

## **HISTORIAN'S REPORT** **FY2022**

This past year has been a time of tremendous change and adaptation on the part of our churches in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry Councils have undertaken many activities to support and aid congregations in responding to the new needs and ministries that have emerged in this time. Details will be found in their Annual Reports, which I encourage you to read, and contemplate these historic times.

Every year, we compile a Necrology, a listing of the ministers, ministerial spouses, and those who've held leadership positions in the NACCC who have died in the past year. In addition to those listed here, I am aware that many of our state and regional fellowships, as well as individual congregations, have mourned faithful volunteers. While this list is limited, I encourage you to celebrate those faithful ones in your state and regional bodies. If someone is missing, please let us know: the NACCC and the Congregationalist Magazine are fully reliant on reports of the passing of clergy, spouses, and lay leadership to keep our records up to date. This year we celebrate the following lives:

### **2021-2022 NACCC Necrology**

#### **Dorothy Britcher (1935-2021)**

Dorothy was the wife of the Rev. Eric Britcher, and a member of Mayflower Congregational Church in E. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Upon Eric's retirement, they continued to volunteer at Dégagé Ministries, co-founded by Eric, providing help to the homeless and disadvantaged of Grand Rapids. She is survived by her husband, her children Curtis, Cheryl, Dina and Eric B., and grandchildren and great grandchildren.

#### **Rev. Philip O. Brookes (1943-2022)**

Philip attended the Philadelphia College of Bible, where he received his bachelor's degree and later a master's degree in counseling. An honorably discharged Army veteran, Phil was a longtime resident of Lansdowne and then Springfield, PA. He worked for Verizon, retiring in 1997. Following his retirement, Phil became the Pastor of the Glenolden (Pennsylvania) Congregational Church, where he served for 15 years. While pastoring, he also worked part-time in the telecommunications business. He is survived by his loving wife of 48 years, Lynne E. Brookes; his children, Heather (Mark) Edelman, Robin Brookes, and Scott (Casey) Brookes; his grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

#### **Rev. Robert William Gault, II (1943-2021)**

Robert earned his degree in religion and pastored churches in Georgia, Connecticut, Virginia, Ohio, and Michigan. He was pastor of the Sullivan, OH, First Congregational Church for the past 12 years, and active with the Ohio Association of Congregational Christian Churches, as well as the Christian Motorcycle Association, the Kairos Prison Ministry, and Ewing Woods church

camp. He served in the U.S. Marines for 21 years, seeing active duty in Vietnam and Desert Storm. Robert is survived by his wife, Lois, two children, four grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and siblings.

**Rev. Thomas Healey (1955-2022)**

Tom studied at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and served as pastor at First Congregational Church, Clear Lake, Iowa and at First Congregational Church, Wayne, MI. While in Iowa, he was very involved with the Iowa-Nebraska Association and its camping program. He is survived by his wife, Karen, three daughters, and grandchildren.

**Rev. Donald B. Keepers (1927-2021)**

Donald was a third-generation minister, earning a M.Div. degree from Aurora College (now Aurora University), IL in 1956. From 1978 until retirement in 1999, he was a funeral director at Todd Memorial Chapel in Pomona. He was as a church camp director and Associate Minister of Education at Pilgrim Congregational Church in Pomona, CA, from 1966-78, and frequently served as a guest preacher in retirement. He served the NACCC as a Co-Director of NAPF.

**John Kraft (1946-2021)**

John and his wife, The Rev. Dawn Curlee Carlson, were members of the Congregational Church of N. Manchester, Indiana. John's humor, listening skills, gift for storytelling and love of life were developed in his acting and stand-up comedy career, and emerged in his writing and blogging. He was a supportive clergy spouse and a great friend to many, attending many meetings and conferences of the NACCC. He is survived by his wife, Dawn, son Alex Carlson, nieces, nephews, and an abundance of friends.

**Rev. Dr. Arthur Rouser (1929-2021)**

Arthur Rouser all his life sought to do good, from his days as an Eagle Scout, leadership in his high school years, Harvard College (BA), Union Theological Seminary (M.Div.), the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and later in life Luther Seminary (D.Min.), and in his years serving the First Congregational Church of Williamsburg, Massachusetts, the Eliot Church of Newton, Massachusetts, and for 32 years, the Colonial Church of Edina, Minnesota. He authored many books on the Christian life, the Christian Church, Congregationalism, and the work of reconciliation. At age 65 he retired from parish ministry and founded the Pilgrim Center for Reconciliation and served as its President for the next 25 years, leading healing retreat programs in areas of war and conflict in six countries in Africa and here in the U.S. with trauma healing. Arthur mentored many young people, guiding them to live out their calling in ministry and mission. He is survived by his wife of 77 years, Molly (Mary Safford Rouser), and children John Newell Rouser (Haseena), Kristen Rouser Jeide (Bruce), Thomasin Rouser, Elizabeth Rouser Snow, and Arthur Andrew Rouser (Rose) and Vi Quang who joined the family as a teen-aged lone refugee from war-torn Vietnam, as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**Marjorie Walbridge (1928-2020)**

Marge was a member of First Congregational Church in Roscommon, Michigan and was actively involved in Congregationalism on the local, state, and national level. In the NACCC, she served on the Credentials Committee (1993-93), the Executive Committee (1995-99), the Women's

Commission (1989-93), the Nominating Committee (2000-02), and the Program Committee (2002-03). She is survived by stepson Seth and stepdaughter Amy, her brother and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband, Harry Walbridge.

**Winnifred Walters (1923-2021)**

Winnifred Lois Kline Smith Korsborn Walters Main was born on an Iowa farm and had a full and diverse life. She attended Iowa State College, met and married Melvin Graves Smith, joined the WAVES during World War II, and taught Kindergarten in Spokane, WA. After Melvin's death in 1966, she earned a Master's degree from Eastern State College, and married Elton Korsborn. She taught at various colleges and traveled until Elton's death in 1988; in 1992 she married Peter Walters. He died in 2001, and in 2004 she married Kenny Main who died in 2016. She was an active Congregationalist, a member of Plymouth Congregational Church of Spokane WA, and supported missions locally, nationally, and internationally. She served the Missionary Society Alumni and the Spiritual Resources Committee of the NACCC. Winnie is survived by her son Stanley Smith and daughter Alison Marnel, and numerous grandchildren, great- and great-great grandchildren.

**Rev. Dr. Leslie Cleveland Wicker (1943-2021)**

Les was a minister for over 60 years, serving churches around the country. He earned the M.Div. from Duke University, and Ph.D. from University of North Carolina in Greensboro. He was the founding pastor of First Congregational Church, Naples, Florida, in 2004, and described that effort in his book *The Miracle Church*. He served the NACCC on Congregational Church Development in 2008 and 2012. He served missions in Honduras and children's missions elsewhere in the world, and volunteered with Habitat for Humanity. Les is survived by his wife of 56 years, Phyllis; two sons, two brothers and a sister, and six grandchildren.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Rev. Dr. Mary E. Biedron, Historian