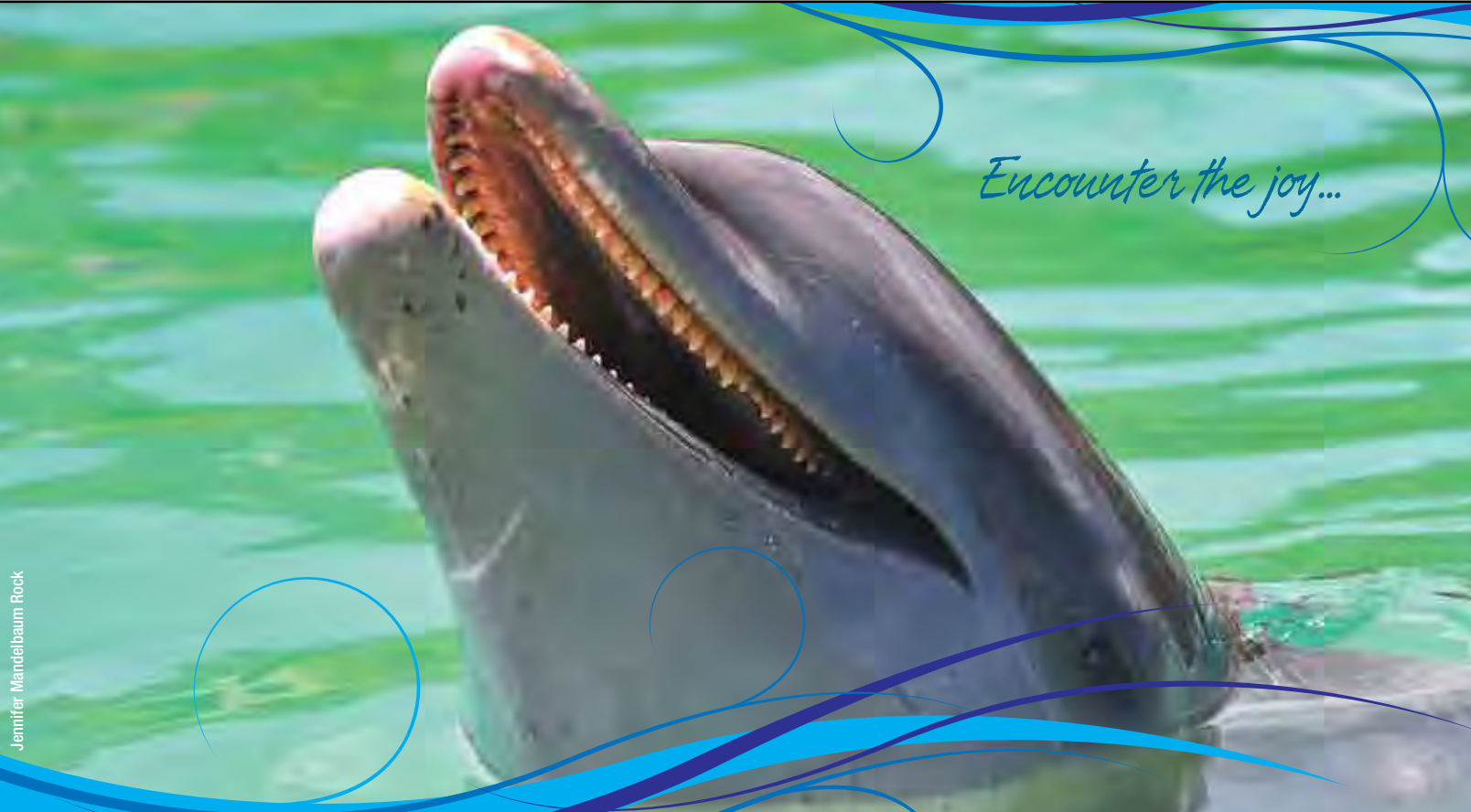


The  
**C**ONGREGATIONALIST

8473 South Howell Avenue  
Oak Creek, WI 53154-0288



*Encounter the joy...*

Jennifer Mandelbaum Rock

*Come to Orlando!*

**59th Annual Meeting and Conference**  
National Association of Congregational Christian Churches  
**June 22-25, 2013**

# The CONGREGATIONALIST

Magazine of the Congregational Way

Vol. 164/No. 4

Congregationalist.org

December 2012



## Christmas **MIRACLE** IN MAINE

**PASTORAL**  
TRANSITIONS

CONFLICT  
**IN CHURCHES**

**8<sup>TH</sup>** Congregational  
**SYMPOSIUM**

*and more ...*



# IS YOUR CHURCH SEARCHING FOR AFFORDABLE BENEFITS?

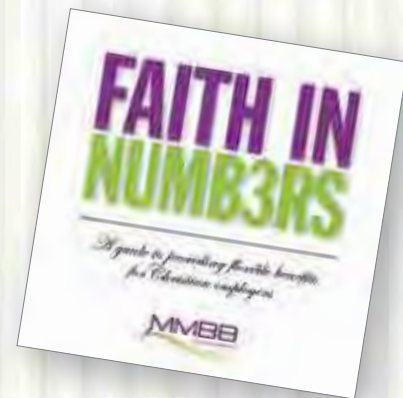
*Then this is a* **BOOK OF REVELATION.**

Here's something every Christian employer should know: offering retirement benefits for your employees is well within your reach.

In fact, it's quite affordable.

Including social security benefits, career members can retire with as their pre-retirement income. And others can retire handsomely, too.

To learn more, send for our free guide, "Faith in Numbers," or download it now at: [MMBB.org/numbers](http://MMBB.org/numbers).  
Or call **1-800-986-6222**.



**REAL PLANNING, REAL SOLUTIONS. THAT'S OUR CALLING.**

\*Source: 2010 Retirement Income Study. Based on 15+ years of participation.

## FEATURES



### 8 A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE IN DENMARK, MAINE

by Allen Crabtree

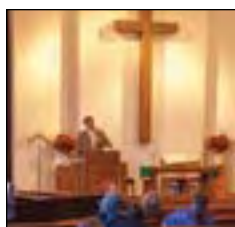
### 12 THRIVING THROUGH TRANSITION IN PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

by David Kaiser-Cross



### 16 DEALING WITH CONFLICT IN A CHANGING WORLD

by Don Olsen



### 18 TWO CENTURIES OF SOUL-LIBERTY AND SERVICE IN SOUTH PARIS

by Don Matberry

### 20 EIGHTH CONGREGATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

### 22 ICF 2013 PREVIEW

### 23 HERE WE STAND

Alabama/Georgia Association



### 29 THE UNCOOL CHURCH

by Rachel Held Evans

## The CONGREGATIONALIST

Magazine of the Congregational Way

Vol. 164/No. 4

December 2012



Allen Crabtree

#### ON THE COVER:

Luke Sekera, 8, was saving his change for a computer—until he learned that the children's collection at the Denmark, Maine, Congregational Church had been stolen, just before Christmas. See "Christmas Miracle," p. 8.

## STOP THE PRESSES!!

As we go to press, a new telephone system has just been installed at the NACCC office in Oak Creek, Wis., with new telephone extensions for key personnel.

The main number is still  
800-262-1620.

The new extensions are:

Tom Richard—1611

Carrie Dahm—1612

Betsey Mauro—1613

Marie Steele—1614

Courtney Schultz—1615

Dan Drea—1616

Rebecca Moore—1617

Linda Miller—1618

Larry Sommers, editor of this magazine, can still be reached at 608-238-7731.

## BOOKS OF INTEREST

### 11 The Congregational Minute

reviewed by Nancy W. Smart

## DEPARTMENTS

### 5 Relation

**NOTICE:** Reading THE CONGREGATIONALIST Is Unsafe.

### 6 NetMending

Church Web Site Honor Roll

### 7 New This Issue! Strangers and Pilgrims...

### 24 Missionary News and Needs

### 26 Along the Way

### 30 Necrology

### 31 Pastorates and Pulpits

### 31 Calendar

# “We’d like to help ensure its future...”

**ROLAND AND NANCY SUTTON**, who belong to churches in Maine and Florida, recently made a major gift to the Congregational Foundation. They also provided a legacy gift in their estate planning, and designated income from this gift to go to their home church in Maine.

“Nancy and I have a great affection for the National Association and the Congregational Way,” says Roland. “We feel Congregationalism is fundamental to the foundation of our country and to our way of life. **Since we are able, we would like to help ensure its future, while also helping our local church.**”

The Suttons’ gift supports the National Association’s work today, and their legacy gift will continue to bless all Congregationalists for years to come.



## The Congregational Foundation

If you would like more information on current or legacy gifts through the **Congregational Foundation**, contact Courtney Schultz (ext. 1615) or Dr. Tom Richard (ext. 1611) at **800-262-1620**.

### EDITOR

Larry F. Sommers

### PUBLISHER

Carrie Dahm

### CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Linda Miller

### CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Barry W. Szymanski

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Kris Grauvogl

### PROOFREADER

Debbie Johnston

### EDITORIAL

### ADVISORY BOARD

Becci Dawson Cox, Rev. Irv Gammon, Rev. Richard Gossett, Don Sturgis, Polly Bodjanac

Articles and editorials in *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* are by the authority of the editor and do not necessarily reflect policies and opinions of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. *The NACCC reserves freedom of expression to its editors as well as freedom of opinion to its readers.*

### EDITORIAL INQUIRIES

Larry F. Sommers - 438 Hilltop Drive, Madison, WI 53711-1212  
608-238-7731; LarryFSommers@gmail.com

**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.

### ADVERTISING INQUIRIES

Carrie Dahm - NACCC, 8473 S. Howell Ave., Oak Creek, WI 53154  
800-262-1620, ext. 1612; cdahm@nacc.org

### SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES

*THE CONGREGATIONALIST* - P.O. Box 288, Oak Creek, WI 53154-0288  
rmoore@nacc.org

*The NACCC reserves the right to refuse any advertisement.*

*THE CONGREGATIONALIST* | ISSN 0010-5856 | Postage paid at Madison, WI 53714-9998. Published quarterly by the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, 8473 S. Howell Ave., Oak Creek, WI 53201-0288. Periodicals postage paid at Madison, WI and additional mailings offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Congregationalist* 8473 S. Howell Ave., Oak Creek, WI 53201-0288.

© 2012 The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. All rights reserved.

*THE CONGREGATIONALIST* Online - Our Web site, congregationalist.org, features PDF files of the current issue plus back issues and a searchable index of all articles. Each new issue is posted on the Web when the printed version is mailed, so you can read it online days or even weeks before the printed copy reaches your mailbox. Enjoy!



**The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches**  
*Bringing together Congregational Christian Churches for mutual care and outreach to our world in the name of Jesus Christ.*

## Subscriptions Policy

- One subscription is provided free of charge to each individual requestor who is a member of a church in fellowship with the National Association.
- One complimentary “Newcomer Copy” will be sent to any person, one time only, upon request by a church in fellowship with the National Association.
- One subscription to *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* is provided free of charge to each church in fellowship with the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches and one to each accredited theological seminary on the magazine’s mailing list.

With the exceptions stated above, the subscription price for *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* is \$15 per year, or \$75 for six bundled copies sent to one address.

Single copies may be purchased from the National Association office for \$3.75 plus \$3.20 to cover shipping and handling.

*We seek and gratefully accept voluntary donations to help keep this magazine in print.* Donations are tax-deductible except for the first \$15 of donation per subscription received by the taxpayer per year.

### SUBSCRIBING? CANCELING? MOVING?

E-mail: subscriptions@congregationalist.org; Mail: *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*, NACCC, 8473 S. Howell Ave., Oak Creek WI 53201-0288; Phone: NACCC office at 800-262-1620.

## NOTICE:

Reading *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* Is Unsafe.

Sometimes we print something that makes steam come out of people's ears.

Sometimes the steam comes from left-eared people, sometimes from right-eared people.

This issue contains an article (p. 23) that we have been earnestly and urgently warned will hurt people and perhaps tear the fabric of our National Association. We're printing it anyway.

