

SEPTEMBER 2019

# The CONGREGATIONALIST

Magazine of the Congregational Way since 1849

VOL. 171 • NO. 3

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## PLYMOUTH LANDING

*What's in a name?*

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*Where  
your  
treasure is...*  
**Annual  
Meeting**

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DONORS**

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**THE  
HEART OF  
OUR  
HERITAGE**

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# Table of CONTENTS



ON THE COVER:  
NACCC's 65th Annual Meeting

## Features

- 5 Open Letter from Craig Memorial Congregational Church
- 6 Plymouth Landing: What's in a Name?
- 10 Where Your Treasure Is: NACCC's 65th Annual Meeting
- 14 Recognition is Due
- 20 Connect With Cleveland
- 20 Mrs. Peabody and the Funeral Beans
- 22 The Heart of Our Heritage
- 26 Missions: Bearing the Burdens of the World
- 29 Why Serve?

## Departments

- 4 OUR VOYAGE TOGETHER  
A Covenant People
- 8 ALONG THE WAY
- 18 NEWS AND NEEDS
- 29 NECROLOGY
- 30 PASTORATES AND PULPITS
- 30 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
- 31 CALENDAR

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

Neither *The Congregationalist* nor the NACCC 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.



# OUR Voyage TOGETHER

By Michael Chittum,  
Executive Director  
National Association of  
Congregational  
Christian Churches



## A COVENANT PEOPLE

I am inspired by looking ahead to the 400th Anniversary of the Pilgrim's arrival in America and by being mindful of John Tamilio's 2019 Congregational Lecture at our Annual Meeting. Thus, I choose to use my column this year to bring to the fore different expressions of Congregationalism in America.

John identified three treasures of Congregationalism: covenant, faith, and service, in his Congregational Lecture, "The Heart of Our Heritage and Our Future Treasure." I am glad that he emphasized these three and that he began with covenant, for that is a defining part of who we are.

Within Congregational churches, the covenant is the basis of being a church.

John Robinson, often referred to as the pastor to the Pilgrims, as quoted by William Barton in his 1916 book, *The Law of Congregational Usage*, wrote, "A church is a company of faithful, holy people, with their seed, called by the Word of God into a public covenant with Christ, and among themselves, for mutual fellowship, in the use of all means of God's glory and their salvation."

Preston Cummings in his 1854 book, *A Dictionary of Congregational Usages and Principles*, quotes Thomas Goodwin as writing: The church covenant is no more with us than this, an agreement and resolution, professed with promise to walk in all those ways pertaining to this fellowship, so far as

they shall be revealed to them in the gospel. Thus briefly and indefinitely and implicitly, and in such like words and no other, do we apply ourselves to men's consciences, not obtruding upon them the mention of any one particular before or in admission, . . . leaving their spirits free to the entertainment of the light that shines or shall shine on them and us out of the world."

A covenant brings us together and holds us together, but does not demand that we must walk in lock step with others. This is a treasure indeed.



## Open letter from CRAIG MEMORIAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



Rev. Andrew and Hillary McHenry

July 9, 2019

*To all our friends and supporters in and around the Congregational way...*

We are so grateful for all the support that has been extended to Craig Memorial Congregational Church in the wake of the Camp Fire of November 8, 2018. The generosity that has been shown to us is overwhelming. From the immediate hours after our evacuation I was hearing from people all across the country who wanted to help. The many cards and expressions of support also encouraged us along the way.

Praise the Lord, the prayers are being answered. No one from our church perished in the fire, and we're all moving forward. Many of our members have relocated to be near family and friends, but others have stayed through. Most of our members lost their homes, but many did not; and many others also have longstanding commitments to the community.



My wife and I stayed with friends in Chico in a guest bedroom until our new home in Thermalito became available. We were donated temporary office space from Butte Bible Fellowship in Chico, and worship space at the Sycamore Glen Retirement Community. We resumed worshipping on November 18th and have been doing so on a weekly basis ever since.

And since the start of June we've been officially back in Paradise, now sharing space with a local Lutheran church that survived the fire. It's a mutual arrangement that should serve us both well until we can get a building of our own.

Gifts from sister churches enabled us to close the church's budget gap, and also to provide assistance to members who were adversely affected by the fire. I received many extremely grateful phone calls expressing thanks, and I felt like the mailman who had simply delivered the letter. The kindness came from our Congregational brethren all across the country!

So once again, THANK YOU for all of your kindness and support. We will not forget it. I'm hopeful that we will be as generous when the tables are turned, and the needs and opportunities are elsewhere. And either way, the ties of national fellowship are among the blessings that we can count as imperishable (cf. Matthew 6: 19-21, II Corinthians 15:42).

God bless each one of you,  
Pastor Andrew McHenry  
Craig Memorial Congregational Church  
P.O. Box 1386 Paradise, California 95967  
www.craigchurch.com

# Thank You

# PLYMOUTH LANDING: *What's in a Name?*



*By Will Lange*

**T**he year 2020 will mark the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrims' landing in Plymouth, "New" England.

During the next two years we will be hearing, seeing, and reading about the landing of the "Pilgrims" at Plymouth. You will not always see or hear the word Congregational(ists). You will be told about the New England Churches (that is most correctly and fully Congregational Churches), Puritans, Separatists, maybe even Brownists. They saw themselves as THE CHURCH in that place. No need for a denominational name.

Today, many neglect our Way, identity, and name. A church might be known as the First Parish Church, or the Church of Christ (a name centuries later adopted by a new frontier reform movement). If you are in England or Wales you would be an Independent (or dissenter, or Puritan) more often than a Congregationalist. Again in Britain, when people refer to Church, they mean the government/state church which we know as Anglican or Episcopal. The Congregationalists and other protestants worshiped in "Chapels" because only the government church could be called a church. If you were introducing yourself in India you would probably get that blank stare when you said Congregationalist. But if you said LMS, for London Missionary Society, they would likely know very well from where you were coming.

Our numbers are small now, but our

influence is great. Some commentators say, "scratch an American and you will find a Congregationalist." Remember at the time of our War for Independence Congregationalists were by far the largest religious group, estimated at one-third to one-half of American church members. Our way has revealed the worth of every person and the contribution they make. What a gift.

400th  
ANNIVERSARY  
INSERTS  
Available on our  
NACCC Web site and  
the ICF Web site

The NACCC Plymouth 400 Task Team has applied a great deal of time and creativity to develop a suite of resources member churches can use to commemorate this important event.

The Task Team has developed profiles of 107 Congregationalists that are intended to celebrate and educate. The Pilgrims were refugees and sojourners seeking a place to worship God in a "pure church" Way, casting off the additions made over the many centuries since Jesus began his ministry.

Their quest was life giving, and it was so important it caused them to risk their lives and the lives of their families, crossing the ocean, settling in what they saw as a wilderness, carving out a

place to live, and worshipping as they thought would best please God and fill their souls. They had heard Good News and sought it for themselves and those they loved. And the world, too!

What has God done with these people, risking so much to gather in his name, covenant with God and each other to live as his sons and daughters. You will read of women and men who grew in faith and life as Christians in the Congregational churches they gathered. Some will be those who many will know of as Congregationalists. Some will cause you to exclaim, 'Oh, I didn't know she (or he) was a Congregationalist.' Others will be less known but grew in life and faith in a Congregational church and did something significant enough that someone wrote it down. Actually, they are much like you. Sharing in the Good News and love of God that spiritually motivated these early Congregationalists adds you to this great company of "Saints."

If you choose to begin weekly using



*Members of the Plymouth 400 Task Team (front) Rev. Will Lange (back l-r) Larry Sommers, Rev. Wendy Van Tassell, Rev. Tom Van Tassell (not pictured) Rev. Norm Erlendson, Rev. Ian Macdonald, Dr. Tom Richard, Rev. Phyllis Merritt, Mary McAleily, and Rev. Dr. Michael Chittum.*

the profiles on November 3, 2019, you will spiritually join many others across our nation. The 107 inserts will carry you to the 400th anniversary of the "First Thanksgiving" in 2020.

