



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

TO: NACCC MEMBER CHURCHES

FROM: NOMINATING COMMITTEE

RE: Nominations for positions to be filled by vote of the Delegates at the Annual Meeting & Conference, June 2022, and current terms. Respective terms begin at conclusion of the meeting.

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## **MODERATOR, Two-Year Term:**

[Two-year Term to end 2024; vote will be taken in 2022, first year of nomination]

### **Rev. Art Ritter, Novi, Michigan**

Art is Minister Emeritus of Meadowbrook Congregational Church in Novi, MI, having retired April 2021. He is a native of Stanton, MI and grew up in the Traditional Congregational Church there. Art has a B.A. from Alma College and an M.A. from Central Michigan University and worked first as a Parks and Recreation Director in Bridgeport, MI. He graduated from the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and the Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies in 1985. Ordained in that same year, Art has also served National Association churches in Toulon, IL; West Bloomfield, MI; and Salt Lake City, UT. He has been active within regional associations and the National Association, with terms on the Christian Education Commission, Nominating Committee, Division for Ministry, Congregational Church Development Division, Executive Committee, and the Annual Meeting and Conference Committee. Art and his spouse Laura have two adult daughters, Maren and Amelia.

## **VICE-MODERATOR, Two-Year Term:**

[Two-year Term to end 2024; vote will be taken in 2022, first year of nomination as Vice-Moderator, serves two years as Vice-Moderator; may be nominated for two years as Moderator]

### **Jodee Lord, Staten Island, New York**

Jodee Lord is a member of Oakwood Heights Community Church on Staten Island, New York. She is actively involved in the life at Oakwood and its community, serving on the Board of Deacons, Church Council, Pastoral Search Committees, Board of Trustees, Church Choir, and food pantry volunteer. Jodee sits on the Board of Directors of S.I. Council of Churches as Chairperson of the Scholarship Committee and Congregational Support and Outreach. She has a deep dedication within the NACCC. She most recently served on the Board of Directors and was Chairperson of the recent Executive Director Search Committee. Jodee is currently serving on the Racial Justice Task Team, Planning and Action Committee, Sexual Abuse Task Team and Bylaws Task Team. She has served on the NACCC's Women's Commission, Division for Ministry, Transition Team, Nominating Committee, and Annual Meeting & Conference Committee. Jodee has served as the Moderator of the NY/NJ Regional Association. She is a retired Preschool Director with a degree in Education and Psychology. Jodee and her husband, Fred, of forty-five years, are the proud parents of Sarah and Julia.

## **SECRETARY, One-Year Term:**

### **Dr. Kathleen (Kate) O'Dell, Anchorage, Alaska [Re-elected this year]**

Kate O'Dell has lived in Alaska since 1981 and has been a member of First Congregational Church of Anchorage (FCC) for nearly 25 years. She has served the congregation in many roles, including Moderator, Clerk, chair of various boards and ministries, and a member of the Host Committee for the 2010 NACCC Annual Meeting in Anchorage. She was the FCC Administrative Assistant for eight years. In 2020, Kate was elected for a second term as Clerk of the Pacific Northwest Association of Congregational Christian Churches, and she is FCC's Year Round Delegate to the PNAACC. In 2006, Kate retired as Professor Emerita of Teacher Education with the University of Alaska Anchorage College of Education. Her most recent service to that program was as a contributing editor for accreditation self-studies. Kate has served on boards of several nonprofit organizations, frequently as the secretary, or chair of the communications committee.

## **TREASURER, One-Year Term:**

### **Patrick Stewart, Marshalltown, Iowa [Newly elected this year]**

Patrick served as the volunteer Youth Leader at his member church, LaMoille Congregational Church for nearly 20 years and is currently serving as the Chairperson of the Iowa-Nebraska Association Youth Task Team. Patrick has attended NAPF-HOPE conferences since 2005 and served as either an attendee, CIT, or counselor/small group leader. He has been the Youth Representative on NACCC Leadership Council for the past several years and is currently on the Annual Meeting Committee along with serving his third year on the NAPF-HOPE Planning Team. In September 1999, Patrick received his Associate's Degree in Accounting With Honors from the American Institute Of Business in Des Moines, IA. He has over 20 years of bookkeeping, budgeting, and finance experience. Patrick is employed by a local non-profit community action agency working as the Payroll Manager in the finance department. He enjoys listening to music, singing, playing co-ed softball and men's church league basketball, and watching the Iowa State Cyclones, Kansas City Chiefs, and Chicago Cubs. He really enjoys spending time with the church youth group doing fun activities and giving them the same experiences he had as a youth. Patrick looks forward to serving as the NACCC Treasurer for the next year.

