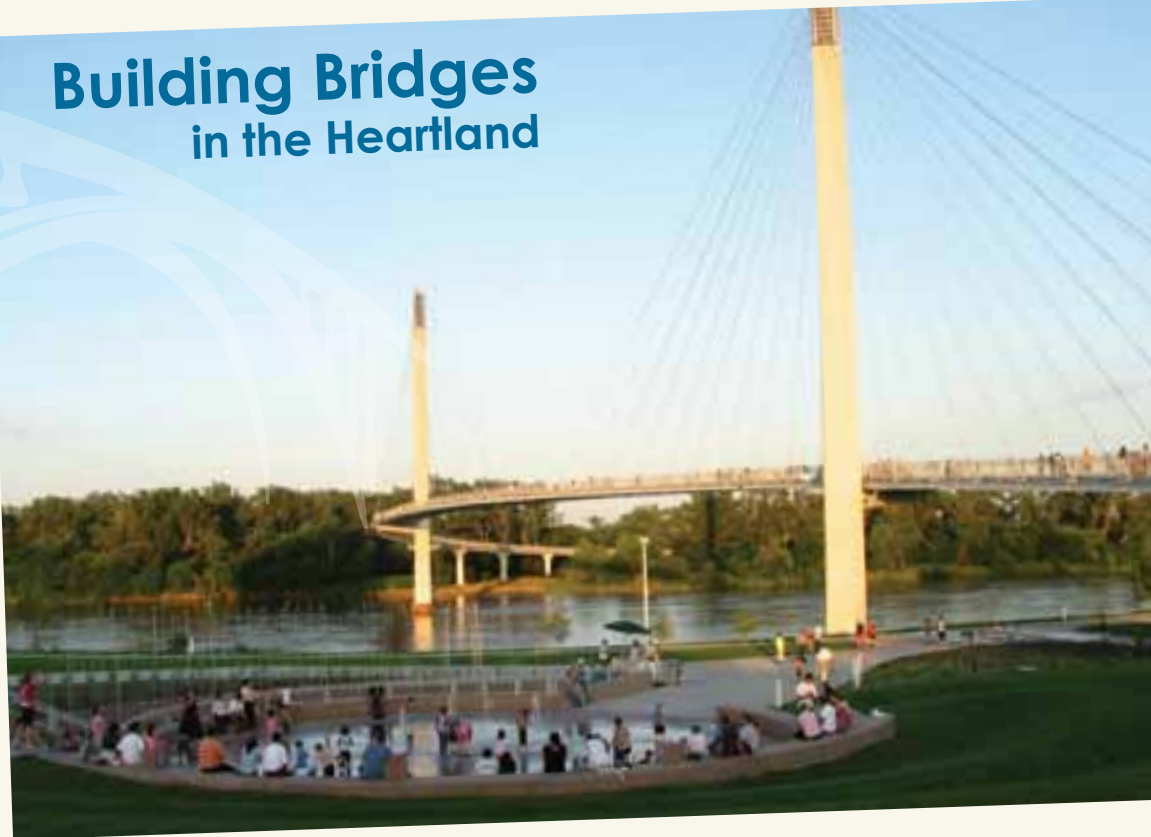


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The CONGREGATIONALIST

Magazine of the Congregational Way

Vol. 165/No. 2

Congregationalist.org

June 2013



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WHAT'S
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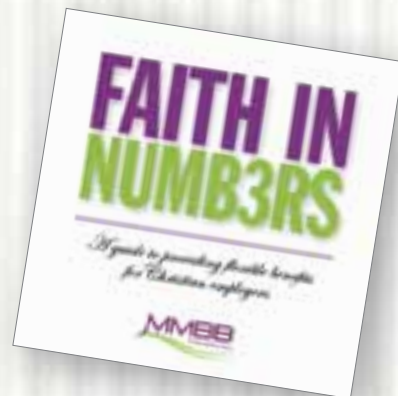
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The
CONGREGATIONALIST
Magazine of the Congregational Way

Vol. 165/No. 2

June 2013



ON THE COVER:

The Rev. Dr. Daniel Harrell, right, senior minister at Colonial Church of Edina, Minn., presents a \$3,000 bonus check to Mike and Leah Driscoll of Twin Cities Mobile Market, recipients of a "Protégé" grant in the church's Innové program. The program is designed to encourage new social change ideas or initiatives. Six visionary projects, including Twin Cities Mobile Market, received \$228,000 of grant funding in an awards ceremony April 21 in Edina. See pp. 14-19.

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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.

Anchors aweigh!

The year 2020 will be the 400th since the Pilgrims arrived in New England. Our nation will likely mark this anniversary with some combination of pride in American freedom and lingering discomfort with Europeans' displacement of indigenous peoples.

We, who derive from the Separatists of Scrooby, will honor four centuries of Congregationalism in America. The media will pay brief attention to the anniversary of the Plymouth landing and may largely ignore that which matters most to us; but we have an opportunity to celebrate our own heritage deeply and at length.

No plans for the observance are far advanced; so "continuing Congregationalists" can be the first climbers on the bandwagon, by starting to plan now. We might even,

thereby, bring the Congregational Way more plainly into public view.

Why not make the celebration into a joyous way to send our tradition into the future? Pride in our Pilgrim heritage could become a trap, but thoughtful planning now can help prepare the way for a new Congregational witness to the world.



LARRY SOMMERS, *Editor*

Necrology

Bernice Gamage

Bernice Rae Gamage, 94, died at her home in Puyallup, Wash., April 22.

We hope to present a full obituary notice of this beloved and noteworthy Congregationalist in our September 2013 issue.

Edith Winter

The Rev. Edith Margaret Winter, 79, passed away May 1 in Holland, Mich. A graduate of Monmouth College in Illinois, she moved to Saugatuck, Mich., in 1956 and taught school until 1960, when she married Dale Winter and became a stay-at-home mom raising their three sons.

She later graduated from Western Theological Seminary, and she was ordained July 17, 1988, by First Congregational Church, Saugatuck. She served there as interim pastor before answering a 1989 call to be senior pastor at First Congregational Church



of Grand Junction, where she served until her retirement in May 2011.

Edie, as she was warmly known in Michigan and around the nation, was a member of the NACCC Communications Commission from 1975 to 1982 and served as editor of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* for three issues during a key transitional period in 1980. She served on the NA Executive Committee from 1982 to 1986. She also held a succession of responsible posts in the Michigan Conference, Western Michigan Association, and West-Central Women's Association.

"A Swiss Army knife may sound like a strange metaphor and an unusual description, but it fits the Reverend Edith Winter," said the Rev. Jerrold Jones of Greenfield, Mich., at her May 4 funeral service. "She truly was a 'Swiss Army knife kind of woman.' She was a humble servant, a talented leader, a persistent worker and a resilient spirit who was always prepared and profoundly caring."

She is survived by her husband, Dale; her sons, Bruce, William, and Robert; eight grandchildren, and other relatives.

Memorial gifts may be given to the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, First Congregational Church of Saugatuck, Hospice House of Holland, or Renew Therapeutic Riding Center of Holland.



Surfer's Ed

“Happy Birthday, you’re sixteen now! You’re a responsible kid. Here are the keys. Just be careful and don’t hit anything”—said NO parent, ever.

You know what else I’ve never heard a parent say? “Cars are too dangerous for you. You should walk, or ride the bus. If you really need to get somewhere fast, just ask me. I’ll drop everything and come give you a lift.”

No, what most parents say is, “Take Driver’s Ed. Then we’ll talk.”