Here's how you can do it: You choose the inserts, put four a month in your church monthly newsletter or insert one into each Sunday bulletin, and add some of your own. (If you do create additional inserts, we would

like to receive a copy. Send it to [wlange48@aol.com](mailto:wlange48@aol.com).

God is with us on this journey. We are not alone, thanks be to God.

400 YEARS OF  
AMERICAN  
CONGREGATIONALISM  
*Faith*  
SINCE 1620



Rev. Dr. Marilyn Danielson

## FCC of Lake Odessa Welcomes Dr. Danielson

The First Congregational Church of Lake Odessa, Michigan, welcomed the Reverend Dr. Marilyn Danielson as Senior Pastor. Danielson served at First Congregational Church of Portland, Michigan, for twenty years and was retired for one year before accepting the call to the Lake Odessa Church. She resides in Portland with her husband, Warren. Between them, they have five grown children and 10 grandchildren.

Danielson received her M.Div. in Pastoral Counseling and her D.Min. in Spiritual Growth at Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, Ohio. She also graduated from the Pastors

of Excellence program sponsored by the Lilly Foundation.

Danielson will serve as lead pastor, with Pastor Mark Jarvie serving as associate as he prepares for retirement. The church is small, but the heart is HUGE!

"The smaller church appeals to me. I'm kind of a bumpkin at heart," said Danielson. She looks forward to being involved in the community, which has its own fair complete with a parade — perfect for a preacher who enjoys clowning. Noted Danielson, "God drew us together. As always, His timing is always perfect timing." Danielson formally began to fulfill her call at Lake Odessa on June 3, 2019.



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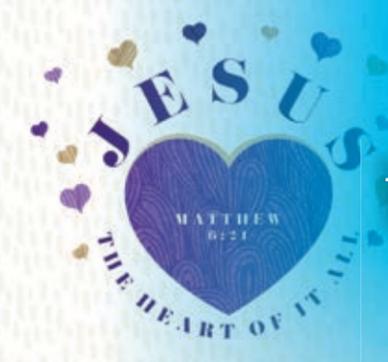
## A Diamond Jubilee: Long-Time Organist Honored

On Sunday, October 28, 2018, during the 10:45 a.m. worship service, Grace Church observed the Diamond Jubilee Anniversary of their "Queen of the Organ," Judy Bott, who has been playing the 1938 Kilgen organ in the sanctuary since 1958. There was a lunch reception after worship.



Judy Bott

In her now over 60 years at the organ Judy remembers many changes in society and the church. There have been many special music programs and times when she mentored younger music directors. She stayed at Grace for so long she said, "because of the people." When her husband, Karl, was very ill, some years ago, the church was very supportive. It has been her pleasure to play in a congregation long enough to see children, at whose baptisms she played, become parents, who became grandparents. She laments that in our culture today there are so many kid's activities, sports, and distractions on Sunday. Back then, Sundays were a day for worship and family. She sees how church music has changed over the decades from very formal service chorales to less formal hymns to contemporary and praise music. During all these changes Judy has played her way through them and continues to do so.



# Where your treasure is:

# NACCC'S 65TH ANNUAL MEETING



The Reverend Dr. Brett Younger

*"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Matthew 6:21

A diverse agenda of speakers and workshop facilitators explored the concept of treasure at the 65th Annual Meeting of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC). The 237 men and women who met in Cleveland, Ohio, explored Jesus' teaching that earthly treasure is fleeting, while God's love through Christ is everlasting.

The June event was hosted by the Ohio Association of Congregational Churches, led by the Reverend Dr. Patrick Hunt of Heritage Congregational Church in Berea, Ohio.

A total 103 NACCC member churches sent an official delegate to participate in the business meeting of the association — welcoming five new churches into the NACCC family, voting on a slate of new officers, board, and council members, and doing other work of the national association. They also had the privilege of hearing speakers Reverend Dr. John Tamilio III, and Reverend Dr. Brett Younger.

The Reverend John Tamilio III, Ph.D., delivered this year's Congregational Lecture, "The Heart of Our Heritage and Our Future Treasure." Tamilio is pastor of the Congregational Church of Canton, Ohio, and visiting Associate Professor of Philosophy at Salem State University. His remarks were rooted in Matthew 6:21, focusing on the treasures inherent in the Congregational heritage. He chose to focus on the treasures of covenant, faith and service brought to Massachusetts Bay by the Pilgrims and practiced today by NACCC member churches. We wish we had enough space in this magazine to publish Dr. Tamilio's lecture in its entirety, but are pleased to offer an abridged version in this issue.

*"It's not about judgement.  
It's not about wrath.  
It's about love ...  
God's unbounded love."*

Rev. Dr. John Tamilio III

The 2019 Bible Lecturer was the Reverend Brett Younger, Ph.D., senior minister of Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York. Younger built his lecture on the conference theme but chose to delve into the Gospel of Mark. He guided his audience to some of the treasures that are to be found when one reads and studies the gospel with an open heart and an inquisitive mind.

Younger cautioned that we are tempted to "think we know it all," while God might intend for us to dig deeper into the Gospels for a richer understanding.

"We need to live like tourists to our faith – wide-eyed, slack-jawed, surprised," said Younger.

Younger pointed to the Pharisees, whom he refers to as "cocky, rigid, know-it-alls," as evidence. In Mark's gospel, Jesus heals the withered hand of a man on the Sabbath. The Pharisees accuse him of breaking God's law, but Jesus sees that, behind their strict adherence to the law is a hardness of heart. The Pharisees know God's law, but their hearts and minds are closed to Jesus' message of God's love and mercy.

According to Younger, Jesus invites us to become people who think new thoughts . . . to think like Jesus. "How would our lives be different if we lived in a way that was best for the whole world?" Younger asked.

He said that, in summoning people to follow him, Jesus calls together a new community that crosses social, economic, and ethnic boundaries.

Younger said that one of Mark's intentions is to make clear who Jesus is. At Jesus' crucifixion, the centurion

declares, "Truly this man was the Son of God." In Mark 10:45, Jesus is revealed as the Servant of God, or, as Younger paraphrased it, "the servant of all who gave his life as ransom for many." He said that, like Jesus, we all should serve. We all "need to find ways to roll up our sleeves and do God's work."

Younger said the Gospel of Mark was written for us, "hungry souls desperate to taste God's faith." He encouraged his audience to live their faith and cautioned that "doing nothing about what we believe will finally break our hearts."

"Envy those who live with passion," said Younger. He urged Christians to talk about their faith, even when they would rather be silent.

The earliest manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark end at Chapter 16, verses 1 through 8: the risen Jesus reveals himself to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. The women flee from the tomb because they are afraid and say nothing to anyone. Verses 9 through 20 were added later by others. Many scholars have offered theories as to why the original Gospel of Mark didn't include Jesus' appearance to his apostles and ascension to heaven, but Younger suggests it ended as Mark intended.

He thinks of the Gospel of Mark as a prologue, and Easter a beginning. "The rest of the story is still to be written," said Younger. "The gospel is unfinished business." Christ is still with us, working in our lives.

"Every day is the gift of a life made new by God's grace," said Younger,

adding that Jesus' death was not the end of the story: "Jesus is God's hope for eternity."

**CFTS Graduates Two Fellows**  
Joel Kenneth Boyd and Joy Matos graduated from the CFTS Program on June 25 before the assembly at the 65th Annual Meeting.

Joel Boyd served his seminary internship as the Licensed Interim Pastor at St. Jacobi Congregational Church in Richfield. He received his Master of Divinity Degree from Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. Last year he was hired as senior minister by First Congregational Church in Marshfield, Massachusetts. In addition to his graduation, he was awarded the Alfred Gray Award for demonstrating exceptional scholarship and perception of the Congregational spirit in the CFTS Directed Study in Congregational History and Polity.