Why do we take such a heedless editorial approach?

---

This publication exists to serve its readers, most of whom are Congregationalists of the NACCC. Items relevant to them naturally include sincere viewpoints ably stated on important religious issues.

Few denominations, or none, embrace local churches with such a wide variety of theological, social, and political views as those of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. Some folks may feel that it's difficult to remain in fellowship with others who so strongly disagree with them. Some do, from time to time, withdraw from our fellowship on that account—a situation that pains us, but for which we have no supernatural solution.

To serve our readers, who almost by definition have an interest in the fractious fellowship that is the NACCC, it seems to us that the best policy is: When people have something serious

and relevant to say—find a way to let them say it in our pages.

Nor do we suppose that every argument appearing in *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* must be counterbalanced by an opposing view that we, the management, seek out or otherwise provide. We trust our readers will let us know, in an articulate and respectful way, when they wish to rise in opposition to something they have read here.

And, just in case you didn't know: *The views expressed in this magazine are attributable to the authors. They are not "official" or "authorized" views of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, and their publication here is not an endorsement by the editor, this magazine, the National Association, or any of its members.*

---

Read at your own risk. We strive mightily to present a varied and interesting sample of the conversations going on within our fellowship. What content to include, and how to present it, is at the sole discretion of the editor.

**Your response is up to you. Feel free to write.**



LARRY SOMMERS, *Editor*

Norm Lenburg



## Church Web Site Honor Roll

Your church Web site isn't for you. If your Web site crashes, the pastor will still show up. Members too. You know who won't? Visitors. As far as they're concerned, your church doesn't exist.

Your Web site is for visitors, especially the front page. Give them what they need without making them click or scroll to find it. Here are three NACCC churches doing it right:

### DULUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, DULUTH, MINN.

The first win is their name: *duluthcongregational.org*. Including "Duluth" makes their listing more likely to pop up on a visitor's search for "Duluth churches." Second, there's a slideshow front and center. They're low-resolution pics, but as a visitor, I care more that it's a living, active church. The slideshow says so without wasting a word.

Now that I'm interested, I need to know directions and worship times. And there they are—upper right corner, front page!

### FAITH COMMUNITY CHURCH, FRANKLIN, WIS.

Faith Community Church hired a professional for its site, *faithcc.us*, and you can tell by the clean lines, color palette, and consistent feel. Notice the special emphasis on kids



Duluth's slideshow reflects a vibrant congregation.

and families, including the prominent link to their Faith Academy child development center. As a parent, this site would reassure me that not only will my kids be safe, they'll be learning.

### FIRST CONGREGATIONAL OF MANSFIELD, OHIO

Visitors want to know what the building looks like (it helps them find it!)—but a front-page picture of your building, or worse, the empty sanctuary, sends the *wrong* message. So Mansfield, at *Istcongregational.ws*, uses its distinctive steeple as a design motif bracketing its appealing, informative front page elements.

Notice also the links for weddings. If you do a lot of them, links like this will save time for you and prospective wedding parties.

Three Congregational Web sites—three winners. Go thou and do likewise.



Faith Community Church's professionally-designed site emphasizes kids and families.

Mansfield's historic steeple brackets the information-rich content of its front page.



THE REV. ROBERT J. BRINK is senior minister at First Congregational Church, Saugatuck, Mich. If you have a technology-related question for "Net Mending," e-mail [Rob@RevSmilez.com](mailto:Rob@RevSmilez.com) or write Rev. Rob Brink, P.O. Box 633, Saugatuck, MI 49453.

# Strangers and Pilgrims ...

*All these died in faith, and received not the promises, but saw them afar off, and believed them, and received them thankfully, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

—HEBREWS 11:13 (Geneva Bible)

## The Mayflower Compact

The Mayflower Compact is an extremely short, extremely important, document. Except for the 41 signatures at the bottom, the following words are the whole thing:

*In the Name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland king, Defender of the Faith, etc. Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony: unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our sovereign lord King James; of England, France, and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini 1620.*

Why was the document written, and why was it signed before the passengers disembarked? Some of the “strangers” had been heard to say that they would go their own way and would not be subject to the leaders of the Leyden congregation. Those

leaders soon decided that their church covenant was not adequate, since not all the colonists were members of their church. They also needed a covenant to establish the civil government. It all followed logically from their immediate circumstances and from their custom of following a church covenant, but this was really a radical act.

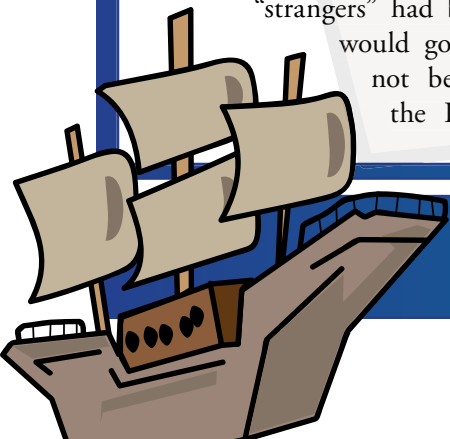
Even today, Great Britain does not have a written constitution. English people speak of their “constitution,” but what they really mean is a supposedly common understanding of how the government ought to behave, an understanding that comes from history and tradition and the development of common law on a case-by-case basis. ...

These Pilgrims had come from a country still bound by a medieval class system ... but the signatures on the document include both saints and strangers, both masters and servants, educated and uneducated, older and younger. The signatures were broadly representative of the population of the newborn colony.

Another important detail is that the purpose of planting the colony and the purpose of establishing a civil government are both said to be the same: “for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith.” This is a strong argument for the idea that America was founded as a Christian nation and that Christian principles should govern the people. That idea was still alive in 1776, when the Declaration of Independence spoke of the God-given rights of individual human beings who got together and instituted governments in order to secure those rights.

Adapted and reprinted, with permission, from *The Congregational Minute*, by Robert Hellam (Seaside, Calif.: Robert Hellam, 2012; amazon.com/Robert Hellam/e/B004VJ49WG)

With this issue, *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* proudly introduces a new recurring featurette, “Strangers and Pilgrims,” aimed at telling, in small pieces, the history of the Congregational Way. We hope you enjoy reading it.





# A Christmas

# Miracle

## In Denmark, Maine

by Allen Crabtree

In Denmark, Maine, Christmas 2011 will be remembered as the year a thief broke into the church sanctuary, stole the children's mission outreach money, and ultimately reminded everyone of the Christian lessons of forgiveness and compassion.

For six months the children of the Denmark Congregational Church had been collecting nickels, dimes and pennies to purchase animals through Heifer International. Every week the level of change inside a large water-cooler bottle prominently displayed at the church rose higher and higher. That is, until December 8, when someone smashed down the front door of the church and made off with the money.

### THE CHILDREN'S MISSION COLLECTION

"The bottle was more than half-full, and I estimate that there was probably \$800 or more in it," said the Rev. John Patrick, the church's minister. "And when it was completely filled we could buy a variety of farm animals through the Heifer International project to send to needy families around the world."

"Up till now," he added, "the project has been a valuable lesson for the children that great things can be accomplished through perseverance and many small steps—a pocket of pennies and nickels may not be much by themselves, but with everyone working together they soon add up to an impressive amount."

### THE LESSON OF FORGIVENESS

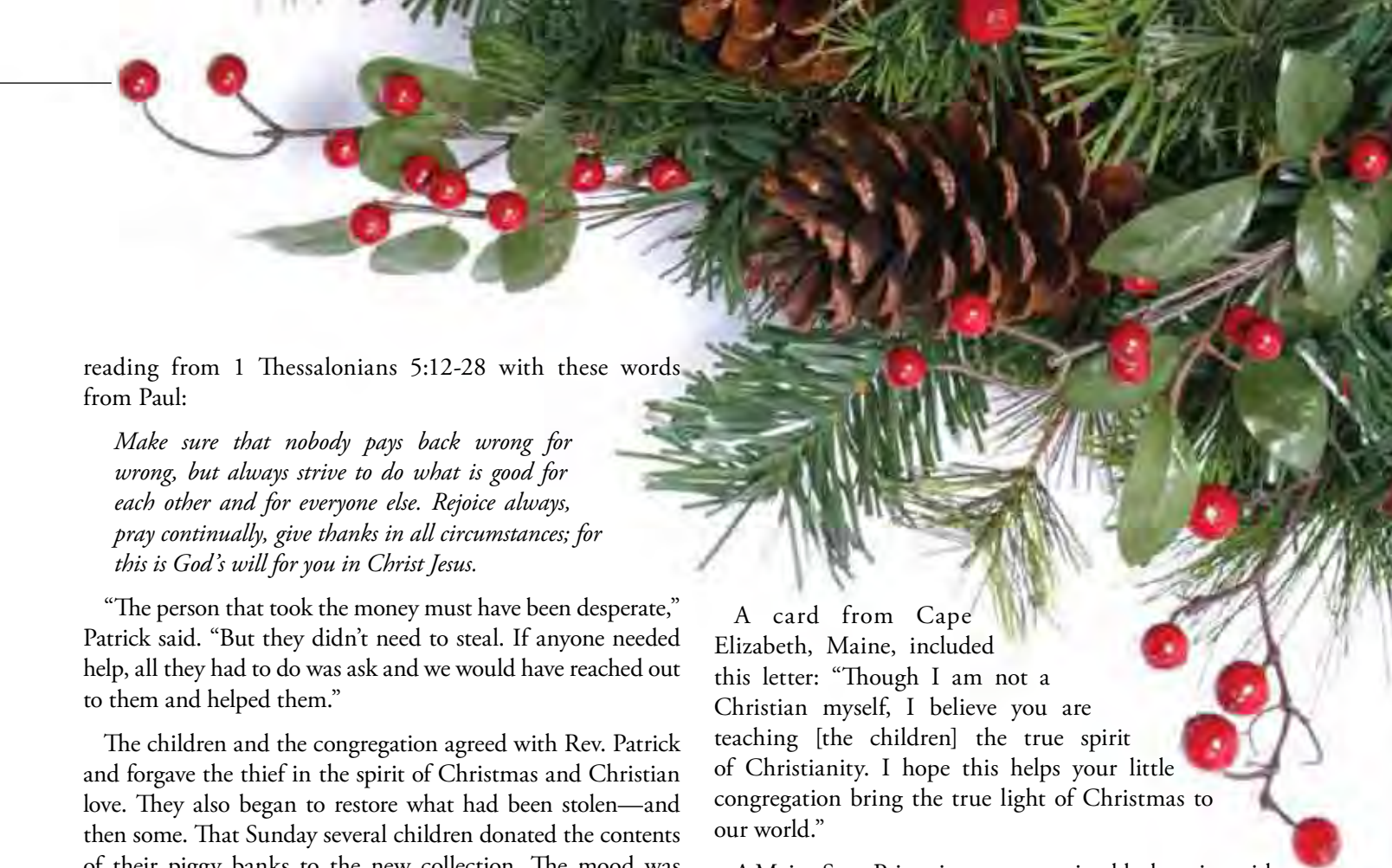
The theft prompted Patrick to teach an even more valuable lesson to the children and the congregation. The liturgy for the Sunday following the theft, the third Sunday of Advent, included a Epistle



Allen Crabtree

*Denmark pastor John Patrick helps Luke Sekera as he empties his savings into the basket to replace money stolen from the Denmark children's collection for Heifer International. Luke had been saving for a computer but donated his savings instead when he heard about the theft.*





reading from 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 with these words from Paul:

*Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

"The person that took the money must have been desperate," Patrick said. "But they didn't need to steal. If anyone needed help, all they had to do was ask and we would have reached out to them and helped them."

The children and the congregation agreed with Rev. Patrick and forgave the thief in the spirit of Christmas and Christian love. They also began to restore what had been stolen—and then some. That Sunday several children donated the contents of their piggy banks to the new collection. The mood was almost festive as the congregation resolved not to have this event spoil their Christmas.

