

# 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 2026 and current terms. Respective terms begin at the conclusion of the meeting.

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

[Two-year Term to end 2028; served two years as Vice-Moderator]

### **Rev. Dr. Martin (Marty) Hall, North Shore Congregational Church, Fox Point, Wisconsin**

A cradle Congregationalist, Marty has spent his life in and around the NACCC and its member churches. Marty graduated as a CFTS Fellow from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1999 and has served NACCC churches in West Bloomfield, MI, Clarkston, MI, and Fall River, MA. Currently, he is the Sr. Minister of North Shore Congregational Church in Fox Point, WI, where he has served since 2015. Marty has been active in regional and state associations throughout his time in ministry, and has served the NACCC on the Nominating Committee, the 2010 Symposium Steering Committee, three bylaw revision teams, various financial teams, the Sexual Abuse Task Team, the Board of Directors, the Annual Meeting and Conference Committee, chair of the Host Committee for the 2023 AMC in Milwaukee, WI, and Vice-Moderator from 2024-2026. Marty and his wife Sharon have three children, Becca (21), Megan (20) and Jay (17).

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

[2026-2028, as Vice-Moderator, serves two years as Vice-Moderator; may be nominated for two years as Moderator]

### **T. Varnum Philbrook, First Congregational Church of Yarmouth, Yarmouth Port, Massachusetts**

Varn is a native Cape Codder with roots going back to the first settlers of Yarmouth where he is a lifelong member of the First Congregational Church. He started in Sunday school, progressed to Youth Fellowship and then served on the boards of Deacons, Trustees, Missions and Outreach. He is currently the moderator of First Church and is very frequently found in the church kitchen overseeing the many meals served from there.

Varn is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Boston University. He spent 7 years in the Army serving in Kansas, California, Virginia and Germany. After leaving the Army he returned to his roots and started an engineering and construction business. He handed over the reigns of the construction end to his son in 2016 and is trying to retire from the engineering side. It is awfully hard to give up your own business after 46 years!

Varn is active in the National Association having served on the old Executive Committee as chairman, on the Board of governors (2013 to the present), CIT Oversight committee (2017 to present), two AMC host committees and several task teams to include Building Sale and Building Re-purpose. He has been attending our annual meetings since 1993 and is looking forward to greeting you this year as a member of the Springfield host committee.

Varn and his wife Liz have been married for 53 years and have three grown children: Acadia, Andrew and Rebecca and six very busy grandchildren. In his "spare" time he enjoys camping, traveling, time in his yard and spending time with all the kids.

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

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

Kate O'Dell has lived in Alaska since 1981 and has been a member of the First Congregational Church of Anchorage (FCC) since 1997. She has served the congregation in many roles including as Moderator, Clerk, chair of various boards and ministries, and as a member of the Host Committee for the 2010 NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference in Anchorage. She was the FCC Administrative Assistant for eight years, retired, but is now in that position again (retitled Church Secretary). In 2022, Kate was reelected as Clerk of the Pacific Northwest Association of Congregational Christian Churches, and she is FCC's Year-Round Delegate to the PNACCC. Kate was a member of the Host Committee for the 2024 NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference in Spokane, WA. In 2006, Kate retired as Professor Emerita of Teacher Education with the University of Alaska Anchorage College of Education. Her specialty was English Language Arts. Kate has served on boards of several nonprofit organizations, frequently as the secretary or chair of a communications committee. The Irish Club of Alaska elected her their secretary for 2024.

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

**Patrick Stewart, First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa** [Re-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 served as the Youth Representative on NACCC Leadership Council and is currently on the Annual Meeting Committee and is serving his fifth 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 currently a Staff Auditor with the State of Iowa's Auditor's Office-Finance Division in Des Moines, IA. 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 once again serving as the NACCC Treasurer for the next year.