Is the Information Highway so different from our physical streets and roads? Our kids can suffer, or cause, serious harm—yet surfing the Internet is no longer optional for a typical adult. If we expect our kids to take Driver’s Ed, why not “Surfer’s Ed”? Imagine a class where they can learn to surf the Net safely, and prove they are worthy of the responsibility.

The teens in my church are already excited about the idea. So are the parents. Teens are aching for a chance to prove they can do this, and parents are aching just as deeply to keep their kids safe. Cyber-bullying, stalking, identity theft, sexting, and the list goes on. One parent asked me, “My daughter has to do a research paper. Can you teach her how to type search requests on Google so the results won’t include porn?”



Kids are intellectually aware of all the downsides, but because they are teenagers—and therefore both brilliant *and* invulnerable—they’re much more interested in the upsides. How do I get my work to rank on Google or YouTube? How can I get more followers? How do I build a portfolio that will impress interviewers?

Here’s our plan so far: Kids will agree to take a class covering basic security, safety, and search engine optimization. Upon successful completion of a written exam, they will receive a “Surfer’s Permit.” In return, parents agree to provide limited, supervised access to the Internet. Upon successful completion of a probationary period, the kids will receive a “Surfer’s License,” earning them adult-level access.

(Just because you have a license, doesn’t mean you get to do whatever you want. *Not-under-my-roof rules* still apply: “Don’t grumble at me. If you want to be an independent adult, get a job, get a place, and pay your own bills.”)

If the above plan seems a bit sparse, that’s because you are an astute reader. It’s really just the seed of an idea. We need three things to make it grow:

1. Adults and teens with tech experience, willing to help write the curriculum.
2. Pastors and youth group leaders, willing to play-test the class in real life.
3. Parents willing to cut a daring deal with their kids. “Show me a license; I’ll show you the keys.” (Or rather, the keyboard!)

Who’s in? Contact me at rob@revsmilez.com to get involved. On completion, all curriculum will be shared publicly, for free, through the NA Web site, nacc.org.



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 or write Rev. Rob Brink, P.O. Box 633, Saugatuck, MI 49453.

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Let us add you to our *CONGREGATIONALIST* e-mail list. Each quarter, you’ll receive a message previewing our new issue—and occasionally, we may send an urgent announcement of major news that *just won’t keep*.

E-mail Courtney Schultz at the NACCC office, cschultz@nacc.org, from the e-mail account you want us to use, and put “Congregationalist E-blast” in the subject line.

Thanks and blessings,

Larry Sommers, *Editor*

The Cambridge Platform

One important document of the Puritan Revolution, also known as the English Civil War, was the Westminster Confession, the result of a meeting of Puritan pastors in Westminster, England, that began in 1643. ...

However, the Confession was basically a Presbyterian document. Congregationalists agreed with the theology of the Confession, except for its ecclesiology, its teachings about church government. So, beginning in 1646 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a synod of New England Congregationalist pastors put out a revision of the Westminster Confession that came to be known as the Cambridge Platform, or as the Platform of Church Discipline.

[T]he Platform has some very good things to say about what Congregationalism is. For one thing, the document maintains that the form of church government has not been left up to human decision These Puritan divines were firmly convinced that Congregational polity was God's plan for His Church: "The parts of church government are all of them exactly described in the Word of God, being parts or means of instituted worship according to the Second Commandment, and therefore to continue one and the same unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, until He shall deliver it up unto God, even the Father. So that it is not left in the power of men, officers, churches, or any state in the world to add or diminish or alter anything in the least measure therein."

What is the Church? The Platform tells us, giving us a definition of the catholic, or universal, Church, which includes

**A COMPANY OF SAINTS BY CALLING,
UNITED BY A HOLY COVENANT FOR PUBLIC
WORSHIP AND MUTUAL EDIFICATION IN
THE FELLOWSHIP OF JESUS**

all the saints in heaven and on earth. The definition includes the statement, "We deny a universal visible Church." In other words, no earthly organization has the right to call itself the one and only Church

"The catholic Church is the whole company of those that are elected, redeemed, and in time effectually called from the state of sin and death unto a state of grace and [unto] salvation in Jesus Christ. This Church is either triumphant, or militant: triumphant, the number of them who are glorified in heaven; militant, the number of them who are conflicting with their enemies upon earth. This Militant Church is to be considered as invisible and visible: invisible in respect of their relation wherein they stand to Christ, as a body unto the Head, being united unto Him by the Spirit of God and faith in their hearts; visible, in respect of the profession of their faith, in their persons, and in particular churches. ... A Congregational church is by the institution of Christ a part of the Militant visible Church, consisting of a company of saints by calling, united into one body by a holy covenant for the public worship of God and the mutual edification one of another in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus."

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

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)



Building The New NACCC

One year ago, the Rev. Jim Owens reported on the work of the NACCC Transition Team in implementing the Strategic Plan (see *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*, June 2012, pp. 6-9). The Transition Team's vision for the Plan's three components—Service Delivery, Organizational Restructuring, and Year Round Delegates—was summarized in the schematic diagram reprinted here, at left.

Since getting the green light at last year's Annual Meeting, NACCC leaders have been busy with the first phase of active implementation.

**The New NA – Bringing together
Congregational Christian churches for
mutual care and outreach to our world
in the name of Jesus Christ**



Leadership Council

Moderator Neil Hunt reports that the newly-formed Leadership Council has been meeting by conference call during the past year.

“We are working on doing a new thing with our meetings as we try to focus more on the future and where we want to be, rather than just viewing where we have been and what we have done.” So the council is developing the “vision” component that is its main emphasis in the Strategic Plan, as the Executive Committee plans for the step-by-step handover of decision authority to the Leadership Council and Board of Directors.

Ministry Councils

Meanwhile, at the operational level, the three new ministry councils have been meeting regularly and taking action in their functional areas of responsibility.

The Vitality Council has created eight task teams. The Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies Team is fully staffed and operating, with a smooth transition from its previous status as a division. Other teams will tackle Annual Meeting receptions, seminars, and workshops; Congregational



Churches, represented by Annual Meeting Delegates, elect three Ministry Councils with task teams that do the work of the association, using funds and resources overseen by an elected Board of Directors, with vision and priorities articulated through an elected Leadership Council.



identity; Center for Congregational Leadership seminars; the annual Ministers' Convocation; the Lay Ministry Training Program; and other service delivery matters. The council will present two workshops at the Orlando Annual Meeting and Conference: "Vitality Council 101," which will introduce the council's work, emphasizing the role of CFTS; and "Giving Care to the Caregivers," on how churches can support those in the role of caregiver.

The Growth Council has identified and created purpose statements for four main areas of responsibility—New Churches, Technology, Worship, and Youth—and has created job descriptions for the task team members needed and begun the recruiting process. In addition, the council has overseen the completion of financial commitments to three churches sponsored by the former Congregational Church Development division. The council will conduct a "Growth Council 101" workshop in Orlando and support seven other workshops on a wide variety of growth-related topics.

The Mission and Outreach Council has seamlessly taken over supervision of the NACCC Missions program, identifying and drafting job descriptions for four task teams covering Micro Finance; Mission Information Updates; Regional, State, and Church Communication; and the work of the former World Christian Relations commission. The council will also present a "Mission and Outreach Council 101" workshop and sponsor a mini-mission project at the Orlando meeting.

Each of the Ministry Councils has also dealt with its own internal organizational matters and budgeting for its functional area for the 2013-14 fiscal year.