### OVERWHELMING RESPONSE

The story of the theft and the church's response received front-page coverage in the daily *Portland Press Herald*, in the weekly *Bridgton News*, and on Facebook. People who had never set foot in the Denmark church gave money and also sent copies of the stories to other friends far and wide. The response from good people who wanted to help right this terrible wrong was overwhelming!

"I received a call from the Denmark postmistress to come to the post office and empty our mailbox," said Patrick. "It was stuffed to overflowing, and there was no room for the large pile of letters that were still coming in!" In addition to a huge amount of loose change, more than two hundred letters and cards with donations were received, and they continued to arrive as more people learn of the theft.

The messages from donors were reassuring and heart-warming, such as the anonymous note that said "To help make your endeavors worthwhile—fill the bottle with love."

A donor from Westbrook, Maine, wanted: "To help the children know that their good deeds do not go unnoticed. And also to understand that good hearts and souls outnumber the 'other kind' on God's earth."

A card from Cape Elizabeth, Maine, included this letter: "Though I am not a Christian myself, I believe you are teaching [the children] the true spirit of Christianity. I hope this helps your little congregation bring the true light of Christmas to our world."

A Maine State Prison inmate sent a sizeable donation with these words: "Kindly take and pass this reminder that the first man to enter heaven was the thief Jesus pardoned. Here is the ransom for your anonymous thief, from a known one."

### THE MIRACLE OF CHRISTMAS

"I have amazing news tonight," said Rev. Patrick at the Christmas Eve service. "We have truly experienced a Christmas miracle. In just two weeks and through the good efforts of so many wonderful people donations have not only replaced the money stolen, but have multiplied it nearly twenty-fold! \$15,000 has been donated—enough to buy three Heifer International 'Arks!' What a wonderful way to help bring joy to the world!"



Denmark Congregational Church pastor John Patrick helps the church's children discern lessons of perseverance, forgiveness, and love out of the initially dismayingly theft of their collection.

Allen Crabtree



Allen Crabtree

The children of Denmark Congregational Church give Janet West Schrock a group hug. Schrock, the daughter of Heifer International founder Dan West and the organization's senior advisor, visited the church to talk about the Heifer International Project and to receive the children's check for \$15,000.

Each Heifer "Ark" has 15 pairs of farm animals that are given to families in the U.S. or elsewhere around the world who are poor and hungry. It helps them become self-sufficient, and as families pass on one or more of the animals' offspring to other needy families in their community, the gifts will multiply for years to come.

What had been disbelief and anger has been transformed into forgiveness and amazement, and the children of the church have truly experienced a miracle that they will remember for years to come. The congregation has been reminded that even the most shortsighted act of desperation cannot overcome the spirit of Christmas and the unselfish acts of good people.

From the children and the congregation at the Denmark Congregational Church: "Thank you all for sharing your love and your donations with us to help turn this loss into a wonderful victory, and helping us learn again the lesson of forgiveness—Merry Christmas everyone!"



ALLEN CRABTREE is the clerk and a substitute lay preacher for the Denmark Congregational Church. He regularly contributes articles to local newspapers, including a weekly column on the outings of the church's Denmark Mountain Hikers. Crabtree is a member of the American Red Cross Advanced Public Affairs Team and regularly deploys around the country to report on Red Cross' disaster relief efforts.

## Church Anniversaries That Make A Difference

It's never too early to start planning for a great anniversary celebration, especially one that matters to church members and your local community.

Please join us for a day of practical workshops and engaging speakers and learn how to bring new life from old stories.

**Save the Date**  
**March 16, 2013**  
**Shrewsbury, MA**

Questions? If you would like to learn more, send an e-mail to [aghoward@14beacon.org](mailto:aghoward@14beacon.org) or give us a call at (617) 523-0470 x230

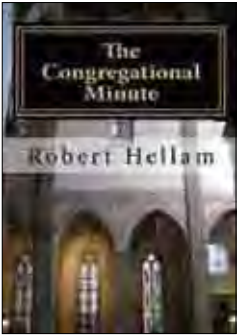


Congregational  
Library & Archives  
*History Matters*

[www.CongregationalLibrary.org](http://www.CongregationalLibrary.org)  
info@CongregationalLibrary.org  
14 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 523-0470

## Warm, Lucid, and Timely Congregational History in Small Bites

by Nancy W. Smart



Review of *The Congregational Minute*  
by Robert Hellam  
Self-published, 146 pages, \$10.00  
(Amazon)

Why read this book of 63 “bites of Congregational history”? Because it is both fascinating and illuminating—that’s why. Moreover, it gives the reader a deep appreciation for our faith, remembering the men and women who put their lifeblood into the development of Congregationalism. Robert Hellam relates our story from the first meetings in England in the 1500s up to the 1975 formation of the worldwide International Congregational Fellowship.

This new book (2012) is the result of “Congregational Minutes” that were presented in Sunday services at Church of the Oaks, Del Rey Oaks, Calif. In warm and lucid presentations, Rev. Hellam has put together an amazing amount of research, drawn from a great many sources.

No matter how much you know regarding Congregational history, I daresay you will find more in these pages, presented primarily by the voices and actions of those pioneers wishing to worship freely.

The first 12 Congregational Minutes are devoted to the stories of dissenters from the Church of England—told first in England, then in Holland—and when England became too dangerous, through voyage to the New World. For daring to hold religious housebound meetings, a number of early worshipers were thrown into prison, tortured and finally hanged on the gallows. Nevertheless they saw themselves as “the new Chosen People.” When the Netherlands did not pan out as the “new Promised Land,” these early risk-takers set their sights on America.

The term “separatist” was applied to those Pilgrims “who insisted that the local congregation was the whole Church, without ties to any higher earthly authority and without accountability to any other congregation.” Traditionally Congregationalism has been defined as “the independence and completeness of the local church and the freedom of congregations and individual believers from binding creeds or other tests of faith.”

Between 1726 and 1756, there was “a series of Christian revivals that stretched from Georgia to New England,” known as the Great Awakening. Efforts were made to rekindle the “Covenant Way of Life.” A chief proponent was Jonathan Edwards, described as “a strong believer in the Congregational Way, as he tried to get Congregational churches to return to the original ideal of the ‘gathered church,’ composed not of mere churchgoers but of genuine believers.”

Other Protestant religions were developing national organizations, and so went the Congregational churches. In 1865, a council was formed to address “two major questions—what do American Congregationalists believe; and, what is their mode of government?” In 1871, a National Council of Congregational Churches was formed, establishing that “the right of government resides in local churches, or congregations of believers ... but that all churches ... have mutual duties subsisting in the obligations of fellowship.” The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches that we know today was born in 1956, to protect the individual authority of the local churches in opposition to the National Council’s formation of the United Church of Christ.

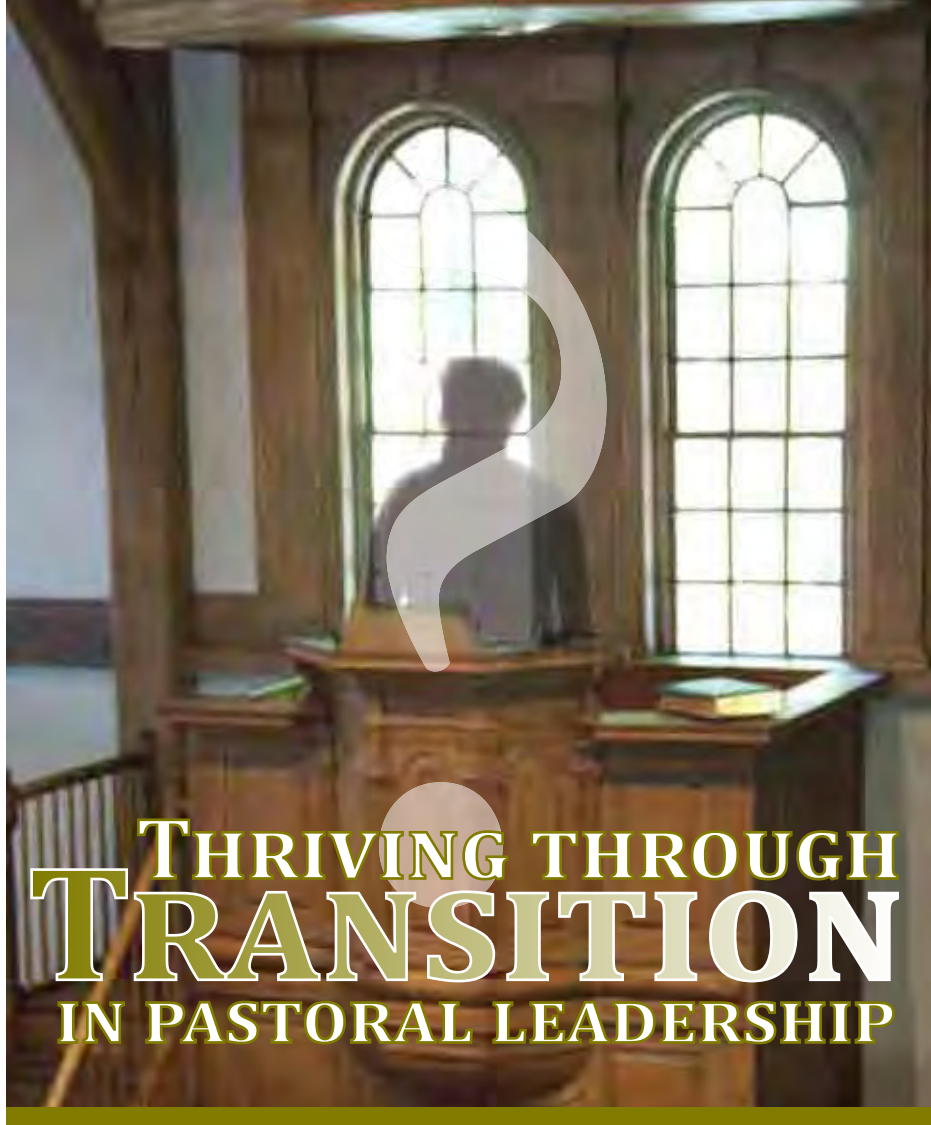
Overall, Hellam helps us to appreciate Congregationalism from the roots up. The book humanizes our church history through a great variety of voices at a time when our churches are planning a redirection for our national organization. There is wisdom in knowing where we have been in preparation for where we are going.

Hellam closes the book with his own comprehensive definition of a Congregational Church—an excellent summation which every church could find useful for new member classes, confirmation classes, study groups or simply as a reminder to the congregation.

Thumbs up for Hellam’s timely book!



**NANCY W. SMART**—author of *We Would Be Free: The Story of the Congregational Way: Faith Freedom, and Fellowship* (Oak Creek, Wis.: NACCC, 1974)—is a member of the First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa, where she was baptized, confirmed and married. While serving on the church staff as Christian Education director, she also chaired the National Association’s Christian Education and Spiritual Resources commissions, and she later chaired the Executive Committee. Nancy’s husband, Allen, died ten years ago; she continues to live in an old family farmhouse in Northern Wisconsin.



*by David Kaiser-Cross*

church can thrive in transition will depend upon a number of factors.

#### **COURAGE**

The first factor is courage. Courage to talk about “the elephant in the room” has to begin with leadership, whether it begins with the pastor or the governing board, but preferably both. Yet the subject of transition is rarely talked about, because no one wants to insult the pastor or imply that it is time for change. The pastor doesn’t want to initiate a conversation that will lead to a “lame duck” situation. Thus, nobody talks about it until the situation becomes an emergency.

Courageous dialogue about retirement or transition accepts the fact that the congregation deserves good transitional leadership. The motivating force behind courageous leadership should be to create a win-win situation for churches and pastors.

In a small church located in a resort community in the mountains, a pastor considered retirement after 40 years of faithful service. For most church members, he was the only pastor they had known. This pastor had the courage to face himself.

“I think it was a recognition,” he reflected. “Age was coming on. I had seen

**T**wenty-one years ago I was called to serve a large, multi-staff church as an executive minister, responsible for the church’s day-to-day operations and programs. Less than a year after I was called, the senior and founding pastor left the church under heartbreaking circumstances.