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

**Rev. Thomas H. Van Tassell, First Congregational Church of Saugatuck, Saugatuck, Michigan** [2026-2027 One-year term]

The Rev. Tom Van Tassell is a retired minister, having served Congregational churches in Michigan and Iowa, and is now a member of the First Congregational Church of Saugatuck, Michigan. He has served the NACCC on the Youth Commission, Division for Ministry, Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies, Vitality Ministry Council, the Congregational Investment Trust, and the Board of Directors.

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

**Melinda Jaster, First Congregational Church of Elkader, Iowa** [Re-elected this year]

Melinda Jaster has been serving on the Christian Ed Committee and as a Youth Leader for almost 20 years 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 served as the Youth Representative for the year 2022-2023. 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:**

**Rev. Dr. William R. "Ron" Toliver Th.D., Crystal Congregational Church, Crystal, Michigan** [term to end 2028]

**Rev. Irvan Gammon, Florence Congregational Church, Florence, Massachusetts** [term to end 2029]

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

**Rev. Robb Tarr, Gahanna Community Congregational Church, Gahanna, Ohio** [term to 2028]

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

**Joanne Simpson, First Church of Christ Congregational, Lynn, Massachusetts** [term to end 2029]

**Rev. Richard Miller-Todd, Berwick Congregational Church, Berwick, Iowa** [term to end 2029]

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS [Staggered Terms, as indicated]**

**New Nominee [Four-Year Term 2026-2030]**

**Dan Vellinga, First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Marshalltown, Iowa**

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

**Robert Weers, Congregational Church of Soquel, California** [term to end 2027]

**Carol Taylor, United Church of Beloit, Wisconsin** [term to end 2028]

**Rev. Sarah Terlow, First Congregational Church of Saugatuck, Michigan** [Three-Year Term 2025-2028]

### **ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS AT LARGE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

**New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2025-2028]**

**Jennifer Hall, Lansing, Mayflower Congregational Church, Lansing, Michigan** [Three-year Term 2025-2028]

was born and raised a Congregationalist I currently live in Lansing, MI and am active member of Mayflower Congregational church and secretary of the state conference. I am enrolled in the Lay Ministry Training Program finishing up year one. Outside of church I like cooking/baking, reading, crafting, watching sports and especially time with family and friends.

**New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2026-2029]**

**Colleen Murray, Gahanna Community Congregational Church, Gahanna, Ohio** [Three-year Term 2026-2029]

Colleen Murray is a lifelong educator and dedicated member of the Congregational Christian tradition. Deeply influenced by her father—a Congregational and Community Church minister who served faithfully for 42 years before his passing—Colleen has carried on his legacy of faith, service, and compassion.

A beloved member of Gahanna Community Congregational Church since 1986, Colleen has worn many hats over the years. She has been actively involved in the music and drama ministry, served as the choir librarian, and participated in the pastoral relations committee. Her commitment to church leadership includes years of service as a board member and Deacon, and most recently, she took on the role of co-treasurer in 2025

In 2023 Colleen launched *In His Light*, a church newsletter she lovingly edits. This publication has become a heartfelt expression of her devotion and a meaningful way to keep the congregation connected.

Professionally, Colleen dedicated her life to education, working with children across a range of roles and settings. After retiring from the local school district with 26 years of service, she strives to make an impact by working with first and second graders through the YWCA Education Department's after-school program.

In recent years, Colleen has also stepped into the pulpit when called upon, offering the morning sermon. She especially cherished the opportunity to speak on Heritage Sunday, honoring the roots and future of the faith community.

Colleen has previously served on boards for the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC), including Church Services (prior to its reorganization), a short term on MOMC, and as MEMBER, THEN Chair of the Annual Meeting Conference Committee. She is now excited to return to service on the Leadership Council, continuing her commitment to the broader Congregational fellowship.