Service Delivery

The new, tiered Service Delivery model, shown in the upper right corner of the schematic, is being implemented piece by piece, with progress in actually providing service through all three tiers—Web-linked information, conferences, and advisors.

Year Round Delegates

By mid-May, 182 member churches had designated Year Round Delegates.



Communication with YRDs has been established and carried on through a standard, branded e-mail format known as "YRD Link." Between April 25, 2012, and March 7, 2013, ten YRD Link e-mails were sent out, with useful information on the Year Round Delegate program itself and a variety of NACCC events and services. At the coming Annual Meeting and Conference in Orlando, the YRD Team will conduct a Question-and-Answer session for all Year Round Delegates in attendance.

Much remains to be done: Developing a general directory of services available through the three tiers; getting timely and effective feedback from the churches to NACCC leaders through the Year Round Delegates; and recruiting new members for the ministry councils' task teams—to name a few obvious needs.

But it's clear that in the year since the 2012 Annual Meeting, a very active National Association has begun the energetic execution of its Strategic Plan.

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“GOD IS THE SINGER, LIFE IS THE SONG”

Wichita's Fifth Annual “Word & Note” features Willimon and Fedak

by Don Olsen

Methodist bishop William Willimon and composer Alfred Fedak headlined the fifth “Word & Note” conference Jan. 18-20 at Plymouth Congregational Church, Wichita, Kan. Willimon spoke on “The Significance of Jesus for Today.” Fedak played the organ as two of his works were performed—a choral requiem, and a new hymn written by Fedak and lyricist Mary Louise Bringle.

WORD

Willimon spoke four times over the weekend, delivering three lectures and the church’s Sunday morning sermon. In the lectures, he raised the question “What is God Like?” and answered it with three parables from Luke:

- ***The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:4-7)***—“Which one of you, shepherds,” Willimon asked, echoing Jesus, “would not leave the 99 and go beat the bushes for that one lost sheep? ... To which your friends would say; ‘The 99 you left are now about 60 because you abandoned them to look for that one sheep.’ Now, which one of you shepherds would not do that?”
- ***The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)***—“Which woman among you,” he asked, “would not pull all your furniture out of the house and put it in the front yard, rip up the carpet ... until you found the coin [that you had lost]. Which one of you would not run out into the street and say to your neighbor, ‘Hey, I found my quarter, it was lost, come celebrate with me.’ Now, which one of you would not do that?”

- ***The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)***—“Which one of you fathers,” asked Willimon, “having two sons, the younger son says, ‘Dad, drop dead, put the will into effect’—would you not do just that—Give everything to your youngest son, who had no claim on the inheritance in the first place, but takes all your money, goes out and blows it all on booze and loose women; then he comes dragging back home dressed in rags—which one of you would not say, ‘Okay, Harold, you wanted a party, I will show you a party! Come in here!’ Now, which one of you would not do that?”

Willimon’s point was: No sensible person would behave that way while sheep-farming, looking for a lost coin, waiting for a lost boy. These stories are not about us; they are about God. God is the seeking shepherd. God is the relentlessly searching woman. God is the father that throws a party to welcome back a prodigal.

These are stories about God. These stories are where we come to a crossroads about how we think about God.

“We tend to think about a God who is distant,” said Willimon. Our description of God is vague, indescribable, indefinable; God is up there, we are down here; religion is this search, this groping for God.

But in these parables we see a different God. Jesus renders a God who is busy reaching out toward us—a God actively engaged with God’s creation.

“What if that is the God we’ve got?” asked Willimon.



William Willimon



Al Fedak

In Sunday’s sermon, he told of conducting a Bible study in Matthew’s gospel. His students had reached the 20th chapter, where Jesus tells of laborers in a vineyard. In Willimon’s paraphrase:

“A farmer has some grapes to be harvested in his vineyard. He goes out early in the morning to hire some laborers. He says to them, ‘Come with me to work in my vineyard and I’ll pay you what’s right.’ And they go to work. And that ought to be the end of the story, but the story continues.

“Mid-morning the farmer is back downtown, he sees some people who haven’t been hired and says, ‘Come work with me in my vineyard, I’ll pay you what’s right.’ At noon, he’s back downtown hiring more workers. At mid-afternoon, he hires more workers. One hour before quitting time, you can imagine who’s down at the unemployment office one hour before quitting time—the people that nobody wants to work at their business, and he hires these people saying, ‘Come on, work for me.’

“At the end of the day, he pays everyone the same wage. There is grumbling. The farmer says, ‘Hey, it’s my vineyard, I can run it anyway I want to. Why are you envious because I am gracious?’”

When Willimon asked his students what impressed them about this parable, one student remarked that the owner is never on the farm—that most of the owner’s efforts are in getting people to work on the farm!

“The owner just won’t rest until everyone in town is working in the vineyard,” said Willimon. God wants everyone working in the vineyard.

“Jesus renders a God who seeks, reaches, and saves; that active God, who says not only ‘I love you’—which you might expect God to say—but here’s a God who is love in action, love moving toward us,” said Willimon.

“I want you to think of salvation not as a program that we get into to be right with God—but as a name for all of God’s activity!”

NOTE

The weekend’s music featured composer and musician Alfred V. Fedak. Fedak has more than 200 choral and organ works in print, and more than 100 of his hymns are included in hymnals of various denominations.

Plymouth commissioned a hymn from Fedak for this year’s Word & Note. He chose Mary Louise Bringle to write

the text, and the team created “God is the Poet,” which premiered during the weekend’s Sunday worship:

GOD IS THE POET

*God is the poet, Word of creation,
conjuring wonders and waking the dawn,
noting and naming breathtaking beauty:
God is the singer and life is the song.*

*New fashioned creatures, called into being,
rise up exulting in joy and surprise.
Summoned from mystery, we join their singing,
opening our lips as we open our eyes.*

Saturday evening’s concert featured Kansas’ premier choral group, the Wichita Chamber Chorale under the direction of Dr. Mark W. Bartel, director of choral music at Friends University, Wichita. The chorale performed Fedak’s *For Us the Living: A Requiem* with an eight-member orchestra plus Fedak at the organ.

The title of the piece is drawn from Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, which directs us to honor those who have gone before us by dedicating ourselves to their unfinished work.

Plymouth’s church covenant states: “Believing in Jesus Christ, the Interpreter of God to humankind, we accept his teachings as the guiding principles of our lives and consecrate ourselves and our church to their fulfillment.”

Willimon found Jesus’ significance for today as one who continually interprets God to us; who challenges what we believe we know, persistently nudging us to “fathom worlds beyond our knowing,” as the new Bringle/Fedak hymn says.

Word & Note brings nationally known scholars, teachers, and preachers who raise provocative questions about life and faith to challenge our thinking, open our minds, and renew our hearts. Previous events featured Philip Gully and James Mulholland, Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, Barbara Brown Taylor, and John Shelby Spong.

*From our creation, music enchants us,
moving our spirits to seek and to learn,
till grace-filled journeys end in beginning:
dying we rise, and to mystery, return.*

*God, grant us wisdom, formed in your image,
poets, composers, in all that we do:
help us to fathom worlds past our knowing.
May our creating be worthy of you.*



Amy-Jill Levine



Mainstreet Brass

Next year’s Word & Note will feature Amy-Jill Levine, professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School (divinity.vanderbilt.edu/people/bio/amy-jill-levine), and the Mainstreet Brass Quintet (mainstreetbrass.com), Feb. 7-9 in Wichita.