Joy Matos was born and raised in New York City. After studying business for two years at New York University, Joy transferred to Central Bible College to pursue her calling. Joy moved to Massachusetts in 1985 and to Quincy in 2009. She has raised a family and has served a number of churches in various leadership capacities. Joy was ordained in 2012 and earned an MBA from Bentley University and a Master of Theological Studies from Boston University School of Theology, where she also earned a Certificate in Religion and Conflict Transformation. Matos was presented the John Claxton Award for the quality of her personal

participation in CFTS and NACCC programs and exhibiting academic competency.

CFTS enriches the student's seminary experience with education in the Congregational way. Students admitted to CFTS are required to attend three academic seminars on topics unique to ministry in a Congregational church, and complete a directed polity study, with submission of a major research paper in Congregationalism. Additionally, students are required to engage in supervised ministry internships, practicing the skills of ministry under the direction of a field supervisor and in cooperation with the field requirements of the student's seminary.

## Special Honors



Chris Surber was serving his ministry in Haiti this past June and unable to attend the 65th Annual Meeting.

The Reverend Dr. Chris Surber was awarded the J. J. Russell Award by the Vitality Ministry Council. This preaching award is given every other year for the best sermon submitted by an ordained, active pastor of an NACCC

church with under 400 members. The sermon must deal with some aspect of the relationship of classical Congregationalism to contemporary American life and emphasize the continuing viability and relevance of the Congregational way. Surber is the Executive Director and co-founder, along with his wife Christina, of Supply



CFTS graduates Joel Boyd and Joy Matos

(Continued)



(Continued)

## NACCC'S 65TH ANNUAL MEETING

and Multiply, a ministry in Montrouis, Haiti. His degrees are from Liberty University, Liberty Theological Seminary, and Temple Baptist Seminary. (B.S., M.A.R., M.Div. D.Min.) In addition to direct pastoral and missionary work, he is Adjunct Professor of Ministry for Global University and Nations University.

The Harry Butman Award is presented to a minister who has at least 10 years of service in an NACCC church and is personally committed to Congregationalism. This year, two ministers joined the select group of individuals who have been honored with the award.



Rev. Dr. Martin Hall and Rev. Terry Bobzien

The Reverend Terry Bobzien is known as a pastor's pastor, a man who has lived a life devoted to the Congregational way. Bobzien was most recently minister at First Congregational Church in Pittsford, Michigan. He attended the University of Dubuque Theology Seminary, the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, and is a CFTS graduate, earning his

Master of Divinity Degree at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit, Michigan. Bobzien is active in the NACCC and the Central Michigan Association of Congregational Christian Churches and Ministers.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Hall, Harry R. Butman Award recipient, was cited for being committed to and living the Congregational way in his preaching, teaching and administration. Hall received his bachelor's degree from the College of Wooster, his Master of Divinity Degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and his Doctor of Ministry Degree from McCormick Theological Seminary. He is senior minister at North Shore Church, Fox Point, Wisconsin. Prior to that he served with churches in West Bloomfield, Michigan, Clarkston, Michigan, and Fall River, Massachusetts. He is active in the NACCC and the Wisconsin Congregational Association.

### Board of Directors Citation

The Board of Directors Citation was presented to the

Reverend Dr. Mark P. Jensen for his outstanding service to NACCC. Over the years, he has served on the Missionary Society, Executive Committee, Youth Commission, Division for Ministry, Program Committee, was Co-chair in Wendover, Massachusetts (1976) and Detroit, Michigan (2016), Dean of Ministers' Convocation, and a member of the committee to revise the bylaws. He is active in the International Congregational Fellowship, the Washington Gladden Society, and a supporter of this magazine.

A participant in many NACCC Annual Meetings, Jensen was moderator of the 1999 Annual Meeting in Hartford, Connecticut, and has been a keynote speaker, Congregational Lecturer, and workshop presenter. He has been active in mission work and a leader in the pursuit of racial and social justice.

Jensen retired from North Congregational Church in Farmington Hills, Michigan, in 2010, after more than 30 years of service as Senior Minister. Jensen is a graduate of the University of Minnesota and Colgate Rochester Divinity School and received his Doctor of Divinity Degree from Olivet College.



Rev. Dr. Mark Jensen

Watch videos of key presentations at the 65th Annual Meeting & Conference on the Now Trending page of the NACCC website:  
<https://www.naccc.org/now-trending.html>



# The Pastoral Call

by Dr. Michael Wayne Glidden

Over a year ago, another pastor shared with me that he hated his job. I couldn't figure out what job he was referring to. After a few minutes and a little probing, I realized that this "job" was being a pastor. Hearing these words, I nearly fell out of my seat. How could this be? How could anyone hate the call to pastor? I realized right then, the problem is easy to see, the ministry is not a "job" but a call from the Lord.

Help me out, friends? I need some feedback from other pastors. Is this a trend now? Is the ministry now considered to be a professional career? I've heard many speak of the call as a 9 to 5 job — keep office hours and, when the clock strikes 5 pm, the shift is over. God forbid that the phone rings in the middle of the night.

I must be living in a dreamland, or maybe I've been watching *The Matrix* or *Coraline* too many times. When I was in seminary, I got a chance to look at some interesting pastors who had a calling. You've heard of them: Baxter, Edwards, Calvin, and Wesley. This litany of passionate ministers can go on. Who would you add?

When I read *The Reformed Pastor* by Richard Baxter, I realized that I would never come close to that man's demanding dedication to the call. Even good Wesleyans could argue that John Wesley probably did more ministry than all of the circuit riders in the colonies. I believe that there was a common denominator to all of these fine men of God— they were called by the Holy Spirit. To be called by the Holy Spirit is to be chosen by God for a

divine task or appointment. They have a personal summons from their Creator.

The scripture that helped me to clarify my call came from the Book of Isaiah. It was this chapter that sent a chill up my spine in the year 1991 as I was contemplating my life and what Jesus was asking of me. It was in Chapter 6, beginning with verse 8, that I somehow saw myself being called. The phrase "whom shall I send," and the response "Here I am!" kept me up many nights as I sought to understand why God was choosing me. I thought

that He was crazy, and I wanted to be Jonah for a little while. Where could I escape?

The verb *go* felt like a personal commissioning to me as the Holy Spirit began to tug on my heart. I felt inadequate to attend seminary, but my excuses would be insufficient. I will go! And I did...and, with a touch of humor, my apartment at Bangor Theological Seminary was where my mentor Rev. Robert Young lived while a student there. What a confirmation!

Dear colleagues, I'd like to hear about your "call" to the work of God.

The Rev. Michael Glidden, D.Min., is Supply Minister at North Deering Meeting House in Portland, Maine. He has been pastoring since 1993. Rev. Glidden earned his Master of Divinity Degree in 1995 from Bangor Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry Degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2002. He was ordained in 2000. Mike lives in South Portland, with his wife Rhonda.



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**Qualifications:** bachelor's degree from accredited college or university. Graduate degree from accredited theological seminary preferred. Evidence of successful church/community involvement with all ages. Ability to be Berwyn-centric in your ministry. Familiar with successful strategies for growing church engagement and membership among all age groups, with an emphasis on local, younger generations. Demonstrate passion for reaching out to and working with all as a spiritual leader, and the initiative and problem-solving skills required to achieve organizational goals.