Within months membership and income had fallen dramatically, and the remaining congregation was split over future direction, worship style, and leadership. Things got ugly.

I would like to say I stepped into the breach as a hero, rallied the church, and led the way towards a brighter future. The truth is that my wife and I, with a few faithful lay leaders, dug in, prayed and held on by our fingernails for a year while a capable search committee went headhunting for another senior minister. Through networking they were led to our current senior minister. Somehow, by God’s grace, we survived, although the damage was extensive and the healing took years.

---

Today it is decades later, and I am still with the church. Our senior minister has been with us for 19 years. Our pastoral team is older; sometime in the near future the church will face another transition in pastoral leadership. There is no plan for transition or retirement in our church’s constitution or bylaws.

A survey I conducted revealed that many churches, like ours, have nothing in writing and no financial plan. What will happen? Whether our church or your

three friends of mine retire poorly and ‘in flames.’ I said to myself, I don’t want to end poorly. I want to finish well. I didn’t want to leave a vacuum in the church.”

This pastor led a marvelous transition. His church found a younger pastor who was a perfect fit, and he was able to retire without worries or complications. While he didn’t engage in formal strategic planning, he intuitively knew the steps to take and the people to involve. He also had the right perspective about his own ministry and the ministry to come.

Dr. Henry Cloud writes, “Endings are a part of every aspect of life. When done well, the seasons of life are negotiated, and the proper endings lead to the end of pain, greater growth, personal and business goals reached, and better lives. Endings bring hope. When done poorly, bad outcomes happen, good opportunities are lost, and misery either remains or is repeated. So let’s get empowered to choose the necessary endings, execute them well, and get to the better results we all desire.”<sup>1</sup>

### ACCEPTANCE

The second factor is acceptance. I have to accept the fact that our church, with its history and people and pastors, is a unique part of God’s plan. No matter which transition philosophy or model we adopt, the process will become unique to our own situation. We need to accept our uniqueness and God’s process as it unfolds within us.

Just so, your church is part of the ongoing process of God’s creation story in your time and location. An important part of that story is pastoral leadership.

In a recent seminar I heard one minister offer an interesting simile: The church is like a bus with a mission to get people safely from one place to another. People get on and off the bus at certain times according to their needs and the

way that life unfolds. However, the bus route is much too long for one driver; thus, there needs to be a succession of drivers who care about the bus and about the people on the bus and where they are going. Yes, it is painful when a driver has to leave the bus before his shift is up; it is equally painful when a driver refuses to leave when he should. Thus, it is a joyous thing when the drivers come and go on schedule. Consequently, everyone on the bus is happy (except for the riders who think their driver should be immortal).

One can certainly poke holes in such a simile, but the point remains: *God’s plan is larger than any one driver.*

### EDUCATION

The first two factors are courage and acceptance. The third factor is education. Most of the literature that is available begins with the reality that pastoral transition is never “if,” but always “when.”

When you are buying a car, getting a new job, getting married, or planning for retirement—change is normal. Why should transition in the church be any different? When the subject is avoided, it almost always becomes a detriment to the church and to the transitioning pastor. But your church can choose to do it differently.

What would happen if some of the leaders in your church made a commitment to be self-educated through reading and conversation? One church faced the retirement of their long-term pastor in the usual way: The council determined to call an interim minister to help them as they began a long search for a new pastor. But then the council members were given a book to read entitled *The Elephant in the Boardroom*. After reading this book the council decided to change direction. They realized that their church was a healthy

church with good and competent leadership on many levels. Unless the church was suffering a crisis or a time of dysfunctional or destructive leadership, there was no need for an interim. Their church avoided a lengthy search process and is well on its way to a happy and healthy transition.

The book’s authors, Weese and Crabtree, write, “Poor transition planning starves a church into an illness that was not necessary in the first place. Every part of the transition plan should be measured against this criterion: Does it keep ministries vital during the transition? [If so, this] produces a health-based approach:

- Linked to a positive vision for the future rather than restoring the past.
- Built on the strengths of the church rather than fixing what is broken.

## THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

Offers a full range of services to church's seeking pastors and pastors seeking church's.

Whether you are a minister seeking a call, or a lay leader on your church's search committee, you can begin a fruitful collaboration with the NACCC by calling the Rev. Dr. Thomas M. Richard at 1-800-262-1620, ext. 1611, or consulting our Web site,

[naccc.org/churches/findingaminister](http://naccc.org/churches/findingaminister).

<sup>1</sup> Henry Cloud, *Necessary Endings: the Employees, Businesses, and Relationships That All of Us Have to Give up in Order to Move Forward* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2011), p. 13.



Being prepared for change and transition doesn't necessarily mean having everything neat and tidy. Change is often messy.

- Intended to move the church to the next level of development.
- Focused on new opportunities in the environment for the vision.”<sup>2</sup>

Within the two churches mentioned above, the keys to a happy transition included giving people lots of information, time to process, assurance of continuity, a voice for questions and concerns, and pastors who were inclusive, open and transparent.

These pastors exemplify what it means to lead a congregation through transition.

### THREE MODELS OF TRANSITION

There are dozens of books available on church transition, and yet there are basically only three models for pastoral transition that have been developed over the past several decades.

First, when a pastor announces a transition or retirement, and the church begins to move through pastoral transition, there is usually some deep emotion involved. In short, transition is

perceived as a death, and a period and process of mourning is needed before new life can emerge unhampered by the past. *This is especially true when the relationship between church and pastor has been less than happy.* In such a situation, an **interim model** is used to help the church process its grief and experiencing healing and new direction. This model urges the hiring of an interim minister to help the church for two or three years while it searches for a new pastor. The Alban Institute ([alban.org](http://alban.org)) and the Interim Ministry Network ([imnedu.org](http://imnedu.org)) are proponents of this model. One of the most helpful books published lately from this approach is Loren Mead's *A Change of Pastors: And How It Affects Change in the Congregation* (1986; 2nd ed., Herndon, Va.: The Alban Institute, 2012).

Second, two or three years before a pastor's transition or retirement, key leaders in a church plan ahead for new leadership that not only “passes the baton,” but focuses on taking the church to its next level of ministry. This **strategic model** views the church as a missional system, in which continuity of ministry and mission is critical to maintain the energy and dynamic of the church. This is especially true for larger churches. This model works well when there is a cooperative effort between an incumbent pastor, educated lay leaders, and an outside consultant.

This can mean headhunting for a pastor who is willing to make a move with a short period of overlap with the incumbent pastor, or finding and hiring an associate minister who works for two or three years before stepping into the role of senior pastor.

A comprehensive book on the strategic model is provided by Aubrey Malphurs, who emphasizes the importance of

<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), pp.138-140.

proactive leaders. “The leadership in general and the senior pastor in particular are responsible for implementation of the strategic plan. That is why the pastor is so important to the entire process.”<sup>3</sup>

Third, perhaps five to ten years in advance of a pastor’s transition or retirement, the pastor, in conjunction with key church leaders, adopts a **succession model** and actively seeks either to hire an associate from outside, or to position a talented associate from inside, with the intention of moving him or her into the senior position upon the incumbent pastor’s retirement. The succession model proposes that the best new senior minister is the product of a long-term mentoring strategy that produces leadership from within the local church itself. While succession planning has some risk, the alternative is for the local church to rely on recruiting from outside sources, hoping for a good fit. Two of the best books that deal with the succession model are Joseph L. Bower’s *The CEO Within: Why Inside-Outsiders are the Key to Succession Planning* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007) and Ralph C. Watkins’ *Leading Your African American Church Through Pastoral Transition* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 2010).

Of the three models, a church would be well-advised to choose the type of transition strategy that best fits its size, style, and tradition. Whichever model is chosen, it is clear that honest, open, and long-sighted leadership by the incumbent pastor is critical.

## PLUNGE IN

Being prepared for change and transition doesn’t necessarily mean having everything neat and tidy. Change is

often messy. Preparation means opening up to new and fresh ideas. Many new ideas come from reading, experience and dialogue.

Preparation also means taking care of people. From start to finish, church is about God’s children, God’s people. People thrive when they are loved, accepted, challenged, nurtured, and connected. That goes for pastors, elders, volunteers, nursery workers, everyone. Therefore transition must be about love, honesty, graciousness and patience.

Transition is about a change in the family, no matter how large or small your congregation. True, families are often quarrelsome and frustrating. But if in transition we are painstaking to take the time and care to be extraordinarily gracious, transition will be much richer and happier, for both church and pastors.

Lyle Schaller, who has studied churches for generations, tells a story about a minister who lost a colleague, the pastor of a neighboring church. He decided to approach his church council and said to them, “I asked you to meet this evening to talk about how we can avoid the problem they are facing. I had always assumed that I would be here for another fifteen or twenty years, but I now realize that life is uncertain. I want to talk with you about designing a plan of succession in case something should happen to me.”<sup>4</sup>

Thriving through a transition in pastoral leadership is what we hope for all churches, no matter what size or tradition. If we can summon the courage to face the realities, if we can accept inevitable changes, and if we will choose to become educated

about our options, then no matter what strategy your church employs, chances are that your church will thrive instead of merely survive. “For God did not give us a spirit of fear,” writes Paul to Timothy, “but a spirit of love and power and wisdom.” (2 Timothy 1:7)



**DAVID KAISER-CROSS** is the executive minister at JupiterFirst Church in Florida. He has served the church with his wife, also ordained, since 1991. Together they have three grown children, and enjoy vacationing

at Lake Tahoe, Calif. David is finishing his doctoral program at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga.



**STUART  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH**

*“Where faith and love are one”*

is looking for a  
**SENIOR MINISTER.**

We are a vital congregation of 350 members in a beautiful small community on the east coast of Florida.

Please contact the church to request a church profile.

**Stuart Congregational Church**

3110 SE Aster Lane  
Stuart, FL 34994

772-287-5951 • [stucong@bellsouth.net](mailto:stucong@bellsouth.net)



3 Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2005), page 284.

4 Lyle E. Schaller, *Discontinuity and Hope: Radical Change and the Path to the Future* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), pp. 110-111.



# Dealing with Conflict in a

# Changing World

by Don Olsen

**C**onflict is no stranger to our personal and professional lives—nor to church lives. We live with conflict every day, because change occurs every day; and where there is change, there is conflict.

The best approach is not, “How do we avoid conflict?” but rather: “How do we identify *manageable* conflict and resolve it; and what do we do with *unmanageable* conflict?”

## FIVE LEVELS

Speed Leas, of the Alban Institute, defines five levels of conflict. Those involved in a conflict may be called “principals” (stakeholders) or “participants,” depending on the individual’s role and depth of involvement.

The first level of conflict is *Problems to Solve* and involves real differences in principals’ and participants’ goals, values, needs and action plans. They may feel some discomfort or short-term anger, but the objective is to fix the problem without blaming others. The goal here is simply to solve the problem.

*Disagreement* is the second level of conflict. At this level, principals and participants are less concerned with solving the problem and more concerned with self-protection.

Shrewdness and calculation enter their thought processes as strategies are planned.

People distance themselves through generalizations such as “All trust is gone,” or “We’ll never get out of this mess.”

Hostile humor and barbed comments also enter the conflict.

The third level of conflict is *Contest*. A win/lose scenario takes hold. Principals and participants do not intend to hurt or get rid of opponents, but to enter into competition with

them. Principals are often exhilarated by their opponents and by their opponents’ strategies. If one side gives in or “folds” without a fight, the other side may feel disappointed: The contest is over without much of a game. But if the contest continues over time, factions may develop, looking for a real victory and not the simple contest they entered into. The language of level three is distortion, exaggeration, case-building and a shifting of responsibility for conflict to the opponent.

