as congregational leaders could join.
- Can churches with very part-time ministers send a lay representative? The shortage of Catholic priests in our area raised this issue. Same answer as above.
- Why don't the mainline and evangelical ministers meet together? There is occasional crossing of lines, but for the most part the theological and, these days, political differences are just too great for comfort. In addition, many of the evangelical churches reject inter-faith fellowship on principle.
- If the clergy association is an interfaith group, should it sponsor specifically Christian events like the Good Friday service? For practical reasons the interfaith group also serves as the ecumenical fellowship.
- In an interfaith setting, to what extent should confessional particularity be muted? This has not been resolved and is still a touchy point.
- Since the state, though not our county, now has a significant Muslim presence, shouldn't we be finding ways to connect? A local bookstore and the senior college have been inviting speakers from the Islamic Centers. Increased tension in the Middle East, however, has made good dialogue increasingly difficult as all become more defensive.
- Why isn't there more fellowship with the rural churches? It's a combination of theology, part-time ministries, and distance.

- Could a church undergoing renovations rent sanctuary space from another church? No schedules were found to be compatible. (In another city, this had worked out quite nicely with an ecclesiastically divergent but demographically similar partner.)
- Should a church broaden its "boundaries of care" if it is partnering with the wider group in assistance efforts. One church limited its general assistance to applicants within school district boundaries but contributed to the emergency fuel fund which was county-wide.
- Should a successful community outreach of one church bring in partners from others? Some have become ecumenical or inter-faith; others remain separate because of particularly strong ownership by the founders.

Setting, expanding, opening, and negotiating boundaries is a never-ending need in any dynamic situation. Our area has been populated with churches (and, being where we are, it is mostly churches) for over two hundred years. Yet all these issues have arisen, or arisen anew, within the last few years. Your church's local boundary catalog is probably just as complex.



THE REV. DR. ARLIN T. LARON is the principal author of the NACCC's *Misconduct in Ministry* handbook. During his 40-year career as a pastor, campus minister teacher, and college administrator, he has worked as a volunteer and board member for numerous social agencies, including a treatment program for victims of child sexual abuse. He and his wife, Sharon, a literacy coach for a local school district, live in Belfast, Maine, where he is secretary of the area interfaith clergy association.

NEXT: Boundaries Within the Local Church

Christ Died for Us:

RECLAIMING AND REFRAMING THE ATONEMENT

By John Tamilio III, Ph.D.

Mainline denominations and churches, especially those left of center, are uncomfortable with traditional models of atonement theology. It is too brutal. It is difficult to reconcile with an all-loving, merciful, and forgiving God. It also supports, indirectly or not, the horrific persecution of innocent victims. Parallels are often drawn with the sacrifice of Isaac. If God spared the son of Abraham, why did he not save his own?

Biblically, it is arduous to avoid the necessity of blood atonement. Not only does it pervade the Gospels, but we find it in the epistles as well. Paul tells the Romans, “He was delivered over to death for our sins” (Rom. 4:25a). Peter proclaims that “Christ...suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Pet. 3:18a). Likewise, John states, “the blood of Jesus...purifies us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7b). The roots of this theology are found in the Hebrew Scriptures, most prominently in Isaiah: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

Contemporary theologians, such as Daniel L. Migliore, have augmented the theology of the cross not to assuage liberal Christians, but to point to the numerous dimensions of the atonement. Such a corrective is needed. In *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Migliore offers three theories to supplement traditional understandings of the work of Christ.¹

1. Christ died for us in order to expose our world of violence for what it is — a world that is in deadly bondage to sin and violence and that stands under God’s judgment.
2. Christ died for us in order to reveal and mediate God’s free gift of love and forgiveness that breaks the unending cycle of hatred for hatred and violence for violence.
3. Christ died in order to open, in the midst of our violent world, a new future of reconciliation and peace for a new humanity and a new creation.

All of these points are crucial. Jesus died the most violent death imaginable. Such an act, especially perpetrated against the one without sin, calls the world’s obsession with violence into question. But this still does not reconcile the numerous biblical citations which claim that *Christ died to pay for our sins*. After stating the basic meaning of the atonement (which has to do with *sacrifice, propitiation, substitution, and salvation*), Millard J. Erickson examines some of the objections to the penal substitution theory, some of which we just mentioned, in his text *Christian Theology*. As part of his analysis, Erickson notes that Jesus atones for the sins of humanity, because he is fully human: “Jesus’s humanity means that his atoning death is applicable to human beings.”² One who is wholly distinct from the human condition

¹ See Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), pp. 196-198.

² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3 ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 734.

cannot rectify it. But Jesus is also fully God, as the Nicene Creed emphasizes: “Light of light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.” The Greek term for the latter claim is *homoousios*, meaning “of the same substance” or “of the same being.” This was an apologetic counter to the Arian controversy, which claimed, among other heterodox ideas, that “The Son and the Father do not have the same essence (*ousia*).”³

To gain a fuller understanding of the atonement, we need to be rooted in a substantive doctrine of the incarnation. The Father did not just send the Son to the earth; the Father *became incarnate* in the Son. The Son and the Father are one. Although both fulfill different offices of the Triune Godhead, the two are the same. Jesus makes this proclamation in John 10:30, declaring, “I and the Father are one.” This does not just signify a very strong, unique relationship between the two. It implies that they are of the same substance (*homoousios*), that they are the same being. Erickson does incorporate this into his Christology, albeit briefly: “the Father did not place the punishment on someone other than himself. It is clear that God is both the judge and the person paying the penalty.”⁴

The implication for the atonement, therefore, is not that the Father subjects the Son to an undeserved punishment on behalf of the guilty. That would hardly be just. In fact, it would be, as some have claimed, divine child abuse. The suggestion is that *God suffers the punishment himself by his own freewill*. This is part of Paul’s Corinthian correspondence: “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ.”⁵

This lies at the core of the faith we profess as Congregationalists. It is codified in *The Cambridge Platform*, which is fairly creedal for a non-creedal church!

This office the Lord Jesus Christ did most willingly undertake; which that he might discharge, he was made under the law, and did perfectly fulfil it, and underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have borne and suffered, being made sin and a curse for us, enduring most grievous

torments immediately from God in his soul, and most painful sufferings in his body, was crucified, and died, was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption, on the third day he arose from the dead with the same body in which he suffered, with which also he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of his Father, making intercession, and shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world.

In an age of low Christology and Church decline, maybe this is the message we need to proclaim boldly. On the cross, Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins. As the Incarnate One, God took death into himself so that we may have life — and have it more abundantly.



JOHN TAMILIO III, PH.D., is the pastor of the Congregational Church in Canton (Massachusetts), a church that currently holds provisional membership in the NACCC. Dr. John (as his parishioners call him) is also a Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Salem State University. He may be contacted at revdrjt3@yahoo.com

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See our website at
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Send resume to Barrie Wagenfeld,
Chairman of the Search Committee
First Church of Christ in Lynn, Congregational
678 Lynnfield Street
Lynn, MA 01904
email: bwagenfeld@yahoo.com

³ Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 274.

⁴ Erickson, 746.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 5:19a.

A Novel Approach to Grieving

Email From Heaven 3.0 by Rev. Leonard J. Capobianco was written especially to comfort all who are grieving the loss of a loved one. It also offers uplifting answers to those reflecting upon their own end of life questions. The story weaves a fascinating vision of the next life and gives a relatable explanation of how the faithful (and the not so faithful) may enter Heaven's gates.

By Marianne King

The opening line in the book says it all: "I am convinced that the most difficult thing you'll ever have to do in life is say goodbye to someone you love."

A minister recently commented that, aside from comforting the bereaved, the book is also "a Christian primer for the unchurched." Author Leonard Capobianco is glad to hear it and says:

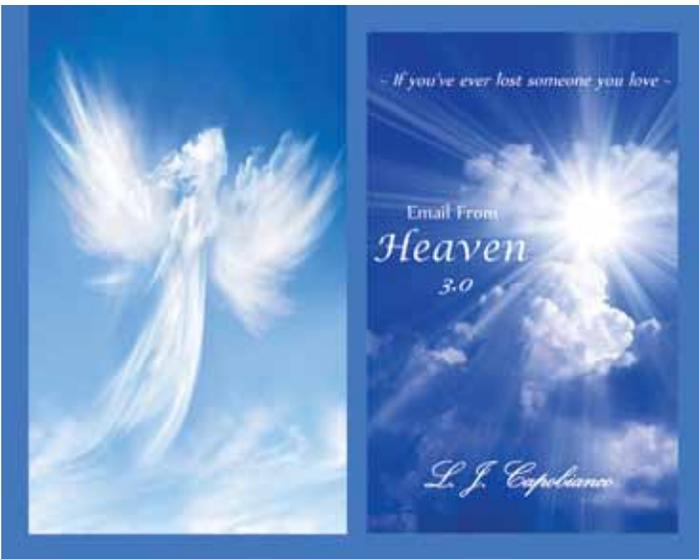
"As a retired pastor, I still wanted to comfort those who've lost loved ones, to bring hope to those who may be depressed about their future, and lift their spirits. I've always had a special feeling in my heart for those suffering loss and decided to write a book to try and answer questions people have asked me over my 30 years as a pastor about end of life issues. I also wanted to help make the Bible more inviting and understandable to those who have little knowledge of scripture or who are unchurched."