Contact: Richard Vavra ~ [richard.vavra88@gmail.com](mailto:richard.vavra88@gmail.com)  
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Gloria Jean Skeete  
South Haven Baptist Church  
David & Carol Stoecker  
Marion Stowell  
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Deena Byers  
Cal-West Association  
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First Congregational Church  
of Bunker Hill

Carl Fleming  
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Richard Graeme  
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Marty Hall  
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Thomas Bettridge  
Philip & Mary Biondi  
Charles Blackman  
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Bruce & Melissa Block  
Dean & Cindy Boram  
Beth Borland  
Bow Lake Free Will Baptist Church  
Bonney Brandt  
Margery Briggs  
Eric & Dorothy Britcher  
Cathy Brockington  
Alfred & Lorraine Brown  
Chris & Beryl Bryan  
Betty Campbell  
Basil & Linda Chadbourne  
Stephen Champagne  
Dorothy Chapman  
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Robert & Amber Clark  
Jon & Mary Lou Clifton  
John Steele Cook  
Harold Covill  
Howard & Sally Cripps  
Arnold & Doris Crocker  
Crystal Congregational Church  
Robert & Mary Davis  
Susan Davison  
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School  
John & Jill Evans  
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Lorraine Finison  
First Congregational Church  
of St. Johnsbury Center  
Garry Fisher  
Phyllis Forster  
Harvey & Connie Frigon  
Steve & Debby Fulton

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Irvin & Brenda Cammon  
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Sarah Terlouw  
 Charles & Velta Glenn  
 Ian Graham  
 James Graves  
 Doug & Cynthia Gray  
 Greenville Congregational Church  
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 Carlton Hardy  
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 Sharon Wozencraft

Leaving a  
*Legacy*

**T**he 1620 Legacy Society serves to honor and recognize our friends who have included, or have made arrangements to include, a planned gift in their estate plans to the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches or the Congregational Foundation. These dedicated and generous donors are committed to supporting our continued growth and development.

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**Connect with  
 Cleveland** *Enjoy the High Points*



*By Shawn Stapleton*

*The Reverend Dr. Shawn Stapleton is the Workshop Coordinator for the NACCC and is working with the Center for Congregational Leadership to develop a resource library for congregations around the United States. He lives in St. Petersburg, Florida, and serves the Community Congregational Christian Church in Citrus Springs, Florida. Shawn can be reached by phone call or text message at 727-403-3663, or by email at sstapleton@nacc.org.*

**G**reetings, saints of the Congregational Way! Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:2 NRSV).

What an amazing conference in Cleveland in June! The gathered saints were brimming with excitement over the steps we're taking within the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches to better equip our member churches for ministry and administration within their local settings.

That's where I come in. I was hired by the NACCC to help coordinate these resources through the creation of a video library you will be able to access anywhere you have an internet connection, by pointing your browser to [www.centerforcongregationalleadership.org](http://www.centerforcongregationalleadership.org). These resources will address such topics as:

- Searching for a pastor
- Organizing and carrying out a capital campaign
- Building insurance and liability
- Ministry to specialized groups (youth, seniors, people with special accommodation needs, etc.)

By the time you read this, we should have the Bible Lectures and Congregational Lecture posted on the NACCC website ([www.nacc.org](http://www.nacc.org)). I hope to have a completed pastoral search video by fall. I'm anticipating that this will be the first in a series of videos on the pastoral search process, allowing viewers to view short, concise discussions on specific facets of the process. We believe this will be the most effective way of communicating this information.

Plus, we are planning a series of brief videos to introduce you to our missionaries and others who you and your congregation may not have yet had the opportunity to meet. All of these videos can be accessed individually but can be especially powerful to watch during a board meeting, congregational meeting, or various times of fellowship. They are all designed to give you information you need to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ more effectively to the people of your community.

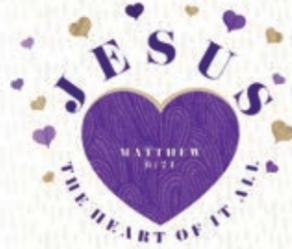
In addition, we want to hear from you! If your church hosts a special presentation or other event, have someone video record it, and let me

know! I will gladly take a look, and if it's something that will edify other fellowships within our association, we will put it in the library! All of our fellowships have great things going on, and I'm hoping that, through this effort, we will be better able to share with one another!

Please be sure to watch for information as the library is built up with resources over the coming months! Please also alert your Year Round Delegates to watch for updates to share with you and your congregations. Don't miss out on these amazing resources we will soon send your way!



# News AND NEEDS of OUR Missions



## 65TH ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE

The NACCC's Mission and Outreach Ministry Council (MOMC) invited the Reverend Dr Harding Stricker of the Asociacion Civil Christiana Congregational Argentina as international invited guest at the 2019 Annual Meeting and Conference, June 22 – 25, 2019, in Cleveland, Ohio.

Fourteen missionaries were in attendance: Katie Dejournette, Hosanna Industries, Pennsylvania; Amy Kennedy, A Christian Ministry in the National Parks, Colorado; Geoffrey Lipale, Pilgrim's Presence, Kenya; Rev. Philip and Mrs. Sheila Malakar, Indian Community Fellowship, India; Rev. Jim Owens, Love Worth Sharing, Haiti; Rev. Jim and Mrs. Sharon Powell, Happy Life Children's Home, Kenya; Laura Rameriz, Panamerican Institute, Mexico; Rev. Charles Sagay, Mission School of Hope, Cameroon; Rev. Julio Santana, Bread of Life Christian Mission, Florida; Rev. Dr. Harding Stricker, Asociacion Civil Christiana Congregational, Argentina; Crystal Tompkins, Morgan Scott Project, Tennessee; and Ashleigh Weis, Fishers of Men, Mexico.

### First Congregational Church Of Rochester

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A rural-agricultural town near Cape Cod



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#### Our Mission Statement

Our mission at First Congregational Church of Rochester is to be intentional followers of Jesus Christ who love unconditionally, serve selflessly, and worship joyfully.

Contact Gini Cutler  
42 Woodland Rd, Rochester, MA 02770  
508-763-2735 vmcutler14@gmail.com

See our Church Information Form on the NACCC.  
Also see our website at rochestercongregational.com

Janet Wilson of MOMC presented Laura Ramirez Santos, president of the Panamerican Institute of Tijuana, with the 2019 Charles Rush Award for working toward worthwhile social and personal goals.



MOMC invited the Reverend Julio Santana of Bread of Life Mission, Florida, as its national missionary at the Annual Meeting & Conference.



Dr. Stricker with (l-r) Joelle Sommers, Jamie Bonnema, Janet Wilson, Greg Carmer, Barbara Dabul



A load of cashew tree seedlings represented a wheelbarrow full of answered prayers at Christ to the Villages, Nigeria. The Brazilian cashew tree farm will provide an ongoing source of income in the remote villages of central Nigeria.



Rev. Charles Sagay, Mission School of Hope in Cameroon, took to the dance floor during the conference's dinner cruise on Lake Erie. The Missionary Alumni Society sponsored the cost of the cruise for the missionaries.



Ashleigh Weis, Fishers of Men, Mexico, had her presentation written down in her purple journal. But as she was preparing to speak, she felt the Holy Spirit say, "You know what you are going to say, put the journal down." Her heartfelt report to the general assembly chronicled her journey with Fishers of Men which has led to her current position of Board President.

For more information about any of these missions, or to make a donation to any of the above projects, please contact Missions Administrator Julie Robie at 1.800.262.1620 ext. 1618 or jrobie@naccc.org. For a complete listing of NACCC Mission Projects, please visit the website: [www.naccc.org](http://www.naccc.org) and click on "Missions."

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

## LOOKING FORWARD

MOMC will hold its Fall Retreat at Hosanna Industries in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where members will discuss the budget for 2020/2021, spend time visiting the local mission and, perhaps, help with a mission project.

## FAREWELL AND WELCOME

The MOMC said goodbye to Joelle Sommers as she finished her term and welcomed Julie Johnson-Staples as the new member. Other MOMC members are Jamie Bonnema, Barbara Dabul, Greg Carmer and Janet Wilson.

## Prayer is needed

Rev. Dr. Jaime Julian (Honduras) asks for prayers for the multiple cases of Dengue Fever he is treating at the clinic.