## **HISTORIAN, One-Year Term:**

### **Rev. Dr. Mary E. Biedron, Farmington Hills, Michigan [Re-elected this year]**

Mary (Mimi) Biedron (M.Div., D.Min.) serves at North Congregational Church, Farmington Hills, MI, where she has been Associate Minister (1998-2011) and is currently Senior Minister (2011-present). Prior to that, she was the Director of Christian Education at First Congregational Church of Toledo, OH from 1981-1998, when she was active in congregational activities as a layperson. She is a 1999 graduate of the CFTS program and is currently the Moderator of the Southeastern Michigan Association of Congregational Churches, as well as a member of the Board of the Congregational Library and Archives. She and her husband, Glenn, have three adult children and two grandchildren.

## **YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE – LEADERSHIP COUNCIL, One-Year Term:**

### **Melinda Jaster, Elkader, Iowa [Newly elected this year]**

Melinda has been serving on the Christian Ed Committee and as a Youth Leader for almost 20 years at First Congregational Church of Elkader starting in high school. She has also served on the Diaconate Committee for almost 15 years. For the past several years she has been part of the Iowa-Nebraska Youth Committee. Melinda first attended NAPF in 2003. Since 2009 she has attended NAPF-HOPE as either an attendee or counselor. For the past several years she has been videoing and taking pictures at the conference making a video for those attending the conference. Melinda is employed by BassPro/Cabelas at the Distribution Center in Prairie du Chien, WI, working in the inventory department and cross-trained in other areas to help as needed. She enjoys reading, listening to music, spending time with family and friends, and traveling.

## **MINISTRY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES SERVING ON THE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

### **One-Year Term as Nominated by their Elected Council**

#### **Growth Ministry Council Reps:**

**Mary Prendergast, Pilgrim Congregational Church, Pomona, California**

**Rev. Ezekiel Rodriguez, First Family Community Church, National City, California**

#### **Mission and Outreach Ministry Council Reps:**

**Gerald (Jerry) Zwaga, Community Congregational Christian Church, Citrus Springs, Florida**

**Rev. Richard Miller-Todd, Berwick Congregational Church, Berwick, Iowa**

#### **Vitality Ministry Council Reps:**

**Rev. Justin Nierer, Sandstone Congregational Church, Jackson Michigan**

**Rev. Sarah Terlouw, First Congregational Church, Saugatuck, Michigan**

## **ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEMBER-AT-LARGE – LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

### **New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2022-2025]**

#### **Joyce Acree, Demorest, Georgia**

Joyce has served as pastor of the Demorest Methodist-Congregational Federated Church since February 2005. She received her BA in English from the University of Georgia and her M.Div/RE from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. She was ordained at a small Southern Baptist church in Louisville in 1983 and became involved with the National Association after joining the Federated Church in 1986 and meeting Mrs. Elizabeth Walter and Dr. Mary Lane. Mrs. Walter insisted that she attend the meeting in Cromwell, Connecticut, which began her active involvement. She has served on several committees, including as co-chair of the Host Committee for the 2017 Annual Meeting at Piedmont University in Demorest. She and her husband Charles have one daughter, Bonnie Elizabeth.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Staggered Terms, as indicated)**

### **Curt Schmidt, Congregational Church of Bound Brook, New Jersey [Four-Year Term 2022-2026]**

Curt has been a member of the Congregational Church of Bound Brook for 36 years. He was raised as a Lutheran in a rural area outside Princeton, NJ, but later married Kathi, a Mayflower descendent from Maine. Curt serves as the Year Round Delegate and has recently stepped down from serving as the Senior Deacon. He has served on the Board of Christian Education, the Board of Deacons, and two Pastoral Search Committees. Curt is a Professional Geologist and works for an engineering and environmental consulting firm. He is also the Northeast Regional Director of the Association of Environmental & Engineering Geologists and co-chair of two AEG committees. He is past Chairman, and presently 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Chair of the non-profit Somerset County Cultural Arts Center which is renovating and operating an historic Vaudeville-era theater, The Brook Theater. He has served on the Lehigh University Alumni Board of Directors. Curt became involved with NACCC following a spur of the moment decision to drop in on the 2008 Annual Meeting at Plymouth. Curt has been an attendee or Delegate since the 2011 Scottsdale Annual Meeting and has been CCBB's Year Round Delegate since that program began. He is also active in the NY-NJ Regional Association and is presently its Treasurer. He recently served two terms on the Growth Ministry Council.

### **Continuing Members on the Board of Directors [no vote necessary]**

**Rev. Thomas Van Tassell, First Congregational Church, Saugatuck, Michigan [term to end 2025]**

**Rev. Dr. Beth Bingham, Congregational Church of the Chimes, Sherman Oaks, California [term to end 2024]**

**Claudia Kniefel, First Congregational Church, Anchorage, Alaska [term to end 2023]**

## **GROWTH MINISTRY COUNCIL**

### **New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2022-2025]**

#### **Pastor Michael K. Freeman, Princeton, Illinois**

Pastor Michael Freeman has been serving as the Minister at Hampshire Colony Congregational Church since 2021. He has served in ministry for thirty-one years and has served the Lord as a Pastor for fourteen years with leading and with offering consulting. Michael has acquired a Bachelor of Science in Biblical Studies, a Master of Divinity in Christian Counseling, and Doctorate in Ministry, and currently he is pursuing a Doctorate in Theology. He has served on different ministry boards and has been involved in various aspects of church planting in Chicago and Cicero, Illinois; Mexico City; and Nairobi, Kenya. He loves to preach and to teach the Word of God. He has started and led many successful children and youth ministries. He likes to use hymns and has incorporated contemporary music formats in worship. He wants God to be glorified in all that he does.