THE REV. DR. DONALD OLSEN is senior minister of Plymouth Congregational Church, Wichita, Kan. He has served churches in Minnesota, New York, and Michigan, and served as an executive staff member of the NACCC from 1998 through 2007. Don is a graduate of Bethel College, Arden Hills, Minn.; United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities; and Chicago Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Penny, enjoy outdoor activities and spending time with their four children and three grandchildren.



HOW (AND WHY) TO DO EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS

by Barry W. Szymanski

A church is an organization of people. Even though organized as a congregation with Jesus as its head, it operates with individuals: People minister to one another. A church may have only one part-time employee, who may be the sole ordained minister, plus a number of volunteers. Or a church may have many ordained ministers, a large paid office staff, paid deacons, several maintenance employees, and countless volunteers.

Who should be evaluated? Should anyone be evaluated? Should only paid individuals be evaluated? Although a church ought to have ways to encourage the best work from its ordained ministers and from its lay volunteers, *this article will focus only on the evaluation of paid, non-clergy, employees.*

Then there is the question of who does the evaluating. Does the minister have the task? Is it the job of a personnel committee? But do the committee's members share in day-to-day interaction with the paid day staff?

Those entrusted with the duty of evaluating employees, are, at least in that sense, supervisors. It may be the council, or the board, or a president, or a moderator, or the minister authorized to so act, or a committee appointed to perform the task of management.

FACING UP TO THE TASK

If employees sometimes fear evaluations, it's also true that many supervisors reluctantly go through an evaluation

exercise only because they are required to do so. Some delay evaluations for weeks and months, skip them altogether, or give a cursory evaluation. If the evaluator is a friend of the person being evaluated, he or she will want to avoid friction. Some supervisors feel that evaluations are too subjective, take too much time, create too much stress or hard feelings—or are, simply, too much work to prepare.

Yet there is great value in evaluations. The focus of any evaluation must be based on the congregation's written covenant and mission statement. Who does the church serve? Who are its customers?

Congregations engage employees to provide services required by their covenant and mission. Employees may be administrators, building superintendents, musicians, computer technicians, and on and on. All of these individuals, in working, interact with other employees, church members, and members of the wider public. So a supervisor cannot narrowly look only to how an employee treats members, but must consider how the employee works with all customers.

CUSTOMERS EVERYWHERE

Consider an emergency response unit that employs firefighters, emergency medical technicians, dispatchers, etc. An EMT's customers are not limited to patients, for her customers include the driver on the ambulance. If she is kind toward her patients, but rude to her driver, she is not accomplishing her mission to the department. A dispatcher may be tolerant toward a phone

caller, but impatient when on the radio to the EMTs. A first responder may be good-natured with persons at an accident scene, but give a cold shoulder to a police officer who also arrives to assist.

The point: A worker's customers include *everyone* with whom he or she comes in contact—not just the direct recipients of services.

Every single employee has customers, and every customer must be properly served. We must all be committed to each other in order to fulfill our covenant, our mission, and accomplish our goals. Therefore every worker's evaluation should address the totality of contacts between that person and all of his or her customers.

A WORKER'S CUSTOMERS INCLUDE EVERYONE WITH WHOM HE OR SHE COMES IN CONTACT.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

A successful evaluation takes place when worker and supervisor discuss the worker's role in the covenant and mission of the church. If the evaluation is mission- and customer-based, both parties ought to appreciate the written documentation and constructive feedback addressing performance, potentialities, occurrences, and needs.

Supervisors who prepare practical evaluations have found that staff members function better and accomplish more when they know their work will be reviewed and they will be invited to comment. The evaluation should be an affirming discussion of the strengths of the employee, while still talking about any needed improvements. The ultimate purpose is a candid, face-to-face discussion that fosters rapport and cooperation in meeting the church's mission.

Evaluations customarily concentrate on a list of subjects such as:

- judgment
- cooperation
- job knowledge
- attendance
- ability to learn
- attitude toward fellow employees and toward customers
- quality and quantity of work
- care of premises and equipment
- skill
- appearance
- initiative
- dependability

Some of these, such as attendance, can be quantified; but other traits, like initiative, are more abstract and thus more difficult to assess.

How to Do It

How do you evaluate an employee and his or her interaction with customers? One way is to simply check the box on a pre-printed form. However, as an attorney I have seen the "check-the-box" form hinder management in disciplinary or termination matters—and contribute to losing at arbitrations and lawsuits. This is one reason I recommend writing a sentence or paragraph under a heading, rather than using a checkbox.

Another reason to avoid check-the-box evaluation forms is that you are not giving enough feedback to motivated employees who may feel that your evaluation does not help them grow personally or professionally.

The best way to organize an evaluation is to use the list above, or to purchase an existing evaluation form and then follow its headings. After reviewing what you deem important—such as judgment or cooperation—write your evaluation in a sentence or paragraph under that heading. This is a better method than merely filing in stock answers or checking a box on a grading system. Employees come to an evaluation meeting wanting to know how they are doing. Every supervisor's job is to honestly respond to that essential question, whether the employee asks it directly or not.

The goal of the meeting is open and honest discussion.

Supervisors should focus on positive strengths; however, there are times when an action plan is required to modify an employee's specific attitude or behavior. If that is the case, then the employee and the supervisor should work it out so that mutually agreed-upon, objective goals are set out. These goals must be achievable by the employee. Discussion of this action plan should show the employee that management sincerely wants to assist the employee in accomplishing the congregation's covenant and mission and wants the employee to successfully work with all customers; and that they will work together to make that happen.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

I recommend that evaluations be drafted either by two supervisors, or drafted by an immediate supervisor and reassessed by another church officer before presentation to an employee or volunteer. Before a meeting with the worker is scheduled, management (which may be a committee) should review the evaluation prepared by the supervisor to detect any personality conflicts (between supervisor and employee, or between customers and the employee), and to assure that no discrimination laws are violated and that the congregation's covenant and mission statement and goals are addressed.

Evaluations can be conducted annually or quarterly, but they should be regularly scheduled. When evaluations are part of your church's normal practices, employees expect to be evaluated regularly. Omitting or skipping reviews can easily be seen as a lack of interest in employees—or even as a discriminatory act, if some employees are evaluated and some not.

Supervisors should realize the consequences of each employee evaluation. Supervisors who routinely rate all employees uniformly may create problems. Also, evaluations must be tailored to each employee's job description. Under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act it may be essential, should there be any dispute, to show that the employee has the ability to perform the job tasks, but is not doing so, and that the church has made all reasonable accommodations under the law.

EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Your evaluation should have a space for the employee to sign to show that he has reviewed it with his supervisor and has had the opportunity to ask questions, and also a space for the employee to comment on his review.

It is the best practice to invite your employee to make comments on his review. The employee's reasonable feedback may give insight on an employee's attitude, why the employee is acting in a particular way, that management has failed to provide adequate training, or that mentoring may be required to assist the employee. It is better for you to receive feedback

on such matters during the evaluation meeting than in a court of law. Also, should matters come to a court hearing, it will be difficult for an employee who has made a written commentary on his or her evaluation to argue that he or she was unaware of performance problems prior to discharge.

While the employee can talk to others about the evaluation, the employer is not legally permitted to do so except to other supervisors, and only in the work setting for church purposes. Employee evaluations are confidential. Employees are legally entitled to privacy, and most states have clear statutory laws governing privacy.

If employees and volunteers genuinely feel that your congregation is committed to its covenant and accomplishing its mission and goals, and to providing the best possible customer service and care, and feel confident that their supervisor and management are striving to help them, they will work to achieve their best.