# Mrs. Peabody and THE FUNERAL BEANS

by Justin Nierer

Church conflict is one of those things I never understood but, unfortunately, it happens time and time again. And when you are dealing with someone like Mrs. Peabody, conflict can happen quite often, too often. During one such time, a church conflict was almost created because of a can of beans, a can of green beans.

Now, to be completely fair to our lovely lady, this was no common can of green beans. It was one of those wholesale-sized cans that you can only buy at certain club member stores. Needless to say, it was huge and could probably feed 20-30 people — or one really hungry green bean loving person for a week.

It was a normal church board meeting, the minutes were voted on, we were moving through the agenda rather quickly. I actually thought I might make it home at a decent time, but that was before Mrs. Peabody came storming into the room.

“She stole my funeral beans!” That was all she said, that was all she exclaimed. There was not a hello, there was no pause to see if she was interrupting. All there was, was Mrs. Peabody, red-faced as if having just run a marathon, barging into our meeting, and saying, not once, not twice, but three times, and with increasing volume: “She stole my funeral beans! Did you not hear me? She stole my funeral beans!”

Now, Dear Reader, there needs to be a point of clarification. Mrs. Peabody was in charge of our funeral dinners and had been for many years. You might be saying to yourself how nice this was, what a great ministry she was providing; and, to be honest, it was. But that’s not the reason she did them. What is in large supply at funerals and funeral dinners? Think about it. There could be, just might be a lot of gossip — lots and lots of stories about the deceased, their family, their friends, the juicier the story that better as far as

our main character was concerned. She was a gossip addict and, yes, she wrote them all down in a notebook alongside the number of people to expect, how many actually showed up, little tidbits of “information,” etc.

Now, you might be saying to yourself, “Justin, I don’t believe it, you are going too far, it’s too much.” And yet, I will say that I had the rare privilege to find and read the sacred notebook one day when she forgot it at the church and didn’t realize it for an hour. I was amazed it took her that long to realize she didn’t have it in her possession. I would have thought she had it in a suitcase and handcuffed to her wrist like in the old spy movie

At the top of each page was the name, the date of death, and what followed on the page was, well to put it lightly, extraordinary. Aside from the menu it was an amazing collection of details, names, stories, a few included what the person was wearing in the casket, and one even mentioned how long the widower spent talking to a certain church volunteer (12 minutes, three separate times throughout the dinner.) J. Edgar Hoover would have been impressed. Like I said, it was extraordinary.

Getting back to the meeting. There was Mrs. Peabody, huffing and puffing and glaring at all of us, expecting us to understand this insane interruption. She took a few deep breaths and proceeded to say the following:

“I have Harvey Williams’ funeral dinner in three days, and when I went to get my green beans from the church pantry they were gone! Sally stole my

funeral beans and she knew they were funeral beans. They were on the funeral dinner shelf, and she still took them for that women’s potluck she had the other day!”

Sally, Dear Reader, was a dear, sweet saint of the church that I believe would have never hurt a fly, literally. I think Sally would catch the fly and set it free to be with its fly friends. Sally was also the treasurer of our women’s ministry and had recently organized a women’s event that involved a ham and green bean dinner. Hence, I was 100% sure that those green beans were the ones in question.

In our church pantry there were two shelves of which our beloved Mrs. Peabody claimed ownership. On them was coffee, lemonade mix, instant potatoes (if she liked you before you passed you got the real thing. I wish I was joking.) and a few other items she always kept on hand for the dinners. Yes, on this shelf would have been at least one or two large cans of green beans. This is why, Dear Reader, she called them “funeral beans,” since they did in fact touch the “funeral dinner shelf.”

“I want Sally to confess and I want her to apologize publicly to me,” steamed Mrs. Peabody.

Now, I had always suspected Mrs. Peabody didn’t like Sally. I think it was because Sally was a good person with a heart of gold. Mrs. Peabody didn’t like good people because she didn’t enjoy good people. In her estimation, good people weren’t entertaining enough, and they and their reputations surely didn’t create enjoyable funeral dinners.

*The Reverend Justin J. Nierer is the lead pastor of Sandstone Congregational Church in Jackson, Michigan. He absolutely loves being a Congregationalist, adores the NACCC, and enjoys spending time with his wife Seneca and their six-year-old son Wesley. He can be reached any time via email at [theoutreachguy@hotmail.com](mailto:theoutreachguy@hotmail.com).*



At the time of this event, Dr. Henry Wright was on our church board. He loved to tell people that his wife finally found “Mr. Right” and just had to marry him. He was a local veterinarian and at least eighty years old at the time, yet still went in to help if needed and still had his favorite “patients” he would take care of when necessary. He was a quiet soul, never said much, but when you conversed with him you knew he was a man of high intelligence and integrity. It was after the apology remark that Dr. Wright spoke.

“Dearest Mrs. Peabody, just so I understand, are we talking about one or two cans?”

“Henry, (she never used titles and no, she never called me Pastor) it was one large can of green beans!” she exclaimed. “Well then,” Henry replied, “had it been two cans I could see how you could be so upset, but since it was just one, let me buy you a new one. I will even do it tonight and put it back on the shelf first thing tomorrow morning.”

Now, did you see what he did there? He didn’t scold her for being irrational or extremely petty, even though she was. He knew, it wasn’t about the beans, but the fact that Sally used them. He took Sally out of the equation and focused on the beans, the inanimate object that, put into Mrs. Peabody’s hands, could have created something much worse than green bean casserole. For all the rational people in the room and for the rational people reading this story, that would make a lot of sense.

Mrs. Peabody looked at everyone, looked at Dr. Wright, and looked at

everyone again, and said “fine, but she better not ever do it again, and you better get the right ones.” With that, and with a twinkle in his eyes, Dr. Henry Wright answered, “Well, if I buy them, wouldn’t that make them the WRIGHT ONES no matter what?” The wonderful doctor started to laugh so hard at his own joke that he had a hard time catching his breath for about a minute or two. The character that is Mrs. Peabody didn’t stay to laugh along, she simply turned and stalked out of the room.

In conclusion, I will say that I wish every church conflict was resolved so easily and I wish every church had a wise sage like Dr. Henry Wright in its membership. Alas, that is rarely the case. But I will mention this, there are too many conflicts that are started over something as petty as a can of green beans and that, My Dear Friends, isn’t of Christ. There might be little things in your church you don’t like, and that’s perfectly normal. I ask you to look past those things and look at the people, look at the hearts, look at your church through the eyes of Christ and, I promise you, you won’t even notice the large can of green beans that’s missing.



# THE HEART OF OUR HERITAGE

# and OUR FUTURE TREASURE

by the Rev. Dr. John Tamilio III, Ph.D.

The Rev. John Tamilio III, Ph.D. is pastor of the Congregational Church of Canton, Massachusetts. He is also a visiting Associate Professor of Philosophy at Salem State University, his undergraduate alma mater. Dr. Tamilio holds graduate degrees from Northern University, Andover Newton Seminary, and Boston University. He has conducted post-doctoral research at Harvard University as part of its Ministry in the Vicinity Program. His first book, *Blind Painting: Poems*, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in Letters in 2003. He is a frequent contributor to *The Congregationalist*.



Editor's note: Dr. Tamilio delivered the Congregational Lecture at the 65th Annual Meeting of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches in Cleveland, Ohio, on Saturday, June 22, 2019. The following is an abridged version of his speech.

In keeping with the theme of the Annual Meeting and Conference, my lecture will draw on Matthew 6:21 —

*“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

1. Christ alone is the head of the church.
2. All church members are spiritually equal and called to the work of ministry.
3. Every local church is autonomous and complete.
4. Each local church is called into wider associations of fellowship.
5. Believers are bound to one another in voluntary covenant.
6. Every Christian possesses full liberty of conscience in interpreting the Gospel.
7. The Bible is fully sufficient as our guide in matters of faith and practice and will inspire individuals and direct the church with fresh light and truth for every generation.