There are two questions of paramount concern to the grieving: What has happened to my loved one? Will we be reunited one day? Leonard wanted to

answer those questions in terms that are spiritually reassuring, and chose a story telling approach for his book.

"I didn't want it to be a sermon or a textbook on grieving, so I wrote it in the form of a novel to make it a more interesting read," explains Leonard.

He believes that weaving actual scripture throughout the storytelling will gently encourage readers to open the Bible and help renew their faith. It is also sprinkled with wonderful quotes from famous poets, philosophers and scientists - along with a touch of welcome humor.



Email from Heaven 2.0 book cover.

The central character of the story is Joe, recently widowed and struggling with loneliness and doubt. He receives a mysterious email that claims to be "heaven sent." The continuing exchange of email messages paints a comforting image of what life is like in Heaven, of the role angels play, and especially of God's amazing grace.

Leonard doesn't expect everyone to agree with everything in his portrait of the afterlife. What's important is that readers agree God's Heaven does exist; that they embrace Our Lord's promise of eternal life for their loved ones and for themselves.

The novel touches on the issues of suicide and sin, subjects that are often difficult to discuss with a friend or counselor. The book allows the grieving individual to explore his feelings free from judgment or expectations of others - as the experience is between the reader and God.

Providing comfort to the grieving was also part of Leonard's work as a police chaplain and prison counselor. Many of the men he encountered behind bars had been threatened with the wrath of a vengeful God, causing them to turn away from religion. One prisoner called it "being hit over the head with the Bible." Leonard wanted to restore their hope by introducing them to a loving and forgiving God.

"I wanted to present God's grace and heaven in an easy, clear and gentle way to let them know that, whatever their past mistakes, they can still change their lives, which is why the book ends on the high notes of redemption and salvation," says Leonard.

Email from Heaven 3.0 is available on Amazon.com and has generated a great deal of positive reader response, receiving a 5-Star rating. But Leonard didn't have profits in mind when he wrote the novel. In fact, he uses proceeds from book sales to donate copies to VA hospitals, nursing homes, and hospices. He recently donated a supply to Books for Africa, which sent copies to a Christian community in Africa where they want to learn English and more about their faith. The book has been translated into Spanish and

will be available soon in Chinese.

The author is very empathetic to end of life issues and drew from his personal as well as pastoral experience when writing - having lost 11 of his family members all within what he describes as "very difficult six year period."

In the book's prologue Leonard writes: "To those who have lost loved ones and those reflecting upon their own end of life questions, I pray this small book provides some solace and especially . . . hope."



REVEREND CAOBIANCO served as an ordained pastor in the NACCC for over 30 years. He previously held positions as an assistant director of the Cerebral Palsy Association, preschool teacher to minority children, a ski tour guide, and is a military veteran. He currently lives in Oshkosh, WI and volunteers as chaplain for the county sheriff's office.

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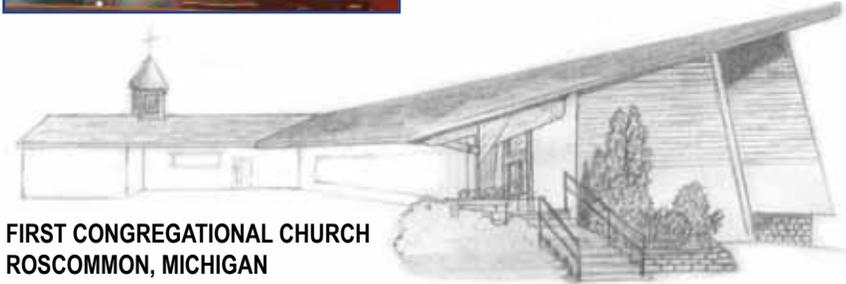
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NEWS

MISSIONARIES EVERYWHERE

There are many missionaries visiting churches this spring and before the Annual Meeting and Conference in June. Rev. Charles Sagay, **Mission School of Hope (Cameroon)** is visiting churches in the Midwest and the Northeast, including New York.