THE REV. BARRY W. SZYMANSKI, J.D., minister of pastoral care at First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa, Wis., was ordained in 2006 but continues to practice business and organizational law, as he has since 1973. He is also a dedicated photographer, whose images sometimes appear in **THE CONGREGATIONALIST**.

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BUILD ON A ROCK

Dear Reader—

As we approach the 400th anniversary of Congregationalism in America, it's a good time to re-dedicate ourselves to the work that must be done to hand our heritage down to newer generations of Pilgrims.

They won't know what's important about the Congregational Way of life unless we tell them.

I hope you'll take a few moments to read this special report on future directions and needs of our flagship publication, *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*.

Blessings,

Larry Sommers, Editor



OUR BRAND, OUR MESSAGE

The Story of the Congregational Way, past, present, and future, speaks more strikingly and persistently from the pages of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* than anywhere else. Four times a year this magazine arrives in your mailbox, bringing in sheaves of compelling, educational, and useful content reflecting the efforts and inspirations of Congregationalists across the country and around the world.

Our first-ever online survey tells us our readers love the magazine and find great value in its contents. But we know also, from the same source, that we need to do better! Most survey respondents were over 40 years old, fewer than three percent under 40 and NONE under 20!

We have a great Story to tell, and *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* does a great job telling it. Print magazines like ours, for specialized audiences, are not going away (contrary to widespread perceptions). But being in print is no longer enough.

To reach the generations about to enter productive adulthood, we need to package our content in terms that fit their world, and deliver it across an array of new media platforms such as Web sites, blogs, e-readers, and smart phones.

We must pass the torch to the rising generations.

The message is changeless, the branding is adaptable.

The print version of this magazine costs about \$60,000 a year to produce and distribute. From advertising, subscriptions, and donations, we take in only about half of that cost. Thus, we are about \$30,000 “in the hole” every year. With this kind of deficit on our *existing* operation, how can we launch the new operations required to reach tomorrow’s “pillars” of the Congregational Way?

"HERE I AM ... HOW CAN I HELP?"

First, understand the fiscal realities:

1. A decision was made 20 years ago to provide our magazine for free to any member of an NACCC-affiliated church who requested it. This promise we continue to make, and to honor.
2. The idea was to cover our costs though donations. Since then, we have made progress but have never closed the gap between revenue and expenses.
3. We have only a few "actual" subscribers—people, not members of NACCC churches, who pay \$15 a year for the magazine, as a straight-out purchase.
4. We also carry paid advertisements. Ads have increased, to become a valuable source of revenue. But not enough to close the gap.
5. The NACCC does not have a surplus to throw at our annual deficit as a "cost of doing business" or a "loss leader." *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*'s yearly deficit simply adds to the association's deficit. Our costs are covered only because NACCC leaders understand *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* is vital to our future.

SO, HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Help us with advertising.

- Buy from our advertisers, or at least give them a chance. And be sure to mention seeing their ad in *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*!
- From whom does your church buy products and services? Send their names and addresses to our editor: larrysommers@gmail.com. We'll approach them professionally, with great advertising rates and service.
- When seeking a minister, your church can increase visibility and response with a quarter-page display ad. Contact us at cdahm@naccc.org or larrysommers@gmail.com. We'll send you our media kit, which makes it a breeze to design and place an attractive ad.

2. Donate generously to support our current operations.

- Join the Editor's Round Table. ERT members give \$100

a year or more to *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*. Higher-level donations are honored in named societies of the Editor's Round Table: The Elias Smith Connexion (\$250 or more), the Edward Beecher Society (\$500 or more), or the Henry Martyn Dexter Society (\$1,000 or more). All ERT members receive printed progress reports from the editor and (in most years) break bread with the editor at a special ERT meal during the NACCC's Annual Meeting and Conference.

- If you can't give \$100, donate as a Sponsor (\$50) or Patron (\$25), or at least send the "subscription-equivalent" sum of \$15 a year to cover your own quarterly copy of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*.
- How about a Gift Subscription for a someone who would appreciate being informed about the Congregational Way but does not presently belong to an NACCC church? Send \$15 for one year, \$28 for two years, or \$41 for three years, and we'll send the magazine to the person you designate.

3. Provide for the long-term future of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*.

If you would like to provide ongoing support to our magazine, our brand, and our message, consider a gift to the Joe Polhemus Endowment Fund. Income from this fund, established in 2005, is used for production and capital costs of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*. That income amounts to about



\$1,000 this year, but new donations to the fund will increase steady income available each year to the magazine. The Joe Polhemus Endowment Fund is a fund of the Congregational Foundation, which exists to provide financial support to the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches.

Choose one or more of these ways to support *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*. If you can't do it all, at least do something. Now is the time to give to the magazine that serves the churches that serve Christ.

A TIP FOR YOU

A tip-on is an extra sheet stuck over the front cover of your favorite magazine. It's not meant to annoy, but to alert you to something important in a way sure to get your attention.

We send a "tipped" copy of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* once a year to each recipient. You may receive yours with this June issue, or in September, December, or next March.

When you see the tip-on, it's a reminder to donate for the work of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*. Feel free to give at any time of the year; but the tip-on is there to remind you, once a year.

When you have sent your check, feel free to remove the tip-on so the beauty of the real cover can show forth. But first—please send the check.

Thanks and blessings.

Thoughts on the NACCC

Ed Backell, an experienced pastor, was called to our church in Warden, Washington—his first National Association church—three years ago. In a recent blog entry, he shared his joy at entering our fellowship.

This is a portion of a letter that I wrote to another church; they are considering becoming a part of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, the group to which my congregation belongs. I thought that some of my readers might enjoy these thoughts about the NA ...

I wasn't raised with any kind of faith, became a follower of Jesus when I was 17, and got involved with various different groups of Christians, each contributing something to my development as a follower of Christ.

1. The Christian/Church of Christ emphasized living out their faith in response to the Word.
2. The Foursquare Church emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit.
3. The Swedish Baptist Church taught me to work through the text of Scripture line by line.
4. The Evangelical Free Church taught me the importance of family in faith formation.
5. The Church of God, Anderson, taught me the perils of power as a substitute for obedience.
6. The Presbyterian Church showed me that a purposeful, thoughtful Christian life was possible.
7. The NACCC brought me full circle, reinforcing Jesus as the Head of the Church.

What I've learned about the NACCC is that the use of power and authority isn't a preferred method to be the people of God.

Our congregation was originally a German Congregational church ... and they placed great emphasis on personal piety, communal experience of faith, and practical service to Christ. Then, in the 1950s when the UCC was started, we joined that group. However, we discovered that over time, the UCC placed more and more emphasis on hierarchical structure, and the controls that go with it (especially in regards to what was considered to be "acceptable theology"). That was not at all who we are as a church; and so, our congregation left the UCC in 2003.

The NACCC is an association of fellowship, not an organization of control. We have churches in our national fellowship who are far more theologically liberal than we are ... and we have churches that are much more conservative. Where we stand on various issues is not the determining factor of our organization. We come together to fellowship with one another as we each follow Christ as the Head of the church. There is no denominational control, no edicts from on high, no memos from the Central Office that tell us what we must do, or how we must do it.

This allows our little congregation to focus on its mission of following Jesus the best way it knows how, and we still can get together with other churches who are doing the same thing if not in the same way.