Some of these points are embraced by our congregations more than others. “Every local church is autonomous and complete” typically tops the list. We are autonomous. We do not have a Vatican or a Pope; we do not answer to a higher, earthly power, so no one is going to tell us what to do. I have heard that refrain throughout my twenty years of ministry.

Interestingly enough, Congregationalists are among the first to shy-away from the question, “What does your church (or denomination) believe?” Arthur A. Rouner, Jr. acknowledges this in his book *The Congregational Way of Life*. In answering the question, “...what is the Congregational way? What do we stand for...?” he says,

*Most of us would stand flat-footed, red-faced, and without an answer. Were we pressed so hard that we had to answer, some of us would probably retort: “Well, we’re the free church. We are the church with no ecclesiastical controls, no bishops to tell us what to do, just local churches ordering our own affairs and doing and believing what we think right.”<sup>1</sup>*

.....

Those of us who are confident in answering this question will say that we are not told what we must believe, or we will point to autonomy.

We honor our heritage best when we learn from it and build upon it, not when we become unyielding slaves to it. Let us look back at our past, with an eye on the horizon — asking how the heart of our heritage can lead to future treasures.

There are many treasures that we could focus upon, but I want to highlight three of them:

- Covenant
- Faith
- Service

## COVENANT.

One of the fundamental principles of the NACCC is that “Believers are bound to one another in voluntary covenant.” We exist in covenant with one another. That term often gets overlooked, deafened by the “Autonomy!” rallying cry.

A covenant is a relationship of reciprocal love, support, and care. In a covenant, your best interests are my best interests — and mine are yours. When you rejoice, I rejoice. When you grieve, I grieve. We are inextricably bound together with one another and Jesus Christ.

This isn’t the way the world thinks. We are contractual, not covenantal. We coexist within the bounds of legal agreements to protect ourselves from each other. Covenants are different, because covenants *always* include God.

We are social beings. We were made to be in relationship with one another. To be made in the image of God means that we are to reflect God’s life together as a Trinity. As Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — or Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer — God exists as a community of persons united in perfect, covenantal love.

People in our communities are hungry for such relationships — relationships built on love, and trust, and forgiveness, not ones based on exploitation, and suspicion, and guilt. People want to be loved for who they are, not judged for who they are not. This is a fundamental aspect of who we are, and what we can offer to a world that is starving for such a theology. However, when we focus solely on autonomy, and short-shrift the message of covenant, our message sounds as if there is a clear division between us and them.

## FAITH.

Congregationalism isn’t just about covenant, otherwise the Church would amount to little more than a friendly, social organization. The covenant we share is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the unique characteristics of the NACCC is that, as a larger body, we do not take stands on sociopolitical issues. In true Congregational form, we let individual churches make such proclamations (if they wish), but the National organization does not. Our focus is, and needs to remain, theological — offering people spiritual edification not political talking points.

As much as people are tired of hearing the Church weigh-in on both sides of the political aisle, they are famished for spiritual food. I believe that churches of the NACCC are in a unique position to fill this void. We have an opportunity to present the core doctrines of the Christian faith to people in a way that offers hope, and love, and life. We have answers to those pervasive philosophical questions: “Why are we here?” and “What is the meaning of life?” If we do not present the tenets of the Christian faith in a hardnosed, exclusionary way, we have a feast to offer the multitudes.

Even though the beliefs and practices of the Pilgrims and Puritans were rigid, they believed that God is a God of love, too, as the First Letter of John declares. When we think of our religious forebears, images of Jonathan Edwards and his sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” come to mind.

But what about John Robinson, the famous pastor of the English Separatists? We often quote from his “Farewell Sermon” that sent the Mayflower on its way: “the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word.”<sup>2</sup> Read Robinson’s book *New Essays; or Observations Divine and Moral*, published eight years after his “Farewell Sermon.” In the second essay, he writes, “God reveals...his gracious love and mercy in, and unto his church here upon earth; which he therefore hath chosen, and taken near unto himself, that in it might be seen the riches of his glorious grace.”<sup>3</sup>

Continued>

# THE HEART OF OUR HERITAGE and OUR FUTURE TREASURE

(Continued)

The message we have to offer people who are spiritually hungry is that God is a God of love who seeks to know us personally, as any lover longs to know his or her beloved. God did not create us out of need, because of some divine lack. He created us in order to share his life and love with us. The very essence of the Trinity — God as a community of persons who coexist in a relationship of perfect, reciprocal love — is a model of the relationship that should unite us not only to one another, who are created in the Image of God (the Imago Dei); it is also a model of the relationship we are to share with God.

If people are spiritual, but not religious, maybe it is because the mainline church is not providing them with the spirituality they need. That spirituality can come from many places, but as far as the Church goes, it is clearly stating the doctrines of the faith in a way that applies to people's lives. Our Puritan forebears saw no division between people's ecclesial lives and their public lives. That is what it means to be spiritual. Maybe that's why (in part) that the church in the square also served as the town meeting house. All that they did publicly was guided by their faith. But what we face today is something different: people no longer attend church because they either aren't being fed, they think the church is no longer relevant, it doesn't fit their busy schedules, or all of the above. The scheduling problem can be resolved with alternative service times, and some churches in the NACCC and beyond have done that. But what about the other two?

People are hungry for God in their lives, and we can give that to them without all the political hubbub. We have to proclaim what we believe boldly. "God reveals...his gracious love and mercy in, and unto his church here upon earth," Rev. Robinson wrote almost 400 years ago.

First, God offers us love and mercy. This is the message we need to disseminate 24/7/365. This is the meal people want. For God so loved the world that he gave us Jesus: The One who loves us unconditionally and offers us the gift of salvation (John 3:16). As Paul wrote, it is not something we earned. It is a gift, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). All we need to do is accept it. And accepting it is simple. You don't need an advanced degree in theology. As Paul told the Romans, if we declare with our mouths that Jesus is the Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, then we will be saved (10:9). That salvation is not just the life that we will inherit when we shuffle off this mortal coil. It is the life-together — the shalom — that God intended for us to live now.

Many of the broken dread walking through our doors. They feel as if they will be judged, because they are not perfect. They are riddled with fear, guilt, regret, shame, you name it. The church doesn't need to beat people up; most do a good job of that themselves. How different would our churches look on Sunday morning if this was the message we sent throughout our communities? It's not about judgment. It's not about wrath. It's about love —

the boundless love of God.

The second part of that quote is equally interesting. God's love and mercy are given to the church. People often say, "I believe in Jesus, but I do not need to go to church to be a Christian." They are wrong. You have to go to church to be a Christian, because at the heart of our faith is a call to be part of God's community.

When people complain that Christians are hypocrites — you know, they act all righteous on Sunday, but the rest of the week they are sinners like everyone else — they're right. Christians don't go to Church because they feel it makes them righteous. (If we do, then we're going for the wrong reason.) We go, in part, because we are broken, and we know it. We go, because we know that God calls us as a people (not as individuals) to worship and serve him.

## SERVICE.

We are called to worship and pray, but we are also called to put our faith into action. We are called to feed the hungry, give clothing to the naked, and to visit the sick and imprisoned. We are called to be the servant church.

Diakonia, the biblical term for service to others, is not about doing good deeds for the sake of being compassionate, altruistic, or nice. It is about serving others, especially those on the margins of society, because, in doing so, we minister to Christ. This is who we are. It is what we are. It is a fundamental part of our identity. We're not social workers. We're not philanthropists. We are Congregational

Christians. Service is in our blood — our spiritual DNA. There is a world of people looking to give of themselves in this way. They want the work of their hands to be connected to their hearts and their spirits.

**F**or where your treasure is there your heart will be also." Our hearts are rooted deep in this rich, Congregational heritage.

It is one that has always espoused covenantal connectedness. Although our churches are autonomous, we are united in a relationship of reciprocal love, support, and care. People are hungry for that, especially in a world that promotes a sense of isolated individualism.