Conflict’s fourth level is *Fight or Flight*. This is where the “reptilian brain” engages, and principals in the conflict enter survival mode. Those who do not like conflict will flee, avoiding conversations or meetings fraught with tension and hostility. They may even leave the church altogether. For those who remain, factions solidify; survival is at stake. The objective of the fight shifts away from the good of the whole to the good of the sub-group or even the good of the individual. Language becomes detached, unforgiving, and self-righteous—focused on “higher principles” rather than the issue at hand.

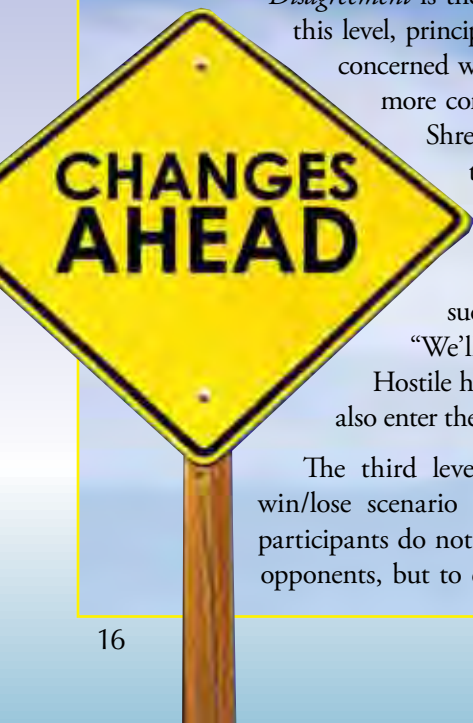
*Intractable Conflict* is level five. Here the objective is to punish, to remove the opposing principal and participants even if it destroys them. The self-perception of either side is so ennobled that they believe they are part of an eternal cause, fighting for universal principles.

One may use a variety of tools to manage conflict at these varying levels.

## DEALING WITH ANXIETY

Much of the conflict I see in our churches is centered in change. Changing culture, changing demographics, changing staff, and changing needs and interests between generations are just a few of the change-related loci of conflict. As congregants experience the realities of these changes in their lives, they become anxious; and anxious people do not think straight. So, let’s look first at anxiety in the changing church.

Anxious people need a clear understanding of congregational process, division of responsibilities, and leadership boundaries. To help people think straight, clarify these processes. *Make sure your church’s constituting documents and policy manual*



*align with the everyday practices of the church.* In most cases, either the constituting documents need to be updated, or the congregation and staff need to change their habits. In either case, putting processes, responsibilities, and boundaries in order will help alleviate anxiety.

Remember, your constitution and bylaws offer guiding principles. The policy manual should reflect those principles for day-to-day implementation. Neither of them ought to be wielded as a club. Grace should abound in both.

But even with articulate documents in place, anxious people try to think straight by simplifying issues into dichotomies of black/white, right/wrong, and pro/con. This tendency can further divide people, heightening anxiety and exacerbating the conflict.

In his book, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Harvard University Press, 1998), Ron Heifetz suggests that when dichotomist thinking overtakes a discussion, we need to “help the congregation see the forest,” so they may deal wisely with its trees. To enable “seeing the forest,” church leadership must “complexify” the issue: Show the various aspects, viewpoints, stories and elements that make up the issue’s totality.

When an issue’s complexity is revealed, those members with ears to hear, eyes to see, and open hearts will begin to help mediate the conversation—opening other ears, eyes, and hearts. As the issue’s complex landscape emerges, dichotomist thinking fades, anxiety is reduced, and members become more amenable to alternate possibilities.

## TECHNICAL VS. ADAPTIVE

Conflicted churches often deal with problems that can be identified as either technical or adaptive issues. Each requires a different approach.

Technical issues raise technical questions:

- *What accounting software should we use?*
- *The boiler needs replacement, what should we do?*
- *Which room will twenty adults fit in?*

These all have technical answers.

But questions such as—

- *How shall we worship?*
- *What music should we sing?*
- *Who is our neighbor?*
- *How do we love our neighbor?*

—are adaptive questions.

While most technical issues may be handled by committee, adaptive issues are the work of the entire congregation because they cannot be answered technically, but must be addressed through adaptation.

Technical issues are generally easier to answer, *so our tendency is to try applying technical answers to adaptive issues.* When this is done churches deepen their anxiety and conflict, because technical answers will not resolve adaptive issues.

Adaptation to circumstances or conditions beyond our sphere of influence will always involve heightened anxiety. Care should be taken by leadership in assessing what change is required to (1) keep the congregation healthy for those who may not want any change, (2) be responsive to those who need change to retain interest in membership, and (3) create an inviting atmosphere for those entering the doors for the first time. The work of church leaders here is to *regulate the amount of change undertaken at any one time.*

In practice, regulating healthy change in the church is much like massaging an over-worked, tired and knotted muscle. Too much pressure causes the muscle to contract, further increasing the pain. Too little pressure and the muscle will not respond, remaining in a knot. But when a chiropractor or massage therapist applies the right amount of pressure, the muscle relaxes, becoming more flexible and stronger.

If church leaders encourage needed adaptive change in small steps, gaining consensus and small successes along the way, conflict levels will never reach the *Fight or Flight*” and *Intractable Conflict* levels, which kill churches. Growing churches have learned how to manage and resolve conflict at the *Problems to Solve* and *Disagreement* levels, keeping anxiety very low.

## SERENITY

In my own consulting work, especially when entering a level three, four, or five conflict, I often remember Reinhold Niebuhr’s “Serenity Prayer”:

God grant me the serenity to accept  
the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference,  
living one day at a time;  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is,  
not as I would have it;  
trusting that He will make all things right,  
if I surrender to His will;  
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with Him  
forever and ever in the next.  
Amen.

*Continued on p. 28*

# Two Centuries of Soul-liberty and Service in South Paris

*by Don Mayberry*



**F**ourteen Mainers decided to form a church, and to do so in the soul-liberty way that caused them to incorporate as a congregationally governed fellowship. They made it official on Nov. 4, 1812.

They built a meetinghouse on the ridge outside of what would eventually become the village of Paris, Maine. At some point they decided the building should be moved to town, and our church folklore has it that they cut the building in pieces and used oxen to haul it down the hill to the spot it occupies today.

## **BICENTENNIAL YEAR**

Throughout this year, First Congregational Church of South Paris has been celebrating our 200th year of offering God's humble presence to this community.

We began our official celebration with an Easter sunrise service outside in the field where the church originally stood. Over 100 people gathered in the dark on Easter morning and stood together in the wind that blows directly off the White Mountains of New Hampshire. We sang and prayed and gave thanks both for the message of Easter and for those hearty folks that gave birth to our church. Later that morning, approximately 275 of us gathered in the church building for Easter worship.

## **ONSLAUGHT OF IDEAS**

While we had an onslaught of good ideas on how to celebrate and have indeed performed many of them, we agreed that the best way we can honor those who began our church was simply to be the church here and now.

We have hung a banner across the front of our historic building, held a hymn sing, featured monthly historic articles in our newsletter, and invited neighbors to join us. We have scheduled a celebration banquet among other activities, but most importantly we have gathered often, prayed and sung and worshipped together. We have carried out our local mission to those in need in our very rural community, and we have continued our outreach by using our buildings for any event that we think adds wholeness to our shared lives. We host Boy Scouts (and have sponsored the troop for over 75 years), Girl Scouts, AA 12-step groups, Rotary, Kiwanis, and many others, as we attempt to carry out our founders' original intent—which, so far as we can discern it, is to be a gentle witness and partner in the community.

Two hundred years ago, when people traveled by horse and wagon or walked to church, the congregation was made up of those who lived close. We now draw people from many area towns. While the church started with a congregation of 14, we now

*Opposite page: The South Paris church in 2012, left, with a banner hung to celebrate its Bicentennial; and, right, as it appeared around 1920.*  
*Right: The South Paris congregation gathers to worship God.*

have a choir larger than that, and our average Sunday attendance is around 200.

### LOOKING FORWARD

We could have spent our whole bicentennial year looking in the rearview mirror—and we did some of that. But mostly, we gave thanks to our forbears and to God by focusing on the present and the future.

The church in South Paris is enjoying a healthy time in its history. Our church has always had a pretty healthy footprint in the community and for that we give thanks. There is a strong presence of the Holy Spirit guiding our way, and we are attuned to that leading. We celebrate as a fellowship with an open heart, open mindedness, and a great love for the people of Western Maine, where God has called us to live.

As we celebrate this 200th anniversary, we remember the value of our church in our lives and in the life of the community, and we ask God's blessings on all fellowships that gather in his name.



**THE REV. DON MAYBERRY** is senior pastor of the First Congregational Church of South Paris. He serves on community boards, volunteers as a hospital chaplain, conducts funerals for local people with no church affiliation, and offers a pastoral presence to the community. Don spent 20 years in the radio business and played folk music with his wife, Judy, who is an artist. Don and Judy have two adult daughters who also live and work in Maine.

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
of Otsego, Michigan


*Seeking full-time Senior Minister*



We have a rich 175 year history in a small southwest Michigan community. We look forward to God calling a spirit filled, biblically based, inspiring, and enthusiastic leader that can minister to all age groups.


Visit our website at [www.fccteams.org](http://www.fccteams.org)

Please send inquiries to [fcctorsegosearch@gmail.com](mailto:fcctorsegosearch@gmail.com) and see our Church Information Form on the NACCC website.



**UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE SEMINARY**  
PREPARING FAITHFUL LEADERS

**Doctor  
Of Ministry**



**"Leading God's People: Encouraging and Equipping the Chosen Exiles of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"**

2013 Cohort Leaders

**Philip Jamieson**  
Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology

**David Rohrer**  
Adjunct Professor of Ministry

Apply for the 2013 cohort to earn your D.Min. in three years. Application deadline is February 13, 2013.

APPLY TODAY  
800.369.8387  
E-MAIL: [udtsadms@dbq.edu](mailto:udtsadms@dbq.edu) | <http://udts.dbq.edu/DocMin.cfm>

# You Are My Witnesses ...

Congregationalists gathered in the Eighth Congregational Symposium, held Nov. 8-10 in Madison, Wis., to share information and views on the theme: “You are my witnesses ... Congregationalism Working with God through Evangelism, Mission, and Justice.”

The Rev. Dr. Arlin Larson, NACCC historian, gave a keynote speech to provide a historical perspective on Congregational activism, mainly during the great outpouring of social concerns that came with the Second Great Awakening of the early 19th century.

Sister Helen Prejean, a Roman Catholic nun from New Orleans and author of the book *Dead Man Walking*, gave a Friday evening keynote, tracing the spiritual and political journey that led her to become a leading opponent of capital punishment.

Nine speakers—three each on the subjects of evangelism, mission, and justice—carried the main activist narrative of

the symposium. One speaker on each subject came from the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC), one from the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC), and one from the United Church of Christ (UCC).

After each set of three presentations, attendees broke into groups of approximately ten for discussion.

### OPENING AND “EVANGELISM”

The event began with a Thursday evening worship service led by the Rev. Bill Rafuse of Rapid River, Mich., who asserted that we are called to follow God’s commands faithfully, even if not always effectively or successfully. Larson’s historical keynote followed the service.

The next morning, the Rev. Jeff Meyers (CCCC) of Cedarville, Mich.; the Rev. Dr. Stuart Merkel (NACCC) of Franklin, Wis.; and the Rev. Tisha Brown (UCC), of Madison, Wis., took up the subject of evangelism.

Meyers, speaking on “Parish Evangelism,” noted that earlier generations of Congregationalists held evangelism as a prime concern. Quoting from an 1865 National Council report and Frederick Fagley’s 1921 book, *Parish Evangelism*, Meyers defined evangelism as “the bringing of people who are alienated from God into a reconciled and vital relationship with God.” Noting, however, that our churches do not have specific plans for evangelism, he urged several methodical steps towards developing and implementing such plans.

Merkel spoke on “Reawakening The Congregational Campaign for Christ: ‘What Shall We Do?’” Ruefully noting that evangelism has been a concept widely avoided in Congregational churches, he posed the question asked by the hearers of the apostle Peter’s Pentecost sermon, as related in Acts 2:37—“What shall we do?” Like Meyers, he provided a list of practical methods for pursuing evangelism.