Personally, I consider it a strength when I'm able to be in a room with 100 other ministers, knowing full well that I'd probably disagree with them on various points of doctrine—but still having sweet fellowship because we recognize the Lord is in our midst, and it is the Spirit which allows us to experience the bond of unity while living with methods of diversity.

... I'm a BIG fan of the NACCC. It's not restrictive on matters of theology (we don't make our ministers sign theological creeds like the CCCC), and it's not dictative on matters of social conscience (like the "still speaking" campaign of the UCC). At the risk of sounding like a fairy tale, it's "just right."

Grace and peace to you as you seek to follow the Lord's leading!

Keep Following Jesus, Ed



PASTOR ED BACKELL is a Washington state native and has taught for 25 years in various churches in Washington and Nebraska. He was called to Warden Community Church in May 2010. Ed is a creative person, avid musician, published author, voracious reader, computer geek, and a pretty darn good ethnic cook!

“Once more unto the breach, *dear friends!*”

by Larry Sommers

The folks at Center Congregational Church, Atlanta, were startled when the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ filed suit in 2008 to take their land and building from them. With a modest property and around 30 members, it's not the kind of church the leaders of large denominations would normally notice, let alone covet.

Two years earlier, however, Center Church had left the UCC over the issue of same-sex marriage and had joined the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, which respects the widely varying theological and political viewpoints of its member churches.

Ultimately, the UCC's gambit was rebuffed by the Fulton County Circuit Court (see *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*, June 2010, p. 17). Center Church stood firm, won its case, and kept its property—thanks in part to the Committee for the Continuation of Congregational Christian Churches, a quiet but vital component of the Congregational Way.

The Continuation Committee spread word about the litigation in Georgia, bringing donations from around the country that helped the church pay its huge legal fees. Just as important, the committee helped mobilize noted authorities on American Congregationalism, who countered plaintiff's contention that the UCC is today's sole heir to the denominational identity of Congregationalism—which was nakedly at issue in the proceeding.

“Through [the Continuation Committee's] vast historical connections and the ‘corporate memory’ of living and archived resources we were able to mount a successful rebuttal to the lawsuit brought against us,” reports the Rev. J. R. McAliley, pastor of Center Church.

Thus ended the latest high-profile skirmish between the UCC and a local church of the NACCC, part of a campaign waged on and off since the great Merger controversy of the mid-20th century. To deal with issues arising from

the Merger, the Continuation Committee was legally incorporated in 1965.

“But why rake up all of that now?”

It's often been pointed out that dwelling on the Merger keeps past quarrels alive and takes up too much current

WHY DOES ALL THIS MATTER?

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches insists that *each local congregation is a complete church in itself, with Christ as its Head.*

The thought that God might trust you and your neighbors with all the Keys of the Kingdom—that your congregation might access conversion, justification, sanctification, and salvation, individually and collectively, on your own with the help of the Holy Spirit—has always and everywhere struck most churchmen as ludicrous, if not heretical.

You can't do that! is a common reaction.

But we've been doing that for almost 400 years. It's the distinctive mark of our Congregational churches.



Center Congregational Church

WHAT WAS AT STAKE IN GEORGIA

Center Congregational Church was founded in the 1880s and met in members' homes until 1895, when Harriet M. Cox donated the land for a meetinghouse, stipulating that it be used "for church purposes of the Congregational Denomination."

"Congregational Denomination" at the time referred to the National Council of Congregational Churches, with which Center Church was affiliated. The National Council merged with the Christian Convention in 1931 to become the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches, of which Center Church remained a member until the United Church of Christ was formed in 1957.

Center Church did not enter the UCC immediately but joined in 1959, by a vote that reserved its right to leave the denomination at any time.

Meanwhile, two other Congregational bodies had appeared: The Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, formed on doctrinal grounds, and the NACCC, formed by churches that declined to join the UCC on grounds of polity.

In 2006, conservative-leaning Center Church, exasperated with the political positions of the UCC, particularly its embrace of same-sex marriage, withdrew from the UCC and joined the NACCC.

The Southeast Conference of the UCC examined the documents of Center Church and found Mrs. Cox's clause restricting the church's property to "the Congregational Denomination." They sued, asserting that such language could only refer to the United Church of Christ as the present-day successor to the old National Council. Center's defense noted that the UCC is only one of *several* present-day inheritors of the Congregational mantle.

Should the court rule in favor of the UCC, the precedent would apply formally across the State of Georgia and perhaps reverberate around the nation, potentially depriving NACCC churches of legal recognition as "Congregational."

The UCC brought its experts; Center Church, with the aid of the Continuation Committee, brought its experts. In 2010, Fulton County Circuit Court Judge Christopher S. Brasher found in favor of Center Church.

"The Defendants," he wrote, "have presented evidence that *the NACCC has preserved for its members the same congregational autonomy* that existed in 1895. The Court therefore finds it to be a proper beneficiary ... and not a misuse of the Indenture, as argued by the Plaintiff." [Our italics.]

So at least for now, and in the State of Georgia, members of NACCC churches are Congregationalists.

attention within the NACCC. But repeatedly, just when we start to think the past is dead, it turns out it was only taking a breather.

The conditions that have brought Center Church and others to hard battles over the past half-century, still exist today: (1) Ancient legal documents begging disputable obligations, and (2) the gnawing hunger of both the UCC and the NACCC for more churches.

Steven Hoth, current chairman of the Continuation Committee, advises churches to examine their old paperwork

Name	Address
1. Rev. John H. Alexander	1717 W. Main St., Marshalltown, Iowa
2. Rev. Malcolm K. Burton	27 Mary St., Fortier, Michigan
3. Mrs. George K. Derkar	1511 Cherylene, Detroit 21, Michigan
4. Mrs. A. Burnham Converse	185 Orchard Lane, Winnetka, Illinois
5. Edward Keeney	1211 Iron Wood Drive, St. Joseph, Illinois
6. Walter D. Edmunds	Lafayette, Illinois
7. Mrs. Norman C. Johnston	2317 E. 17th St., Duluth, Minnesota
8. Rev. Arthur A. Zouner	111 Franklin Avenue, Franklin, New Jersey
9. Rev. Leonard Hauser	Waverlyville, Michigan

The Committee's 1965 articles of incorporation show a roster of illustrious names as the initial directors.

WHENCE THE CONTINUATION COMMITTEE?

In the mid-20th century, Congregationalists held almost a "civil war" over the principle of local autonomy. Leaders of the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches promoted a merger of their churches with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form a unified national church. Some Congregationalist dissenters, cleaving to the ecclesiastical sufficiency of the local congregation, resisted the merger.

But the merger came, spawning the United Church of Christ. Some 400 churches opted out, instead forming the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, a purely voluntary fellowship of locally autonomous churches.

In 1965, the Committee for the Continuation of Congregational Christian Churches was registered as a nonprofit corporation in the state of Iowa, to cope with challenges arising in the aftermath of the merger. It would function outside the formal structure of the NACCC. As an association of individuals, not of churches, the Continuation Committee has greater flexibility than the NACCC itself in dealing with specific legal situations.

The names on the committee's incorporation papers comprised a mini-*Who's Who* of the early NACCC, but the man who chaired the committee for many years was attorney Ed Adams of Marshalltown, Iowa. The current chairman, Steven Hoth, became active on the committee in 1990 and was elected chairman after Adams' death.

In recent years, the committee has held a breakfast meeting during each NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference, welcoming all interested attendees to take part.

for anything that might become the basis for a preemptive claim.