We are also a people of faith. Our churches run the gamut. We are liberal, conservative, and everything in between. We come together because of our common faith. In an age of spiritual confusion (an age in which people try to find meaning in vapid, secular, self-help offerings), people are hungry to latch on to something substantive, to hear the story that is ours. We not only proclaim that God is real, but that God loves us so much that he came to us in Jesus Christ to free us from ourselves, to forgive our sins, and to offer us new life.

Lastly, our faith and worship remind us that we are a servant church. It is about allowing the living God to work through us as we serve Jesus Christ in the service of others.

We have a great deal to offer a world that is slowly coming to realize that social media is empty, that reality TV isn't real, that trying to fill your life with "stuff" brings little more than compounded debt. When those in search of meaning cry out, "There's got to be more to life," we in the NACCC can say, "Indeed, there is! Come through our doors and meet the living Christ! Come, be fed by the Word! See how it connects to your life! Come, be part of a family who will love you for who you are, not judge you for who you are not! Come, and truly see that the more you give of yourself to others, the more you will receive!

For a complete transcript of Dr. Tamilio's presentation go online to [www.cc-cantonma.org/multimedia-archive/congregational-lecture](http://www.cc-cantonma.org/multimedia-archive/congregational-lecture)

<sup>1</sup> Arthur A. Rouner, Jr., *The Congregational Way of Life* (Mount Morris: Hammond Publishing Company, 1972), 38.

<sup>2</sup> John Robinson, "Farewell Sermon," July 1620, available online at Pilgrim Hall Museum. Accessed March 13, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> John Robinson, "New Essays," 1628, available online at Pilgrim Hall Museum. Accessed March 13, 2019.

## First Congregational Church Wayne, Michigan



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Caring for our  
Community

# MISSIONS: Bearing the Burdens of the World

by Chris Surber

A child I know by name waits at a rickety table under a braided palm branch shelter for the feeding clinic. He hopes the missionaries won't cancel it today, as they did last week because they could not drive to his community. The roads were blocked with burning tires because of government instability he does not understand. He appears patient as he waits for the food. He isn't. He does not have the energy to complain. He is hungry — really hungry.

Haiti is the part of the world to which I can speak most intelligently about poverty and suffering, but it is hardly unique. I know Missionaries in Burkina Faso, Rwanda, and other parts of the world report similar stories. Fellow followers of Jesus all over the world suffer conditions of poverty that are so bleak as to be soul crushing.

There are many kinds of global persecution that are worthy of addressing. However, for the sake of clarity, I am going to focus on our collective responsibility to fellow followers of Jesus who carry the cruel yoke of extreme poverty around the world. We are a part of a global brotherhood of souls, and the Christian life is inherently a life of sharing and bearing.

Here are just two passages of Scripture and a few thoughts as to how the Lord is calling us to life on mission as bearers and sharers of the love and life of God found in Christ.

## Bear One Another's Burdens

In Galatians 6:2 the Apostle Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (ESV) The application of Christian virtue is not found in a vacuum of human application. At the very least, it simply can never be quantified or verified if that virtue, no matter how well intentioned, is not tested within the context of real human interaction. In other words, no monk in a hut on a hill alone with his sacred texts and personal prayerful holiness ever did anything worth doing.

Christ does not call us to personal piety devoid of practical human concern. Commenting on this idea, Marva Dawn wrote, "That is another reason why we so much need each other in Christian community – to remind one another of the source of our motivation, to encourage a deeper reliance on the Lord's empowerment for all of our slaving."<sup>1</sup> When we bear the burdens of others, we find out our own motivations – whether they be true or false – because love hoarded is not love. It is self-gratitude.

When we bear the burdens of other followers of Jesus, we enter into lived communion. We embody the message that is embodied in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. We become one another's incarnation. We become one another's preacher. We become living witnesses to the immediate power of the gospel. Bushnell says, "The power is to be personal, and will therefore lie in the facts of the personal life. These facts therefore are preeminently the good news that composes the gospel; requiring heralds to go abroad and publish it."<sup>2</sup>

The Great Commission bids us go. The Great Commandment tells us the manner of our behavior in the going. Passages like Galatians 6:2 inform our pilgrimage in this world. We are not only going to those who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our call is to go also to those who have heard, yet presently bear burdens alone.



Kim Quint, member of Mt. Hope CC, with a little boy in Montrouis



Pastor Surber in Haitian Creole at the Pentecostal Church of Montrouis, Haiti

## Share One Another's Needs

"And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need" (Acts 2 2:44-45 ESV). For me, this has been the hardest lesson to learn. I grew up poor by American standards. Clearance rack Pro Wings and hand-me-downs were most certainly not my attire of choice. They were just what I was given to wear! As I matured into a young man, I worked hard and made a life for myself. I took pride in providing for myself. No, I was full of pride because of my false belief that I alone had provided for myself.

I had pulled myself up by my bootstraps, but I forgot to praise God for the bootstraps, the strength to pull, and His blessing upon the pulling. Some of our brothers and sisters around the world do not have the bootstraps and they do not know anyone else that has any to lend. That is where we come in. This passage speaks

The Reverend Dr. Chris Surber, D.Min. is pastor of Mt. Hope Congregational Church and executive Director and co-founder, with his wife Christina of Supply and Multiply, a ministry in Montrouis, Haiti. He also is Adjunct Professor of Ministry for Global University and Nations University



specifically to one local congregation that held "all things in common." Our Congregational identity might incline us to see this kind of Christian community as inherently local. As such, any inference we might draw as to our obligation or inclination to do likewise would likely be to interpret and apply these practices locally.

There is a local application in our community churches. However, our Congregational identity does not give us a "pass" on our inherent connection with the global Body of Christ. The Kingdom of God is for believers everywhere. We are Christian only, but we are not the only Christians. Christ is the light of our local fellowships but "In a much more exalted sense is Christ the light of the world."<sup>3</sup> The light of Jesus shining at home casts light into a global portal.

Moreover, if their identity is complete in Christ and our identity is completely Christian, we not an obligation to extend the circle of our concern for burden-bearing and

need-sharing to the global Body of Christ? Does the command of Christ to bear the burdens and share the needs of fellow followers of Jesus not extend to every corner of the globe? Are we not bound to do our part not only to bring the story of Christ to the world so that they may find life in Him, but also to bring the story of Christ to life in us that in bearing their burdens and sharing their needs they would find Him alive through us?

A child neither you nor I know by name sits at a rickety table under a rickety shelter waiting for you and me to care about his hunger, his lack of education, his sickness, and the myriad ways he and his Church community are oppressed by the demons of poverty. Will we be global burden bearers and need sharers?

If he, you, and I are one in Christ, as best I can discover from Scripture and experiencing the love of God in Christ, his burdens are mine to bear. His needs are mine to share. What shall we do? When shall we do it? How long will he sit at that rickety table waiting on you and me?

<sup>1</sup> Marva Dawn, "Truly the Community," (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992), page 185.

<sup>2</sup> Horace Bushnell, "The Vicarious Sacrifice," (The Regina Press, New York, Reprint Edition 1975), page 530.

<sup>3</sup> R.B. Kuiper, "The Glorious Body of Christ," (The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA, 1967), page 265.

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## Necrology 2019



### The Reverend Richard Lindvall (1946 – 2019)

The Reverend Richard Lindvall, of Michigan City, Indiana, passed away on April 4, 2019, at age 73. Most recently, Lindvall served as pastor at Tinley Park Community Church. He was Intern-Interim at Ontario Congregational Church, Oneida, Ill. (1968-71); and pastored Northland Congregational Church, Rockford, Mich. (1972-77); First Congregational Church of McCook, Neb. (1977-86); Bethany Union Church, Chicago, Ill. (1986-93); and Tinley Park Community Church, Tinley Park, Ill. (1996-2018). He also served as Institutional Chaplain at the University of Chicago Medical Center in the mid-1990s.

Lindvall loved traveling and made a trip to Sweden to meet some of his relatives. He also enjoyed spending time with his family and joining them for canoeing trips.