Rev Peter and Faith Ndungu

Rev. Peter and Faith Ndungu, **Happy Life Children's Home (Kenya)**, visited with members of Plymouth Congregational Church in Racine, Wisconsin. They put on programs for North Shore Congregational Church in Fox Point, Wisconsin, and Ozaukee Congregational Church in Grafton, Wisconsin.

Rev. Philip and Sheila Malakar, **Indian Community Fellowship (India)**, will be visiting churches in Michigan. Rev. SaDo, Congregational Church of Myanmar, is also planning to visit a few Midwestern states.



Rev. Philip and Sheila Malakar



Rev. SaDo

There will be other missions represented at the Annual Meeting and Conference in Dearborn, Michigan. Among them are Panamerican Institute, Indian Trails, Bread of Life, Seafarer's Friend, Morgan Scott Project, Love Worth Sharing, Happy Life Children's Home, Fishers of Men and Hosanna Industries.

The Annual Meeting will be a great place to visit with and learn about these missions.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Asociacion Civil Cristiana Congregational (Argentina) is doing very well with its sponsorship program. The mission clinic provided health care to about 2,500 patients in 2015. Several families continue to use the community garden. Church services, Sunday school and youth group activities were run normally in spite of the often bad weather conditions (heavy rain showers).

They also were able to install a play park (slide, metal horse, hammocks, etc.) on the mission ground, which all children seem to enjoy.



Play park for the mission

Their most immediate project is to complete the laying of a proper, 400-square-foot floor for the mission's sport hall. This will be another important step in reaching out and engaging young people to become part of the mission family, keeping them from trouble on the streets.

THE MINISTRY IS IN THE PEOPLE, NOT THE BUILDING

Twenty-three years ago, Julio and Elba Santana set out with a dream to make a difference. They were called to share the tangible love of God with an underserved community in Plant City, Florida. The mission was clear: to serve the less fortunate, low income families, and families in transition by living out the Gospel.

Bread of Life started in a small strip-mall storefront. In 1999, they found a funeral home for sale. It was perfect. God, and many donors, helped raise the needed funds to purchase the building. Julio would



Bread of Life Mission

often say, “What once was a place of sorrow became a place of hope”.

After 16 years in the same location, Bread of Life Mission has sold the building to a growing Hispanic church.

Rev. Julio Santana says, “The best part of all of this is that the work of the Bread of Life Mission is not over yet. We are not closed. We have not retired. The mission continues. We invite you to continue partnering with us as we continue this work. It is only with your support that we can continue serving this community for another 23 years.”

MISSION TIDBITS

Travancore Church Council (India) had a weekend revival in April. It was a time of great spiritual refreshment. Jubilee celebrations started on Sunday at 10:00 a.m., and continued to 12:30 noon, followed by lunch for all the participants.

On Sunday, the Jubilee memorial stone was dedicated, and the dedication prayer was led by Rev. Kenaz Solomon, former TCC president.

Scheduled programs for the rest of the year for Travancore Church Council are to conduct summer English grammar school for the children and to start an English worship service.

Ministerio Vida Hospital (Honduras) had a very busy year in 2015. The hospital attended to 8,305 patients. Ten pastors received financial help. Twenty-four patients received free medical attention through the Samaritan Box donations.

NEEDS

Happy Life Children’s Home (Kenya) is looking for musical instruments (saxophones, tonettes, etc.) for their children.

Congregational Church of Myanmar is asking for funds to build a church/school building for Thaukyat Taw CCM. Also, a huge fire burned two towns. One Great Hour of Sharing funds were sent to help the relief efforts.

Travancore Church Council (India) had major flooding in December. Three churches were damaged. One Great Hour of Sharing funds were sent to help the renovations.

Christian Mission in the Far East (Philippines) had 15 baptisms in April.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Pray for Kim Murphy, the new director at **Indian Trails (Arizona)** as she follows in her father’s footsteps, the Rev. Tom Gossett.

Pray for Symphony John, NACCC Philippines, as he juggles the ministry and building a new retreat center.

Pray for all our missionaries who will be traveling.