More broadly, the Continuation Committee also advises local churches in a variety of tricky legal situations. For example:

- Embezzlement of church funds by pastors or other employees.
- New accounts outside of regular church accounts—even when established for good reasons—that may put tax preferences at risk.
- Lack of provision in governing documents for disposition of church property when the church loses membership and must close its doors.

For these and other reasons, the committee's work is sure to go on.

Hoth points out that the committee does its work on donated time and funds, with no assessment against NACCC funds for committee expenses.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

"What can we do to protect our church and ensure the continuity of the Congregational Way?"

Steve Hoth, chairman of the Committee for the Continuation of Congregational Christian Churches, has the following suggestions for churches that wish to safeguard their property and their Congregational heritage:

1. Examine your church's founding documents and other historical paperwork. Be on the lookout for (1) property given to the church with legal restrictions or conditions, and (2) ancient loans or mortgages that an adverse party might wish to construe as enforceable obligations.
2. Make sure all your church's debts and obligations are paid. Consult an attorney if you are unsure about whether something is a valid obligation.
3. Make sure that your current governing documents (constitution and bylaws) include a dissolution clause that provides for disposition of church assets in case your church at some future point closes its doors. *You can help underwrite the future of the Congregational Way by designating the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches as the recipient of such property.*

If you have questions or concerns about any of these matters, contact the National Association office for a referral to the Continuation Committee at 800-262-1620.



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BIBLE STUDY

in the Early Church

Bible study groups are not a modern invention. They were well-established among believers by the early third century A.D., and possibly by the first. (By “Bible study group,” this article means likeminded Christians gathering together at a time other than Sunday worship to collectively learn from and discuss Scripture passages.)

THE NEW TESTAMENT

According to the New Testament, laypeople’s commentary on the Old Testament was part of Jewish worship. Luke 4:16-22 depicts Jesus, with no formal theological degrees or office in the synagogue, as reading from the Book of Isaiah in public worship, just as Jews take turns reading their Scriptures in the twenty-first century. The difference is that he commented on them, which is not the present Jewish custom for the unqualified. Thus the scene was more like a Christian Bible study than a formal worship service.

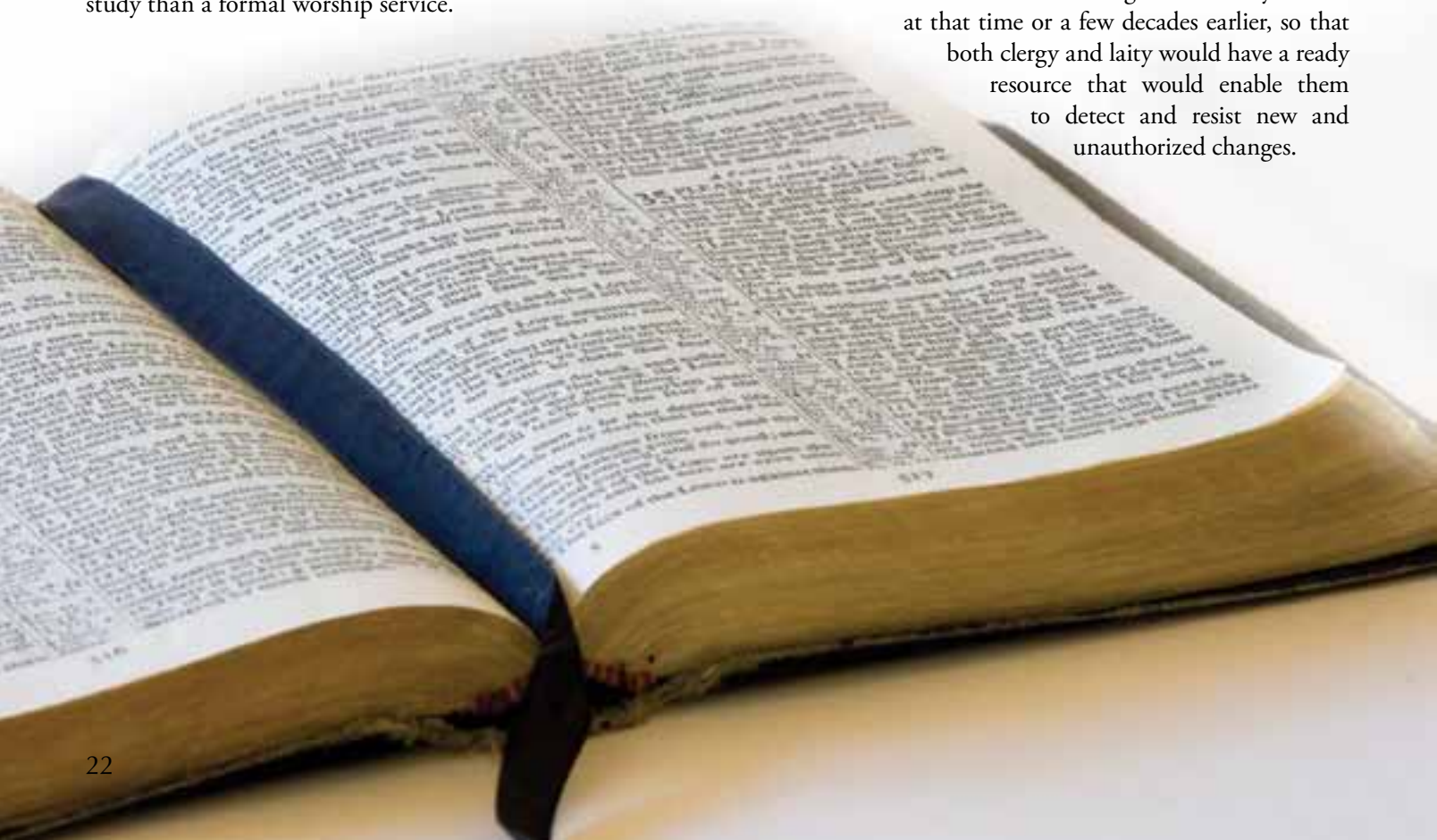
The scene is similar in Acts 13:14-15. There the leaders of the synagogue asked two strangers in town to speak to the congregation, even though they were already seated and not officiating clergy.

A Bible study group fully within our conventional sense appears in Acts 17:11. There the Jews in the town of Berea searched the Scriptures every day, not just on the Sabbath, to determine whether they supported the teachings of Paul and Silas. Given the community rifts and debates that accompanied Paul’s preaching elsewhere in Acts, the Bereans most certainly had discussions among themselves, on all days of the week.

HIPPOLYTUS, THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION

Hippolytus was a bishop (at that time the term for a parish or town pastor) in central Italy who was martyred around A.D. 235. He was very zealous that Christians keep to the practices and institutions that had been handed down from the apostles. Fearing them eroded or corrupted in his own day, in A.D. 217

he wrote a book describing them as they existed at that time or a few decades earlier, so that both clergy and laity would have a ready resource that would enable them to detect and resist new and unauthorized changes.



by David Brattston



In his *Apostolic Tradition* 35, Hippolytus described the preparations for the Christian workday. Both males and females were to wash their hands and pray immediately after rising in the morning. Then they were to attend a local Bible study if one was being held that day, so that they could hear God through the instructor and enable the group's prayers to protect them from whatever evil might threaten them while at work. Hippolytus also wrote that attendance at a Bible study group would help the attendees to learn what responsibilities they had at home. Then they were to go about their workday.

Christians, wrote Hippolytus, should be eager to go to the church for such Bible study, and consider it a great loss if they could not.