Lindvall was born on February 20, 1946, in Chicago, to Martin and Alma Lindvall. He is preceded in death by his parents, his wife, Sharon, and his son, Luke. He is survived by his daughter Dottie (Larry) Karasiewicz and his two grandchildren.

Memorial donations may be given to Tinley Park Community Church, 7939 167th St., Tinley Park, IL 60477, or to the Parkinson's Foundation, 1359 Broadway, Ste. 1509, New York, NY 10018.

# WHY SERVE?

by Cinda Walton

Why serve as an officer, member of a committee or special event planner with the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches?

My reasons for serving over some forty-plus years are the same reasons for choosing to be a member of an NACCC Congregational church. We, being the lay persons and ministers, are equal. Each has one vote in what takes place in our church. We fellowship together in our churches and in our Associations for fellowship, to support one another, for opportunities to learn together — without a hierarchical system telling us what to believe or how to function.

Each church is autonomous (self-governed). Our Associations, when in fellowship, are built on the idea that lay persons and ministers share in the events as equals, and if this is to continue both must participate.

Each person has their own skills and talents. God gave them to us. They can only grow and be effective if we participate. Our minister's special talent is the sharing of God's Word, studying and teaching, helping us to better understand God's Word. . . helping each of us to make our own decisions as to what we believe or do not believe.

A major feature of Congregationalism is that the individuals at our gatherings do not have to think exactly alike. We are to respect one another, and all may worship together when we respect one another. We each have only one person to whom we are responsible, our Heavenly Father, God. We have the freedom to speak and commune to God directly and listen for his reply. At times, a minister may help us to find our connection to God, but it is not required that a minister be the go-between each of us and God.

We have bare bone beliefs that bind us together in Faith, Fellowship, and Freedom. These are a belief in God, that his son Jesus lived among us and died, and we would truly know of God and his great love when Jesus died for us. We believe in the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Ghost. We believe the Bible, when studied, gives us the knowledge needed to believe.

Children of God, brothers and sisters, both lay persons and ministers, if we wish this Freedom to continue, if we wish to continue a Fellowship as Congregationalists, and want Faith to be our guide in our lives, we need to share our gifts, given to us by the one God of us all.

Let us continue to meet in Fellowship, both lay persons and ministers. This is not just your minister's responsibility, but the responsibility of us all.

Cinda Walton is a member of First Congregational Church of Pittsford, Pittsford, Michigan.

## Recent Calls

The Little Brown Church, Nashua, Iowa, has called Rev. Drew McHolm as Senior Minister—March 10, 2019  
 Atkinson Congregational Church, Atkinson, Ill., has called Rev. Dustin A. Largent as Senior Minister—April 21, 2019  
 United Church of Marco Island, Marco Island, Fla., has called Rev. Kathy Sprague as Associate Minister – May 5, 2019  
 North Manchester Congregational Christian Church, North Manchester Ind., has called Pastor Andrew Burch as Associate Pastor of Family Ministry – May 1, 2019  
 Duluth Congregational Church, Duluth, Minn., has called Rev. Cherie Daniel as Senior Minister – May 1, 2019  
 People's Congregational Church, Bayport, Minn., has called Rev. Toya Richards as Senior Minister – May 20, 2019  
 First Congregational Church, Terre Haute, Ind., has called Revs. James Hugh Elliot and Kathryn Ann Jenkins Elliot as Co-Senior Ministers – June 1, 2019  
 First Congregational Church, Lake Odessa, Mich., has called Rev. Dr. Marilyn Danielson as Senior Minister – June 3, 2019  
 First Congregational Church, Roscommon, Mich. Has called Rev. Brad Williams as Senior Minister – July 1, 2019  
 Cheney Congregational Church, Cheney, Wash., has called Matthew K. Goodale as Senior Minister – July 7, 2019

## Installations

Rev. Andrew Delmar Stinson, First Congregational Church Fall River, Mass. May 19, 2019

## Letters TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

As an almost-lifelong Congregationalist and as a minister of over forty years' standing, I am committed to, and have no complaints about, the Congregational Way. I do, however, have a complaint about a trend that I have been observing in our fellowship during the past twenty years or so: references to ordinations and installations being carried out with the concurrence of "vicinage councils." I have seen many such references in *The Congregationalist* and elsewhere.

Call me a "contrarian grammarian" if you will, but the use of the word "vicinage" in this regard is an egregious act of violence against the English language. The presumption seems to be that "vicinage" is an ecclesiastical term. It is not, and I stand in rebellion against this increasingly common error in usage. "Vicinage" is an anachronism that means exactly the same thing as "vicinity." Would a Congregational church, inviting its sister churches to gather for the examination of an ordinand, refer to the event as a "vicinity council?" That would be ludicrous. So is the use of the word "vicinage" in this regard.

"Vicinage" is a geographical term. It has nothing whatsoever to do with church affairs. Indeed, I have even heard it mispronounced

## In Search – Updated 07/10/2019 Senior Minister

Arbor Grove Congregational Church, Jackson, Mich.  
 Crystal Congregational Church – Crystal, Mich.  
 First Congregational Church, Interlachen, Fla.  
 First Congregational Church, Rochester, Mass.  
 First Congregational Church, Yarmouth Port, Mass.  
 First Congregational Church, Hudson, Mich.  
 First Congregational Church, Wayne, Mich.  
 Flatbush-Tompkins Congregational Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.  
 Founders Congregational Church, Harwinton, Conn.  
 Gahanna Community Congregational Church, Gahanna, Ohio  
 McGraft Memorial Congregational Church, Muskegon, Mich.  
 Pilgrim Congregational Church, Pomona, Calif.  
 Second Congregational Church, Warren, Maine  
 St. Jacobi Congregational Church, Richfield, Wis.  
 Tinley Park Community Church, Tinley Park, Ill.  
 Third Congregational Church, Middletown, Conn.  
 Westchester Congregational Church, Colchester, Conn.

## Associate Minister

First Congregational Church, Mansfield, Ohio.

## Non-NACCC Church – Senior Minister

First Congregational Church United Church of Christ, Springfield, Vt.

"vicinage", as though it has to do with vicars, something of which Congregationalists have none but of which Episcopalians have many. (A vicar, in Anglican parlance, is a pastor of a mission parish or chapel.) In Congregationalism, the word "vicinage" came to be used long ago in reference to the formation of ecclesiastical councils, which consist of representatives of Congregational churches "of the vicinage" (of the vicinity).

If a church wishes to hold a council of delegates from other churches to advise it — whether for an ordination, an installation, or an internal matter — the proper term is "ecclesiastical council." If the council is held to examine a person who is a candidate for ordination, it would be equally proper to call it an "ordination council." But a "vicinage council?" No. This grammatical impropriety needs to go. As is said nowadays, "Give it a rest—or, better yet, a decent burial".



Sincerely, Rev. Douglas Warren Drown  
 Minister, Saunders Memorial Congregational Church (NACCC), Little Deer Isle, Maine;  
 North Sedgwick Baptist Church (ABC), Sedgwick, Maine

SEPTEMBER 30 – OCTOBER 2, 2019

Fall Silent Retreat in Memory and Honor of the Rev. Donald Mullen  
 Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center  
 Plymouth, Indiana  
 Rev. Dr. Charles Packer, Chaplain-Director, Congregational Retreat Society Contact:

## SAVE THE DATES

APRIL 20-23, 2020

Minister's Convocation

JUNE 27-30, 2020

66th Annual Meeting & Conference of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches  
 Portland, Maine

JULY 22-28, 2020

International Congregational Fellowship Quadrennial Conference  
 Curry College  
 Milton, Massachusetts

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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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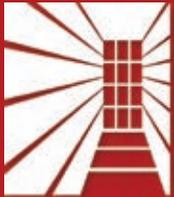


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# The CONGREGATIONALIST

Magazine of the Congregational Way since 1849



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