Pray for Rev. Santana, **Bread of Life (Florida)** as the staff imagines the mission without a building.

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@nacc.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.nacc.org, and click on “Missions.”

News from the fellowship of churches

BOUND BROOK CELEBRATES 140 YEARS



The Dulcimer Boys entertain

In 1876, a group of 53 Christians, including a number of “dissatisfied Presbyterians,” met to discuss the idea of organizing a new church in Bound Brook, N.J. This winter, Congregational Church of Bound Brook celebrated the 140th anniversary of its founding.

That original meeting of Presbyterians, Methodists, some Brooklyn residents and unaffiliated Christians produced the following resolution:

Be it resolved that we withdraw from our connection with other churches in Bound Brook and elsewhere, and form ourselves into a Congregational Church having for its object the stated worship of Almighty God according to the faith and practice of the Congregational Churches in the United States of America.

THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME—The Congregational Church of the Villages held its first worship service in its first church home this past March 13. The congregation met in rented facilities for the previous nine years. The inaugural service was followed by Congregational Church of the Villages’ 7th Annual Benefit Luncheon and Style Show on March 18. Men and women from the congregation modeled fashions provided by Stein Mart, the event’s host, for an audience of 120 women. The event raised over \$4,500 for the



Pastor Marisol Ferrer-Maloy chats with church members at the anniversary dinner.

In July of that same year the cornerstone was laid for a church at Church and High Streets in Bound Brook. On October 15, 1876, the first minister of Congregational Church of Bound Brook preached his first sermon in the new church. The following year, 12 horse sheds were erected on the grounds. Over 50 years later, the church erected an educational building.

The “little church that could” (as dubbed by Kristin Schuyler in an earlier issue of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*) still meets at the corner of Church and High Streets. In celebration of its 140-year history, the congregation offered tours of the building followed by dinner. Entertainment was provided by The Dulcimer Boys. In keeping with the church’s motto “where community begins,” the public was invited to join in the fun at no charge.

Infant & Toddler Pantry, which is a church ministry operated by volunteers in the Fellowship Hall.

The new facility, located on South U.S. Highway 301 in Summerfield, Fla., has attracted a higher than usual attendance. Sixty people attended the Easter Sunrise Service, which was followed by an Easter breakfast. Another 132 attended the regular Easter Service, after which the congregation moved out onto the lawn and released butterflies into the spring morning.

The church is taking full advantage of its new home. On April 15 and 16, Astronaut Drew Feustel made a community presentation regarding his space walks to repair the Hubbell Telescope and International Space Center. Drew's parents, Steve and Beth Feustel, are church members.

SHARING WITH THE WORLD—First Congregational Church of Barkhamsted, Conn. held its Annual Church World Service Blanket Drive March 6 through April 3.

Barkhamsted Congregational Church joins around 8,000 congregations and groups across the U.S. that sponsor Church World Service (CWS) blanket events, providing funds to help people in need around the world. Molly Davis, from the Barkhamsted Congregational Church Social Outreach Committee, shared information during Sunday church announcements about the benefits offered by Church World Service.

Benefits include:

- Blankets, tents, food and other emergency supplies in the wake of a disaster
- Tools and seeds for refugees returning home to replant their fields
- Wells for families living in drought prone areas to provide clean, safe water for drinking, as well as irrigation of crops and gardens
- Literacy training and microcredit for women struggling to realize their potential

In 1946, following World War II, 17 denominations formed an agency “to do in partnership what none of us could hope to do as well alone.” Church World Service’s original mission hasn’t changed: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, comfort the aged, shelter the homeless.

PARTNERS IN HEALING—Community partnerships are an important part of First Congregational Church of Anaheim. The church recently began partnering with a ministry, NorthEast of the Well, that reaches out to those in recovery and halfway homes. The partner organization is neither a church nor a recovery program itself, but it provides Bible study and Christian fellowship opportunity for people in recovery programs.

First Congregational Church of Anaheim has begun having Monday evening dinner and worship events in partnership with this ministry.

“We would not have the resources to provide dinner and worship every Monday night by ourselves, but we do have space and volunteers to share. And NorthEast of the Well does not want us to have it all! They have an incredible network of relationships and resources to use and share, helping them and us connect more broadly with the community,” said Emily Miller-Todd. “We are excited to be partnering in this ministry with NorthEast of the Well—a ministry that connects with people in deep need that are right in our neighborhood. And it’s been fun to share our nursery with 26 new kids on Monday evenings!”