Brown, pastor of Madison’s Community of Hope, an environmentally concerned church serving a seeking population in a famously liberal city, proposed a “framework for re-thinking our approach to evangelism,” based on Formation, Narrative, and Action. She stressed Action and gave examples of innovative ministries connecting her church with its surrounding community—including a children’s garden, labyrinths free for public walking as



*Rev. Jeff Meyers speaks on "Parish Evangelism."*

places of serene meditation, and a local ministry supporting relief efforts in Haiti.

### “MISSION”

Afternoon sessions featuring the Rev. Jim Owens (NACCC) of Zephyrhills, Fla.; Chicago Theological Seminary M.Div. graduate Wendy Cooper (UCC) of Madison, Wis.; and the Rev. Keith Hunholz (CCCC) of Elkhart Lake, Wis., dealt with mission.

Owens spoke of “Love Worth Sharing,” a ministry in Haiti that he has conducted for 15 years, both before and after the catastrophic earthquake of 2010. While giving concrete examples of work done by the mission in Haiti, Owens stressed that Christians need to actually go and do missions, as scripture commands.

Cooper spoke of her own circuitous route from being raised in a strongly anti-religious household, realizing at age 35 that she was called to something more, and moving through to Unitarianism and ultimately to Christian ministry. Her gradual and ambiguous journey left her appreciating the obstacles posed in the present by a history of Christian missions, “sometimes ... intertwined with the ... oppression, violence and injustice that has accompanied empire and colonial control.” And she offered ideas for new ways to do missions free of the entrapments of power.

Hunholz offered a retrospective review of the overall attitudes toward mission on the part of historical Congregationalists—the Pilgrims, Puritans, and their 19th-century successors.

### CONCERT, SISTER HELEN, AND “JUSTICE”

Friday evening featured a varied musical program by the Heritage Church choir and music director Robert Eversman on violin and organ, followed by Prejean’s talk against the death penalty, with a book signing immediately afterwards.

The symposium turned on Saturday morning to the subject of justice, with presentations by the Rev. Jamie Green (UCC) of Needham, Mass.; the Rev. Art Gay (CCCC) of McHenry, Ill.; and the Rev. Mike Fales (NACCC) of Olivet, Mich.

Green presented “Experience the Love: A Praxis Model of Lifelong Religious Education for Justice.” She outlined differences between the traditional “banking” method of education (with the teacher “making deposits” in the students’ minds) and the newer “experiential learning,” aimed at interaction that fits the context of students’ lives. She explained “rotational learning” and stressed the need to



Sister Helen Prejean signs books after her keynote address.

examine the language used in instruction, so students are not inadvertently excluded.

Gay’s address on “Thinking Biblically About Immigration” raised the issue of international immigration and assimilation. “I’m looking for someone, hopefully a Congregationalist, to write the next *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” he said. “This may be our *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* moment, with regard to immigration.” He insisted that the solution must be nonpartisan—“Not the donkey or the elephant, but the agenda of the Lamb,” in the words of Latino leader Samuel Rodriguez. Recognizing complex arguments surrounding the issue, Gay called his hearers to help widen the church’s perspective to see immigration from God’s viewpoint.

While Gay sought the next Harriet Beecher Stowe, Fales proclaimed a search for the next Washington Gladden in his paper, “A Call for the Second Social Gospel Movement—Christian Justice in the Twenty-First Century.” He told how Gladden and others (Jane Addams, Jacob Riis, Richard T. Ely) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries developed a conscience-based resistance to *laissez-faire* norms of commerce and industrial organization that impoverished many workers. Fales called for a new Social Gospel to combat today’s inequities in the world-wide marketplace.

After a worship service led by the Rev. Cindy Bacon Hammer of the host church, participants went home to put newfound information and ideas to work in the witnessing Congregational churches of the 21st century.

**Papers presented in the symposium will be published in the spring issue of the *International Congregational Journal*. Copies may be obtained by writing:**

Rev. Dr. Rick Hartley  
First Congregational Church  
231 Roberts Drive, Mukwonago, WI 53149  
\$12 per copy; make check payable to “ICJ”



# ICF 2013

The International Congregational Fellowship will hold its quadrennial conference at Brunel University in West London, July 29-Aug. 2, 2013.

## CONFERENCE COST

The following rates cover full board and the conference fee:

Adults—£325

Under 5 years old—free

5-10 years old—£95

11-18 years old—£150

19-25 years—£200

The university has excellent modern facilities and is handy to Heathrow Airport, with good connections into the heart of London and to other parts of the country.

## DETAILS

The planning committee is at work on the conference program and logistics and hopes to announce details of the conference soon on the ICF Web site, [intercong.org](http://intercong.org).

## “CONFERENCE BONUS”

“It is anticipated that Congregationalists in Britain will welcome visitors from overseas should anyone wish to extend their visit to the UK either before or after the Conference,” according to the site.

---

## THE BRITISH SEMINAR

U.S. attendees will enjoy a unique opportunity to combine the five-day ICF Conference with a subsequent ten-day guided tour in England and Holland, emphasizing our Congregational heritage.

The Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies is packaging this tour, known as the British Seminar, packed with fun, fellowship, and a deep exploration of our Congregational roots.

### The itinerary includes:

- A pilgrimage to **Canterbury Cathedral** and the **Canterbury Tales Museum**.
- Visits to **Babworth**, **Scrooby**, **Austerfield** (birthplace of Plymouth colony’s Governor William Bradford), **Gainsborough**, and **Boston**.
- **Cambridge**, intellectual seedbed of the English Reformation, plus **Bedford** (John Bunyan’s hometown) and **Oxford**.
- **Plymouth** and **Dartmouth**, including the **Barbican**, where the Pilgrims set sail on the *Mayflower*, and Bayard’s Cove.
- **Southampton**, **Portsmouth**, **Salisbury** (view the Magna Carta!), **Stonehenge**.
- **London**—Two days with Pilgrim and Puritan sites including the Clink Prison Museum and the burial place of *Mayflower* captain Christopher Jones.
- Three days in **Holland**, including William Brewster’s printing press building and other Pilgrim sites in Leiden, plus a free day in **Amsterdam**.

The price for the ten-day British Seminar is \$4,189.00 per person. The price is for land only. It does not include air. It includes breakfast each day and one dinner. It is based upon double occupancy. The single supplement is \$725.00.



---

So mark your calendar for July 29 through Aug. 13, and prepare to immerse yourself in the Congregational Way.

**Editor's Note:** An article on the 100th anniversary of the sanctuary at First Congregational Church of Oshkosh appeared in our September issue. The final paragraph of that article included a statement on that church's social stance, which has drawn the following response from the Alabama/Georgia Association of Congregational Christian Churches:

## *Alabama/Georgia Association of Congregational Christian Churches*

# Here We Stand

October 23, 2012

**Subject:** A Theological Response to *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*, vol. 164/no. 3, September 2012; also referring to the 2012 Annual Meeting of the NACCC, "Social Justice Workshop" of June 24.

The Alabama-Georgia Association of Congregational Christian Churches held its regular Annual Meeting on Sunday October 21, 2012. As part of our business we considered a response to both the article in *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* (p. 35) noting "FCC Oshkosh also is an 'Open and Affirming' congregation that welcomes the gay, lesbian, transgender, and bisexual community into the full life and fellowship of the church;" and the NACCC "Social Justice Workshop" of June 24.

We of the Alabama-Georgia Association and individually as member Churches in association with the NACCC wish to raise *a voice of deep concern* with respect to these recent public presentations of what we consider to be an aberrant social agenda. In spite of many grandiose statements of social justice concerns, we find no *Scriptural reference* to support the "Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Bi-Sexual" position (LGBT). What basis is there then, except for "extra-Biblical" rationale, to attempt to justify this deviation from orthodox Christian theology and the history of our Judeo-Christian society?

Scripturally, we do find homosexual behavior is a sin, listed along with adultery, fornication, prostitution, lust, etc. (Romans 1:24-27; I Timothy 1:10,11; I Corinthians 6:9; Genesis 18

and 19.) It is not singled out as some "special sin," especially offensive to God beyond any other sin. In fact the Scripture notes that *all* have sinned and fall short of God's intended lifestyle. God offers grace to all of us sinners, but *nowhere* does God condone sinful behavior.

Again, Scripturally, we note that humans are sexual beings created by a loving God and that loving relationships are part of God's Covenant of Grace. But God made us responsible for the right use of our sexuality as directed in God's Word. (Genesis 2:24; Genesis 9:7; I Corinthians 7:3, 4.) The only acceptable behavior as God intended it was as "one man and one woman in covenant with each other." We are directed throughout Scripture to love all people, but we believe sexual behavior is only acceptable as God directed it.

The Church catholic cannot, and we must not, condone behavior which is sinful and contrary to God's directed order. These articles highlighting "Open and Affirming" positions not only condone this sinful behavior, they imply that members of our Association positively endorse it and are encouraging others to do so. We of the Alabama-Georgia Association acknowledge that the historic "Congregational Way" allows each Church to function autonomously, but we reject the notion

that this allows license to act "as we please" without regard to Biblical standards. In light of this position, we as the Alabama-Georgia Association make the following statement regarding our stand:

**The Alabama-Georgia Association of Congregational Christian Churches is open to *all* people, recognizing the truth that we are all sinners in need of God's grace and reconciliation. However, we cannot affirm (much less condone, encourage or endorse) sinful behavior. We believe God offers forgiveness to all who will repent of their sin and willingly turn from that sin back to God, and that God gives each of us the strength we need to live in keeping with God's directed order. As such we reject the "Open and Affirming" position toward LGBT behaviors.**

Submitted on behalf of the Alabama-Georgia Association,

REV. J.R. McALILEY III

*Moderator*





## HURRICANE SANDY RELIEF

Our prayers are with our NACCC Family on the East Coast as they work to relieve the suffering of others and put their own lives back together.

The NACCC is accepting donations for disaster relief through One Great Hour of Sharing.

Please send your donations to—

**NACCC: OGHS—Hurricane Sandy**

PO Box 288

Oak Creek, WI 53154

## NEWS

### GROWTH IN THE MIDST OF TYPHOONS

**Christian Mission In The Far East (Philippines)**—Jaime Julian reports: “I have also visited Edenton College and despite our deteriorating economic condition and the first year of implementing the K+12 by the Department of Education our enrollment in the college alone have increased to almost 1,000. We are compel to utilize the church building for classroom cause we don’t have no other venue to use. Please be praying too for our need of additional classrooms.” A tree fell on the roof of Edenton College, during the recent storms. Students attend classes in the church building, pending repairs.



*Flooded land in the Philippines.*



*Symphony John Castillo distributes food aid.*

**National Association of Congregational Churches (Philippines)**—Symphony John Castillo reports, “With your gracious prayers and support, God enabled us to hand out a total of 285 grocery packs, 271 anti-fungal creams, 310 Bibles (165 of which to non-believers and 25 to new believers and 50 to our tribal churches), one lot of used tarpaulins (for temporary ‘cover’ for lost walls and destroyed/leaking roof sheets of flood/typhoon victims), some equipment for rescue and community needs. You are all part of this. The task has been taxing but very fulfilling. Your partnership is an inspiration. Your sense of urgency to help kept us all going and we carried on with our job come ‘rain or high waters’ (literally). Our people’s saddening plight also urges us.”

### GIFT OF SIGHT

**Fishers of Men (Mexico)** has the wonderful opportunity to partner with many local churches, missionaries and other organizations through its Evangelistic Medical Mission Crusades. One such organization is Children of the Dump in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. During their second crusade with Children of the Dump earlier this year, the mission’s optometrist, Isabel, was able to examine people and give out 145 pairs of eyeglasses. However, an additional fourteen individuals needed special glasses for extreme vision problems. Children of the Dump director Mike Parker ordered those glasses through Isabel and is beginning to get them into the hands of those individuals waiting for their gift of sight.