**Continuing Member-At-Large on the Annual Meeting & Conference Committee** [no vote necessary]

**Robert (Bob) Labadini, Deacon, Union Congregational Church of Amesbury, Amesbury, Massachusetts** [term to end 2027]

### **MINISTRY COUNCILS:**

#### **GROWTH MINISTRY COUNCIL**

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

**Lisa Van-Alst, Preston City Congregational Church, Preston, Connecticut** [term to end 2027]

**Rev. Dr. William R. "Ron" Toliver Th.D., Crystal Congregational Church, Crystal, Michigan** [term to end 2028]

**Pastor Michael K. Freeman, Hampshire Colony Congregational Church, Princeton, Illinois** [term to end 2028]

**Rev. Irven Gammon, Florence Congregational Church, Florence, Massachusetts** [term to end 2029]

**Sharon Brown, Meadowbrook Congregational Church, Novi, Michigan** [term to end 2029]

## VITALITY MINISTRY COUNCIL

### **New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2026-2029]**

#### **Rev. Chris Kurtz, First Congregational Church of Royal Oak, Royal Oak, Michigan**

I am Rev. Chris Kurtz, and I am the Senior Minister of the First Congregational Church of Royal Oak, Michigan. For 36 years I have served communities of faith in Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina and Michigan; with these communities of faith being in both rural and urban, as well as small and large settings. I have an extensive ministry background with responsibilities that have ranged from music, children and youth to senior adults, discipleship, executive pastor, and senior pastor. My wife Jamie and I have been married for 19 years and have two adult children.

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

**Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith, First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin [term to end 2027]**

**Rev. Dr. Chris Suber, First Congregational Church of Naples, Florida [term to end 2028]**

**Rev. Robb Tarr, Gahanna Community Congregational Church, Gahanna, Ohio [term to end 2028]**

**Rev. Mark Tanner, Skowhegan Federated Church, Skowhegan, Maine [term to end 2029]**

## MISSION AND OUTREACH MINISTRY COUNCIL

### **New Nominee [Three-year term 2025-2028]**

**Shaun Wissmann, First Congregational Church of Redlands, Redlands, California [Three-year term 2025-2028]**

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

**Ann Goecke, La Moille Congregational Community Church, Marshalltown, Iowa [term to end 2027]**

**Rev. Marilyn Danielson, First Congregational Church, Lake Odessa, Michigan [term to end 2028]**

**Joanne Simpson, First Church of Christ Congregational, Lynn, Massachusetts [term to end 2029]**

**Rev. Richard Miller-Todd, Berwick Congregational Church, Berwick, Iowa [term to end 2029]**

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE Nominated by Board of Directors

### **New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2026-2029]**

#### **Rev. Jerry Turner, First Congregational Church of Portland, Portland, Michigan**

I retired from Consumers Energy after nearly 39 years of service and then felt the call to ministry. I transitioned into ministry, completing the Lay Ministry Training Program in July 2015 under the guidance of Rev. Terry Bobzien. In August 2015, I was ordained at Arbor Grove Congregational Church in Jackson, Michigan. Concurrently, I participated in Clinical Pastoral Education at our local hospital and served as Associate Chaplain for three years. Subsequently, I assumed the role of interim pastor at Arbor Grove Congregational Church until they called a senior pastor in 2021 and later provided pastoral leadership at First Congregational Church of Portland, Michigan for six months during their search for an interim pastor. From 2008 to 2018, I served as both delegate and year-round delegate for Arbor Grove. Since 2008, I have actively contributed to the Central Michigan Association and the Michigan Conference, currently holding the position of Moderator of the Central Michigan Association. Additionally, I manage and distribute the Church and Clergy Directory for the Michigan Conference. I have three children, three grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. In August 2026 my wife, Rebecca, and I will celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I am looking forward to serving on the Nominations Committee.

### **Continuing Members of the Nominating Committee [no vote necessary]**

**Rev. Kay Miller-Todd, Berwick Congregational Church, Berwick, Iowa [term to end 2027]**

**Rev. Doug Gray, First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City, Utah [term to end 2027]**

**Cynthia Hardy, Congregational Church of the Valley, Chandler, Arizona [term to end 2028]**

**Doug Loux, Florence Congregational Church, Florence, Massachusetts [term to end 2028]**

**Rev. Patrick Hunt, Heritage Congregational Church of Berea, Ohio [term to end 2029] (Needs Executive Approval)**