First Congregational Church (FCC) of Salt Lake City

Seeking candidates to fill the position of full-time, Senior Pastor. FCC has been a Christian vanguard in the Salt Lake Valley for over 150 years, and continues to remain a vital member of the community.

This position is salaried and offers full benefits.

Compensation will be determined based on candidates’ qualifications. Interested candidates should first register with the NACCC by completing a Minister Information Form (MIF). Once that is complete, then reach out to the secretary for the FCC Pulpit Search Committee, Emily Weibel (emily.weibel@gmail.com).



Candidates can review the FCC website at:
firstcongregationalslc.org



Table Mountain



Robben Island



Stellenbosch University

SAVE THE DATES

Thurs., July 6--Tues. July 11, 2017

International Congregational Fellowship - ICF

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA



COST: \$48/person/day includes lodging & meals

Many people from many lands and many cultures

Called to Freedom

Through one Lord, Jesus Christ

**Freedom in Worship
Freedom of Mind
Freedom to Serve**



Join us on Facebook

International Congregational Fellowship

Can't attend the meeting but are blessed with means to help others go?

Checks can be written to AMCO, earmarked, "ICF South Africa."

Mail to Sue LeFeber, Treasurer, 3011 W. Woodland Court, Mequon, WI 53092

PASTORATES AND PULPITS

ORDINATIONS

First Congregational Church,
Tacoma, Wash. ordained the
Rev. Lori Erwin-Johnson,
March 6, 2016.

RECENT CALLS

First Congregational Church, Rio
Vista, Calif. called the Rev. Dr.
Frank D. Ward as pastor.

United Congregational Church,
Norwich, Conn. called the Rev.
George Blair, III as pastor.

Union Congregational Christian
Church, Marbury, Ala., called
the Rev. Ray Weaver as pastor.

Community Congregational
Christian Church, Citrus
Springs, Fla., called the Rev.
David McCane as pastor.

Congregational Church of the
Chimes, Sherman Oaks, Calif.,
called the Rev. Raefield Perteeet
as pastor.

Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.,
called the Rev. Dr. Brett Younger
as pastor.

IN SEARCH

SENIOR MINISTERS

Arbor Grove
Congregational Church,
Jackson, Mich.

Ashby & Hyannis Congregational
Churches (share pastor),
Ashby and Hyannis, Neb.

Craig Memorial
Congregational Church,
Paradise, Calif.

First Church of Christ,
Lynn, Mass.

First Congregational Church,
Anchorage, AK.

First Congregational Church,
Ashland, Neb.

First Congregational Church,
Interlachen, Fla.

First Congregational Church,
Peterson, Iowa

First Congregational Church,
Porterville, Calif.

First Congregational Church,
Roscommon, Mich.

First Congregational Church,
Salt Lake City, Utah

First Congregational Church,
Waseca, Minn.

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

Gomer Congregational Church,
Gomer, Ohio

Hampshire Colony
Congregational Church,
Princeton, Ill.

Little Stone Church,
Mackinac Island, Mich.

Olivet Congregational Church,
Olivet, Mich.

Orthodox Congregational Church,
Petersham, Mass.

Plain Congregational Church,
Bowling Green, Ohio

Plymouth Congregational Church,
Racine, Wis.

Rockwood First
Congregational Church,
Rockwood, Mich.

Sandstone
Congregational Church,
Jackson, Mich.

Second Congregational Church,
Jewett City, Conn.

Veazie Congregational Church,
Veazie, Maine

ASSOCIATE/ ASSISTANT MINISTER

United Church of Marco Island,
Marco Island, Fla.

NON-NACCC CHURCHES

Congregational Christian
Church of Ravena,
Ravena, N.Y.

First Congregational Church,
Gray, Maine

First Congregational
Church of Peru,
Peru, Ill.

La Canada Congregation Church,
La Canada Flintridge, Calif.



REV. WESLEY GORDON WOODMAN

The Rev. Wesley Gordon Woodman, 91, passed away on Feb. 11, 2016, after a brief decline in his health at Togus Veteran's Hospital.