“I put one of the glasses on a woman who told me she hadn’t been able to see for two years. She let out a scream for joy and danced around her home that has a dirt floor. Cried and hugged me, thanking me for being able to see again.”—*Mike Parker, Children of the Dump*

Fishers of Men accepts old prescription glasses. You can send them to: Fishers of Men, PO Box 352016, Toledo OH 43635.

### SOW, GROW, FLOURISH

**Cook Native American Ministries (Arizona)**, Suanne Ware-Diaz, executive director, reports, “We have 15 students entering the final year of their Commissioned Ruling Elder training. We expect to have about 50 students registered for winter classes in January at a classroom site near their new offices. We were able to celebrate our new theme of emerging efforts—SOW, GROW and FLOURISH—at an Open House gathering at our new offices in August. We were able to reconnect and strengthen bonds with their community and supportive friends.”

## NEW TRADE SKILL LEARNING CENTER

**Hosanna Industries (Pennsylvania)** dedicated its new Trade Skill Learning Center Oct. 21. Staff member Amanda Becker shares, "There is a need for vocational skill training and Hosanna is excited to consider our ability to meet the needs of at-risk young people and provide them with practical educational programs, a meaningful place to learn and grow, and hope for the future.

"We also recognize the need for a facility that will allow for teaching about missions, visioning, beginning a non-profit, becoming an entrepreneur, and how to be both efficient and effective. Additionally, this facility will provide a place for leaders and visionaries to gather and share ideas, and to collaborate regarding societal needs and potential solutions.

"The building that will house all of this is a two-story building with spaces for training in each of the construction trades. There is a classroom, lounge, wood shop, and large group instruction area."



*On the 2012 Crow's Nest Cruise of Boston harbor, supporters of Seafarer's Friend view ships as the Rev. Gail Avery, with microphone at window, describes the issues and struggles of seafarers' lives and how the mission helps them with their needs.*

## CROW'S NEST CRUISE

**Seafarer's Friend (Massachusetts)** welcomed friends and supporters on its Third Annual Crow's Nest Cruise in September, celebrating 185 years of service to seafarers. This year through August, they had visited 630 ships and had 5,097 contacts with seafarers, giving out 49 bibles, 256 ditty bags and 481 crosses.

## NEEDS

### SEWING FOR A LIVING

**Indian Community Fellowship (India)** operates a sewing center for local women to earn money to support their families. *Sewing machines are needed* in order to open a second sewing center. Rev. Philip Malakar reports, "Last year two graduate students (illiterate women) received sewing machines after their training, in the Learning Center. They are now practicing and earning too. Two ladies earned \$1.20 and \$0.80 cents last month respectively. I want to add this, that, these two ladies from other faiths, accepted Lord Jesus Christ as their personal savior during the course of learning stitching and learned how to READ and WRITE."

### PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers are still needed for a new roof for **Bread of Life Mission (Florida)**.

Prayers are still needed for the health of Nannie Castillo from **NACC (Philippines)**.

Pray for Tom Gossett of **Indian Trails (Arizona)**, recovering from hernia surgery.

Pray for the health of Charles Nyane, of **Word Alive (Ghana)**.

Pray for funds to buy a vehicle for the **Congregational Churches of Myanmar**.

Pray for the health of Julie Zaragoza of **Fishers of Men (Mexico)**, and for her 16 children.

**Pray for all of our missions and the work that they do every day.**

### Thank you for your support!

For more information on any of these missions, or to make a donation, contact Linda Miller at the NACCC office, 800-262-1620, ext. 1618.

**The Missionary Society, NACCC  
PO Box 288, Oak Creek WI 53154**

For a complete listing of NACCC

Mission Projects, please go to our Web site, [www.naccc.org](http://www.naccc.org), and click on "Missions."

**First Union Congregational Church**  
Quincy, IL

is looking for a full time **SENIOR MINISTER**

Come rekindle our spirit, grow our congregation and light over 180 candles on our next birthday cake.

If you deliver relevant, thought-provoking sermons, embrace the Congregational Way and appreciate an arts-oriented community, contact us.

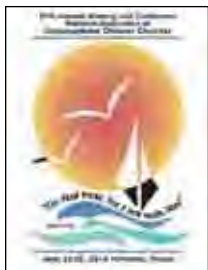
Send inquiries to [mikehulsen@gmail.com](mailto:mikehulsen@gmail.com)

[www.firstunionchurchquincy.com](http://www.firstunionchurchquincy.com)

# Along the Way

## News from the fellowship of churches

**ORLANDO ON OUR MINDS**—Made your vacation plans for June of 2013? Ready to meet with other Congregationalists for a time of fellowship and fun?



Are you looking forward to unique worship times that draw members of churches from across the country together to sing, pray, and hear God's word proclaimed? Is your church thinking about ideas, strategies, programs and other gifts that you can share with your sister churches? You can look forward to all this and more at the NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference June 22-25 in Orlando, Fla.

The young people of NAPF and HOPE will meet at the same time and in the same place as the NA meeting. Throughout the conference they will be joining the adults for many activities. This participation is a crucial step as our next generation of leaders is incorporated into the central event of the National Association—the Annual Meeting and Conference—and into the life of each local church.

The business meeting is important—we will be looking at the by-laws to support the new NA structure—but will take no more time than necessary. The Annual Meeting and Conference Planning Team is building in more time for fellowship, for sharing between churches—and for Disney World!

### Other highlights:

- Piedmont College Singers in concert
- Bible Lecture by the Rev. Dr. Donald Olsen of Plymouth Congregational Church, Wichita, Kan.
- Congregational Lecture by the Rev. Mark Jensen, formerly of North Congregational Church, Farmington Hills, Mich.

As hundreds of Congregationalists gather, we hope you will be there to take part in the renewal of the National Association, to share in the fellowship that is a hallmark of Congregationalism, and to join in the fun of Disney's magical wonderful World!

—**Helen Gierke**, for the Planning Team and the Host Committee

**ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING**—*First Congregational Church of Anaheim, Calif.*, drew approximately 800 people to Music Fest 2012 on Aug. 25, the church's third annual multicultural extravaganza (see "Celebrating Diversity," *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*, December 2011).



Jack Brown

**VIRGIN ENTHRONED**—*Gary Wertheimer*, professor of art and chair of the Olivet College Art Department, stands beside "The Virgin Enthroned," a painting (oil on canvas) by **Sara Anna Benedict** (1841–1919). The artist, one of Olivet's first three female graduates, was the daughter of **William Benedict**, second pastor of the First Congregational Church of Vermontville, Mich.

*Sara Benedict taught drawing and painting at Olivet from 1864 until 1868. Subsequently, she studied art in Chicago, New York City, and Paris.*

*The painting was part of a February exhibit at Olivet featuring the work of Michigan artists. It is part of the Vermontville First Congregational Church collection.*

"Each year gets better as we learn and improve from the previous years," pastor **Jim Schibsted** reported. "The planning went smoother and the volunteers really stepped up to the plate and delivered. Special thanks to Full Gospel Fellowship



*Musicians on stage at Anaheim's Multicultural Music Fest.*

of Praise, Iglesia de Dios and the Roque Center for helping the many volunteers from our church with this Music Fest. ... It was so good to see people from various churches working together to make this a very inspiring event as we reached out with God's love to our community."

Performers included the Anonymous Band, the 5 Star Band, L.E.D., Mariachi Regional mi Tierra, King Cyrus, Greater Grace, Katella High Dance Team, Driven to Praise, Hot Hula, and other artists.

**CELEBRATION AT THAFAMASI**—*Thafamasi Congregational Church*, South Africa, hosted more than 3,000 members of the *United Congregational Church of Southern Africa's amaDodona* (“Sons”) group for its annual provincial conference, Sept. 28-30.



Bhekumdeni Sibusiso Muthwa

*Pastors and attendees celebrate the restoration of the tombstones of the Revs. Samuel Marsh and Thomas Hawes.*

With no hotels or guest lodgings, the poor village provided hospitality to the large group by following Gospel examples—the widow’s mite, the anointing of Jesus’ feet with nard, the miracles of the loaves and fishes, and the water turned to wine at Cana—according to the **Rev. Scott Couper**, development manager for *Inanda Seminary*.

The conference program included rededication of the recently restored tombstones of two faith pioneers buried here—the **Revs. Samuel Marsh (1817-1853)** and **Thomas Hawes (1829-1897)**, one white from North America and one black from southern Africa, both of whom served *Thafamasi* faithfully. After a lecture on the histories of both evangelists and a discussion of how to better graft African spirituality to orthodox Christianity, all present marched to the cemetery, where clergy unveiled the painstakingly restored grave markers. The **Rev. Dr. Bonganjalo Goba**, who before retirement served both the North American and the southern African church, preached passionately about faith ancestors who sacrificed their lives to carry out God’s work and will.

Following the unveilings of the tombstones, *amaDodona* members dispersed over the countryside to preach, sing, and pray in local homes. “Indeed,” reported Couper, “the hills were alive with the sound of music’ that afternoon! In gathering, learning, and worshipping we are inspired to go out into the world to serve.”

**CONGREGATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP**—Students wishing to attend *Piedmont College, Demorest, Ga.*, who are active members of NACCC or UCC churches can qualify as Congregational Heritage Scholars, eligible for financial assistance up to one-third the amount of tuition. For further information, contact the **Rev. Ashley Cleere**, [acleere@piedmont.edu](mailto:acleere@piedmont.edu) or 706-778-3000.

**PRAYER IN THE AUTUMN AIR**—*First Congregational Church of Maywood, Ill.*, welcomed the fall with an outdoor service conducted by the **Rev. Elliot Wimbush** on the church lawn, followed by a delicious and colorful fiesta luncheon, Oct. 7.

“The weather forecast was for barely fifty degrees,” reported **Karen Skinner**, “but ... a chill in the air was not a deterrent to



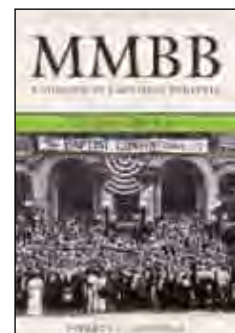
Karen Skinner

*The Rev. Elliot Wimbush teaches the children a lesson about the treasures of God’s creation.*

our robust family of worshipers! There is something energizing about praying in the midst of birds chirping, leaves rustling, and traffic whizzing by.”

**EMPLOYEE BENEFITS: NOT JUST FOR MINISTERS AND MISSIONARIES ANYMORE**—Historian **Everett C.**

**Goodwin** has written a book, *MMBB: A Pioneer in Employee Benefits—The First 100 Years* (Mercer University Press, \$31.50 at Amazon), relating how the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, created by the Northern Baptist Convention (now the American Baptist Churches USA), pioneered the delivery of retirement benefits. Goodwin traces how employee benefits evolved from a form of charity—provided when the need arose—to a self-sustaining fund paying regular benefits to provide a secure financial future. Today, MMBB has \$2.5 billion in assets and offers services to nearly 4,000 faith-based organizations (including Congregational churches) and 17,000 people.



**SPIRIT OF CARING**—The **Rev. Jerrold Jones**, senior pastor of *First Congregational Church of Greenville, Mich.*, will receive the 2013 Fred and Lina Meijer Spirit of Caring Award at the February 2013 Many Hearts One Mission Charity Ball in Greenville.

*Continued on p. 28*

## AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Perhaps one of the most valuable tools for dealing with church conflict is the non-anxious presence of one who holds no stake in the issue. Because a consultant is outside the congregational system, he or she can bring fresh insight to the situation without the weight of political, familial, historical, and friendship ties. Such ties heighten emotion, raise anxiety, dichotomize thought-processes, and make it very difficult to see the greater vision to which we all aspire.

Plan for change and manage it because change will happen, with or without you.



**THE REV. DR. DONALD P. OLSEN**, senior minister of Plymouth Congregational Church, Wichita, Kan., served the NACCC as associate executive secretary and dean of CFTS. He was trained in conflict consulting by the Alban Institute. Dr. Olsen also serves as president, Board of Directors, for Interfaith Ministries, Wichita.