### **Continuing Members of the Growth Ministry Council [no vote necessary]**

**Rev. Ezekiel Rodriguez, First Family Community Church, National City, California [term to end 2024]**

**Mary Prendergast, Pilgrim Congregational Church, Pomona, California [term to end 2023]**

**Rev. Dr. John Tamilio III, Congregational Church of Canton, Canton, Massachusetts [term to end 2023]**

## **MISSION AND OUTREACH MINISTRY COUNCIL**

### **New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2022-2025]**

#### **Rev. Bob Higgins, Idalia, Colorado**

Bob Higgins has pastored St. John Church in Idalia, Colorado since 2018. Prior to that he served in churches in Ohio, Massachusetts, and Texas. He graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1996 with a master's in religious education and served his first two churches with responsibilities of small groups, administration, and religious education before being called as Senior Pastor at a Baptist Church in Ohio where he served for 16 years. Most recently, he and his wife Jennifer moved to Idalia, Colorado to pastor a recent addition to the NACCC, St. John Church. He has previously organized and led a mission trip to the Dominican Republic and is currently planning a church mission trip to North Dakota to expose their youth and adults to mission service. He has two grown children, one in Denver and the other in Montana – both are married.

## **MISSION AND OUTREACH MINISTRY COUNCIL~continued**

**New Nominee** [Three-Year Term 2022-2025]

### **Amana Talala Mbise, Anchorage, Alaska**

Since joining the First Congregational Church of Anchorage in 2019, Amana has been an active member serving as chair of the worship ministry, a board member of the Dancing Owls Learning Center (a proposed after school program to serve the children of the University of Alaska Anchorage students) and playing in the handbells choir. He is also a member of the NACCC Racial Justice Task Team. Outside FCC, Amana works as an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Alaska Anchorage. He brings over ten years of experience in social work, global health, and community development in Tanzania, Denmark, and the US. His research interests center around immigration, human trafficking, and rights-based approaches to social work. Currently, he is leading the first health needs assessment for Black-Identifying Alaskans in collaboration with the Alaska Black Caucus.

### **Continuing Members of the Mission and Outreach Ministry Council [no vote necessary]**

**Gerald (Jerry) Zwaga, Community Congregational Christian Church, Citrus Springs, Florida** [term to end 2024]

**Thomas Chelimsky, North Shore Congregational Church, Fox Point, Wisconsin**

[Filled an unexpired term, term to end 2023]

**Rev. Richard Miller-Todd, Berwick Congregational Church, Berwick, Iowa**

[Filled an unexpired term, term to end 2023]

## **VITALITY MINISTRY COUNCIL**

**Second Time Nominee** [Three-Year Term 2022-2025; Completed a Three-Year Term 2019-2022]

### **Cynthia Hardy, Chandler, Arizona**

Cynthia Hardy is a NACCC Year Round Delegate and Ambassador. She is a mother of three sons and married to Pastor Victor Hardy. Cynthia held many different responsibilities at the Congregational Church of the Valley. In the Chandler community, she has been involved in the Chandler Coalition on Youth Substance Abuse & Task Force for drugs, alcohol, and suicide prevention, among many others.

**New Nominee** [Three-Year Term 2022-2025]

### **Rev. Robb Tarr, Gahanna, Ohio**

Robb Tarr has been pastor at Gahanna Community Congregational Church in central Ohio since October of 2019. He has a passion for ministry at the connection point of churches and the broader community. This has meant that over the last decade and a half he has served as a parish pastor as well as working for faith-based non-profits that help bring the experience of God's Kingdom to more of our world. He has an educational background in the overlap of faith and theology with media and culture that he pursued at Florida State University (BA) and Fuller Theological Seminary (M. Div.). His ministry emphases have included equipping communities in transition, church visioning and vitality development, liturgy and curriculum creative development, poverty alleviation, and social justice advocacy. While newer to the NACCC, Robb has always valued earnest freedom and committed ownership of faith in his ecumenical ministry experience. He is very excited to be more involved in partnership with the NACCC. Robb is proud to share life with his wife Wendy, who is director of an active faith-rooted justice-oriented non-profit, and his daughter and son, Aislynn and Coen.

### **Continuing Members of the Vitality Ministry Council [no vote necessary]**

**Rev. Ian Macdonald (M.Div.), Congregational Church of Soquel, Soquel, California** [term to end 2024]

**Rev. Justin Nierer, Sandstone Congregational Church, Jackson, Michigan** [term to end 2023]

**Rev. Sarah Terlouw, First Congregational Church, Saugatuck, Michigan** [term to end 2023]