Born in Portsmouth, N.H., he joined the Navy in 1942 and served aboard an aircraft carrier in World War II. Married in 1945, he moved with wife, Virginia, to Rye, N.H., where he became a lay preacher, Sunday school superintendent and teacher at Bethany Congregational Church. In 1961 he moved his family to Warren, ME, where he served as minister of Second Congregational Church for the next 21 years. During that time, he completed his education through the University of Maine and Bangor Theological Seminary. He served as trustee of Maine Congregational Christian Council and member of the Ministerial Committee of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. Upon retirement, he and his wife moved to Union, ME.

Rev. Woodman was a past grand Masonic chaplain of Maine, past worthy grand patron of Maine Order of the Eastern Star and a life member and worthy patron of Ivy Chapter, OES.

He was preceded in death by his wife, his parents, and his brother, Frank Woodman. He is survived by five children and their families. Gifts in his memory may be made to Pope Memorial Humane Society, 17 Buttermilk Lane, Thomaston, ME, 04861 or to any Special Olympics organization.

Olivet Congregational Church seeks a full-time senior pastor to lead our theologically diverse and biblically educated congregation with a strong affinity for community service and outreach.

Responsibilities include conducting worship services, weddings, baptisms, funerals; community outreach and relations; visitation of members and shut-ins. Regular office hours expected.

Most important: a generous and kind spirit, ability to preach the word with enthusiasm, desire and ability to continue to help us grow spiritually and practically.



On Olivet College Campus
38 miles SW of Lansing, MI

Olivet Congregational Church

Applications accepted beginning July 15, 2016:

Olivet Congregational Church
Search Committee
125 College Street
Olivet, MI 49076

(269) 749-2631 • olivetcongregational.org

NACCC WELCOME

CONTINUED FROM P.10

Debby and her husband, Steve, are members of the North Shore Congregational Church in Fox Point. She has three children, two girls and a boy, who all live outside Wisconsin. Debby and Steve spend much of their free time riding motorcycles.

“I am a team player and enjoy the success that several minds working together bring to a plan, project, solicitation, and event,” said Debby. “Strong management, organizational and communication skills coupled with successful execution of development and marketing strategies has been the platform for my success, and I look forward to working with the team and Board of the NACCC as we continue to share the message and gain support for the mission.”

Debby's email is dfulton@naccc.com. Her phone number is 414-856-1610.

CALENDAR

JUNE 23-30, 2016 - Missionary Assistance Corps trip to Misión Mazahua, Mexico
Contact Jack Brown, pilgrim_pastor@hotmail.com or 269-749-2631.

JUNE 24, 2016 - Quiet Day Retreat preceding Annual Meeting and Conference—
St. Paul of the Cross Retreat Center in Detroit, 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. Rev. Dr. Robert Hellam is the Retreat Guide. Contact Rev. Dr. Charles Packer, Chaplain-Director, 734-755-4131

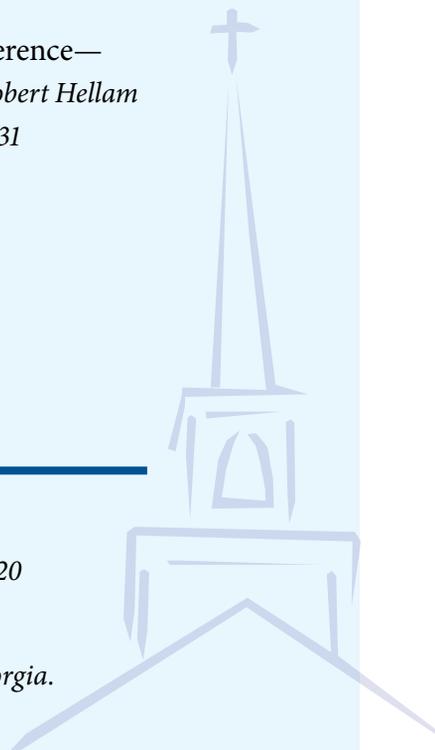
JUNE 25-28, 2016 - NACCC 62nd Annual Meeting and Conference—
DoubleTree by Hilton, Detroit/Dearborn, Michigan

JUNE 26-JULY 1, 2016 - NAHP/HOPE—Detroit, Michigan
Go online to NACCC.org.

SAVE THE DATE

AUGUST 10, 2016 - MMBB Financial Services Retirement Seminar & Webinar at NACCC—Oak Creek, Wisconsin. *Contact Dan Drea at 800-262-1620 ext. 1616 or ddrea@nacc.org.*

JUNE 24-27, 2017 - 63rd Annual Meeting & Conference—Demorest, Georgia.
Hosted by Piedmont College.



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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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