## Along the Way

Continued from p. 27

Jones, the award's eighth recipient, "doesn't know the word 'no,'" said William Ham, the 2012 recipient. Jones has served the community through the Spectrum Health United Quality and Safety Committee, the Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness Coalition of Montcalm County, the Biomedical Ethics Committee, United Lifestyles, the North Kent Guidance Service Advisory Committee, and the Greenville Public Schools Health Advisory. Further, in the past six years, Jones has helped raise more than \$5 million to build and improve the local hospital.



Rev. Jerrold Jones

The award is given annually to "an individual who has demonstrated a remarkable and dedicated commitment to improving the quality of life for the people in our community now and for future generations."

**RECORD ENROLLMENT AT OLIVET**—With a record 504 new students enrolled for the fall semester, Olivet College's total undergraduate enrollment stands at an all-time high 1,156—the largest student body total in the college's 168-year history.

"A record incoming class on the heels of our largest graduating class is a strong testament to the power and quality of the learning and living experience students are having here at Olivet College," said President **Steven M. Corey**, Ph.D.

"We have over 200 students majoring in the sciences, over 150 in criminal justice, and nearly 100 in the insurance program," said **Maria Davis**, Ph.D., provost and dean of the college.

Olivet College instills in students the value of Education for Individual and Social Responsibility. Students not only develop the knowledge and skills to become professionally and economically successful, they learn that with success comes responsibility to make a positive difference in the world.

For more information, or to apply to Olivet College, visit [olivetcollege.edu](http://olivetcollege.edu).

**PANES-TAKING PROCESS**—First Congregational Church of Searsport, Maine, has begun restoration of its hundred-year-old stained glass windows. Each window will be



Arlin Larson

disassembled, cleaned, and re-leaded by Stained Glass Resources of Hampden, Mass., and new plate glass protective covers will be installed. The 14 stained glass windows were installed at the beginning of the 20th century along with curved pews, embossed tin walls and ceiling, and a 1906 Lane 21-rank mechanical organ, in a remodeling that changed the sanctuary from its original plain Puritan look to the current Victorian style.

**ONE FROM TWO**—Second Congregational Church of Beloit, Wis., formally merged with First Presbyterian of Beloit on Sunday, Oct. 28, to become the *United Church of Beloit*. The new church affiliated with the Wisconsin Congregational Association and the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches and is a member of the Milwaukee Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church USA.



# The Uncool Church

by Rachel Held Evans

People sometimes assume that because I'm a progressive 30-year-old who enjoys Mumford and Sons and has no children, I must want a super-hip church—you know, the kind that's called "Thrive" or "Be" and which boasts "an awesome worship experience," a fair-trade coffee bar, its own iPhone app, and a pastor who looks like a Jonas Brother.

While none of these features are inherently wrong, these days I find myself longing for a church with a cool factor of about zero.

That's right: *I want a church that includes fussy kids, old liturgy, bad sound, weird congregants, and ... brace yourself ... painfully amateur "special music" now and then.*

Why?

Well, for one thing, when the gospel story is accompanied by a fog machine and light show, I always get this creeped-out feeling like someone's trying to sell me something. It's as though we're all compensating for the fact that Christianity's not good enough to stand on its own, so we're adding snacks.

But more importantly, I want to be part of an uncool church because I want to be part of a community that shares the reputation of Jesus; and like it or not, Jesus' favorite people in the world were not cool. They were mostly sinners, misfits, outcasts, weirdoes, poor people, sick people, and crazy people.

Cool congregations can get so wrapped up in the "performance" of church that they forget to actually be the church—a phenomenon painfully illustrated by the experience of a child with cerebral palsy who was escorted from the Easter service at a North Carolina church for being a "distraction."

Really?

It seems to me that this congregation was distracted long before this little boy showed up! In their self-proclaimed quest for "an explosive, phenomenal movement of God—something you have to see to believe," they missed Jesus when he was right under their noses.

Was the paralytic man lowered from the rooftop in the middle of Jesus' sermon a distraction?

Was the Canaanite woman who harassed Jesus and his disciples about healing her daughter a distraction?

Were the blind men from Jericho who annoyed the crowd with their relentless cries a distraction?

Jesus didn't think so. In fact, he seemed to think that they were the point.

Jesus taught us that when we throw a banquet or a party, our invitation list should include "the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind."

So why do our church marketing teams target the young, the hip, the healthy, and the resourced?

We have one place for the uncool people (our ministries) and another place for the cool people (our church services). When we actually bump into one another, things can get awkward, so we try to avoid it.

We're all guilty of thinking we're too cool for the least of these. Our elitism shows up when we prevent others from contributing art and music because we deem it unworthy of glorifying God, or when we scoot our family an extra foot or two down the pew when the guy with Asperger's sits down.

Having helped start a church, I remember hoping that our hip guests wouldn't be turned off by our less-than-hip guests. For a second I forgot that in church, of all places, those distinctions should disappear.

*Some of us wear our brokenness on the inside, others on the outside. But we're all broken.*

We're all uncool.

We're all in need of a Savior.

So let's cut the crap, pull the plug, and have us some distracting church services ... the kind where Jesus would fit right in.

*Adapted and reprinted, with permission, from the blog of Rachel Held Evans, at [rachelheldevans.com/blessed-are-the-uncool](http://rachelheldevans.com/blessed-are-the-uncool).*



RACHEL HELD EVANS is a blogger and award-winning author of two books: *Evolving in Monkey Town* (Zondervan, 2010) and *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* (Thomas Nelson, 2012). She describes herself as a skeptic, a creative, and a follower of Jesus. She lives with her husband Dan, in Dayton, Tenn.

# Necrology

## Onnalee (Lee) Ahrens

Onnalee J. Ahrens, 83, Warren, Mich., died Sept. 13. *A full obituary notice, with photo, will be published in our March 2013 issue.*

## Kathleen Steece

Kathleen Nims Dole Steece, 87, died Oct. 12 in Shelburne, Mass. Kathleen was a 1948 graduate of Mount Holyoke College and attended Union Theological Seminary in New York. She was director of Christian Education at First Congregational Church, Concord, N.H., 1948-1949. She married Arvel M. Steece in 1949 and shared in his ministry to Congregational churches in New England and the Midwest.



She sang with the Mount Holyoke College Choir and Glee Club, the Bennington Chorale, and the Greater Keene Pops Choir; and she led children's choirs and sang in church choirs where her husband was the minister.

Kathleen received her elementary school teacher certification at Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich., and taught elementary school in Bennington, Vt., for seven years. She was a legal secretary in Keene, N.H., for 10 years.

She assisted her husband in his historical research. She was admired for her excellent quilting and knitting skills, was an avid Red Sox fan, and loved jigsaw puzzles and the color purple.

The Rev. Irven A. Gammon, a close friend, writes, "Her joy was grounded deep within her heart and bubbled out constantly through her words of compassion and nurture. Kathleen was also very astute to the work of ministry serving alongside Arvel for over 60 years. ... Kathleen was a Saint to many of us and is dearly missed."

She is survived by her husband, Arvel; and by three sons, three sisters, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Fred and Hazel Dole Music Fund of the First Congregational Church of Shelburne, c/o Cynthia Smith, 28 Reynolds Road, Shelburne MA 01370.

## Mary Susan (Sue) Broadwell

Mary Susan Broadwell, 69, passed away Oct. 25, in Michigan, after a brief course of illness.



Sue was active for 45 years in North Congregational Church, Farmington Hills, Mich., where she served on many committees and was director of Religious Education for several years. She attended National Association meetings, often as a delegate, over a 27-year period. She served on the NA Nominating Committee and participated in hosting the 1995 NA meeting in Detroit. She served as moderator of the Michigan Conference.

She went on a mission trip to Misión Mazahua and took part in the Southeast Michigan Association's Hurricane Katrina rebuild project. She was a supporter of Olivet College and many other groups.

"She almost never said no, when asked to serve or help," according to the Rev. Mark Jensen, a longtime friend. "She was loved by her family, her church and all those who served with her in any task."

She is survived by her husband, Ed, by three children and four grandchildren, and by many cousins. Memorial contributions may be directed to North Congregational Church.

Need help getting to NAPF or HOPE?

**APPLY NOW!**

**SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE**

for those wishing to attend the 2013 NAPF/HOPE Conference in Orlando (June 22-26) but needing financial assistance to make the dream happen!

Go to [naccc.org](http://naccc.org) for information on available scholarships and an application form.

**Scholarship Application  
Deadline  
February 1, 2013**

Sincerely The Commission on Youth Ministries

**DON'T MISS OUT** on the opportunity of participating in NAPF/HOPE 2013. **ACT NOW!**

# Pastorates and Pulpits

## RECENT CALLS

First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa, Wis., has called the Rev. William Trump as senior minister.

Tipton Community Congregational Church, Tipton, Mich., has called the Rev. J. Eric Hickman as senior minister.

University Congregational Church, Wichita, Kan., has called the Rev. Dr. Robin McGonigle as senior minister.

First Congregational Church of Mansfield, Ohio, has called the Rev. Bruce Haapalainen as senior minister.

First Congregational Church of Breckenridge, Mich., has called Margaret Wallin as senior minister.

New Faith Fellowship of Orange County C.C., Orange, Calif., has called Thomas Fraker as senior minister.

## ORDINATIONS

Congregational Church of the Valley, Chandler, Ariz., ordained the Rev. Victor Hardy for ministry, Sept. 16, 2012.

Berkshire Community Church, Richmond, Mass., ordained the Rev. Nancy Lois for ministry, with concurrence of a vicinage council, Oct. 14, 2012.

## IN SEARCH

### SENIOR MINISTERS

Baleville Congregational Christian Church  
*Newton, N.J.*

Berkshire Community Church  
*Pittsfield, Mass.*

Britton Congregation Christian Church  
*Britton, Mich.*

Carmel Union Congregational Church  
*Carmel, Maine*

Community of Faith and Fellowship  
*Limerick, Maine*

Congregational Church of the Chimes  
*Sherman Oaks, Calif.*

First Church of Squantum  
*Squantum, Mass.*

First Congregational Church of Kenosha  
*Kenosha, Wis.*

First Congregational Church  
*Otsego, Mich.*

First Congregational Community Church  
*Roscoe, Ill.*

First Union Congregational Church  
*Quincy, Ill.*

Lakewood Village Community Church  
*Long Beach, Calif.*

Plymouth Congregational Church  
*Lansing, Mich.*

St. Luke's Reformed Church  
*Salisbury, N.C.*

## ASSISTANT MINISTER

West Gorham Union Church  
*Gorham, Maine*

## PART-TIME MINISTERS

Congregational Christian Fellowship  
Church, *Winchester, Va.*

Second Congregational Church  
*Jewett City, Conn.*

## DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

First Congregational Church  
*Kingston, N.H.*

# Calendar

February 22-23

“Religion and the Liberal Arts”  
Conference 2013—*Piedmont College*

Call 706-778-8500, ext. 1174, or go to [piedmont.edu/RC](http://piedmont.edu/RC).

April 8-11, 2013

Annual Ministers Convocation—*Mundelein, Illinois*

Contact Marie Steele, [msteele@nacc.org](mailto:msteele@nacc.org)  
or 800-262-1620, ext. 1614.

## SAVE THE DATE!

June 20-27, 2013

### Short-term Mission Experience

—*Misión Mazahua, Mexico.*

Contact Jack Brown, [pilgrim\\_pastor@hotmail.com](mailto:pilgrim_pastor@hotmail.com) or 269-749-2631

June 22-25, 2013

### NACCC 59th Annual

Meeting and Conference—*Orlando, Florida*

[nacc.org/yearbook/annualmeeting\\_2013.aspx](http://nacc.org/yearbook/annualmeeting_2013.aspx)

July 29-Aug. 2, 2013

### International Congregational

Fellowship Conference—*London, UK.*

[intercong.org/conference-information/the-2013-conference/](http://intercong.org/conference-information/the-2013-conference/)