THE DIDASCALIA APOSTOLORUM

In the first third or first half of the third century, roughly the time of Hippolytus, a church manual was compiled in Syria setting out the duties and rights of husbands, wives, children, pastor-bishops, deacons, and other roles and situations in which Christians find themselves. It also deals with modesty, secular work, church discipline, backsliders, and repentant sinners. It is much longer than Hippolytus's *Apostolic Tradition*, but could serve the same purpose: a ready reference for Christian clergy and laity for keeping to apostolic norms and practices.

The *Didascalia* 2 opposes idleness and straying aimlessly around the streets. It exhorts layfolk to work diligently at their trades or other work. If a Christian is wealthy enough to live without working, she or he is to be constant in seeking out likeminded Christians in order to learn and meditate collectively on the Scriptures. This manual goes a step further than the *Apostolic Tradition*, for it places a requirement on the individual to organize a Bible study group, not merely attend one that is already established at the local church.

TWO LETTERS CONCERNING VIRGINS

Besides demonstrating that studying the Bible in groups was an ancient activity, the examples of Jesus, the Bereans, Hippolytus and the *Didascalia* also disclose that such groups were composed

of sincere believers; that is, they were not academic, value-neutral classes for educational credits in which believers, non-believers, and the indifferent all had an equal say.

In fact, one source in the first half of the third century discountenanced Bible study or Bible reading so ecumenical that scoffers and the indifferent could participate equally with Christians, who were diligently seeking direction from the Scriptures as to how to conduct their lives:

We do not cast that which is holy before dogs, nor pearls before swine; but with all possible self-restraint, and with all discretion, and with all fear of God, and with earnestness of mind we praise God. For we do not minister where heathens are drinking and blaspheming in their feasts with words of impurity, because of their wickedness. Therefore do we not sing psalms to the heathens, nor do we read to them the Scriptures. ... Do not so, my brethren; we beseech you, my brethren, let not these deeds be done among you; but put away those who choose thus to behave themselves with infamy and disgrace. It is not proper, my brethren, that these things should be so.¹

Now go and study with your likeminded Christian brothers and sisters, seeking them out and organizing a Bible study group if there is none already in your community.



DR. DAVID W. T. BRATTSTON is a retired lawyer residing in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada, who has been a self-directed student of authoritative Christian texts since he was a teenager. His articles on early and contemporary Christianity have been published by a wide variety of denominations in eleven countries.

¹ *Two Epistles concerning Virginit* 2.6, translated at vol. 8, p. 63 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. American Reprint of the Edinburgh ed. by A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885-96; continuously reprinted Edinburgh: T & T Clark; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson).

Theology and Society in Timber and Clapboard

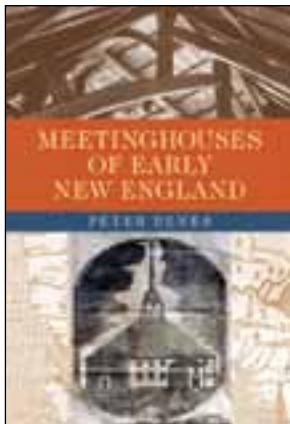
by Larry Sommers

Review of *Meetinghouses of Early New England*

by Peter Benes

University of Massachusetts Press, 446 pages

\$44.96 hardcover (Amazon)



They say there's always room at the top, and Peter Benes' monumental new study, *Meetinghouses of Early New England*, seems to fit nicely atop all previous scholarship as the new defining work in this fascinating field.

Benes is cofounder, director, and editor of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, Deerfield, Mass. His book, unlike Henry Martyn Dexter's pioneering 1859 *Congregational Quarterly* article on meetinghouses, Edmund Sinnott's useful 1963 book *Meetinghouse and Church in Early New England*, and many others, rests not only upon surviving examples of early meetinghouses but also upon old drawings, photos, and written town and church records. Its 280 pages of clear, illuminating text are profusely illustrated with photographs, line drawings, and diagrams. More than 160 pages at the back of the book are crammed with data-rich appendices, endnotes, bibliography, and index.

The author marshals this ocean of data to amass, bit by bit, the physical facts of church architecture in Colonial New England and the social, economic, political, and theological matrices in which that architecture developed and moved through its famous three periods, which now stand delineated as never before.

You thought you knew about New England meetinghouses? Would it surprise you to know that in the period 1678-1828,

most of their exteriors were painted in various shades of yellow, red, orange, blue, green, brown, and gray—with only a minority in the “traditional” white or stone colors that later came to typify the New England church building?

Or that, contrary to our modern vision of a settled, more or less permanent countryside of stable communities worshipping in the same building for generations, the early builders and occupants of these meetinghouses saw them as temporary structures? Rapid population growth, migration, and shifting patterns of affiliation meant that towns and congregations were always building, tearing down, remodeling, and rebuilding. Only in the post-Revolutionary period did New Englanders aspire to create “churches” of imposing and lasting sacramental beauty.

Their architectural designs were typically inspired by unabashed imitation of nearby meetinghouses they admired, though gradually a fraternity of professional church architects began to shape tastes in more conventional ways.

One common supposition Benes leaves more or less intact is that people's religious views strongly influenced their meetinghouse design. “Most parishes and towns,” he says, “followed what appeared to be a regionwide liturgical and social canon. They built ‘New England’ meetinghouses and followed ‘New England’ worshiping practices.” Even at that, however, the shapes and forms of meetinghouses seemed to change, over the period 1622-1830, largely in tandem with like changes in the shape and form of people's theological views.

Whatever your own theological views, a perusal of Benes' landmark study is likely to deepen and strengthen your appreciation of the New England background in which American Congregationalism grew.



LARRY SOMMERS is the editor of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* and believes that spatial relationships, like those in architecture, reflect and shape our perception of social and spiritual realities.

Norm Lemburg

American Disenthralment

by Linda Palmer

Winthrop & Co. Cast Off Bishops and Kings

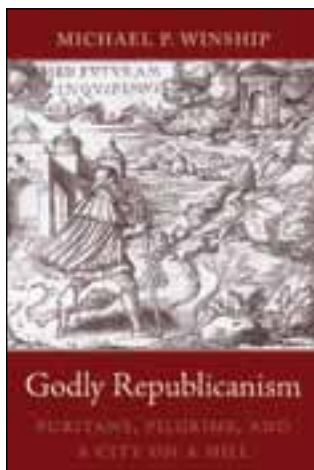
Review of *Godly Republicanism:*

Puritans, Pilgrims, and a City on a Hill

by Michael P. Winship

Harvard University Press, 350 pages

\$40.01 hardcover/\$38.01 Kindle (Amazon)



Lovers of Congregational church history will enjoy reading Michael Winship's new book, *Godly Republicanism*. Winship, professor of History at the University of Georgia, traces the republic established in Massachusetts in the 1630s to English Puritan roots in the days of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I.

It was the impassioned courage of early Presbyterian ministers such as Thomas Cartwright, John Udall, and John Field that led to a 70-year battle of wits, with Parliament and Puritans on one side and the Monarchy and Bishops on the other. Although the Puritan movement at first sought merely to curb ecclesiastical abuses, it soon took on a democratic character, with calls for the people to appoint their own ministers, citing New Testament models as proof of God's plan. Of course, the Crown looked askance at these distasteful republican leanings, seeing its own authority at stake.

Modern Americans may not think of Puritans as freedom-loving radicals. Winship makes clear, however, the close connection they saw between corruption in the church and corruption in the state. Lust for power affected all equally, whether it be

the bishops or the king. The national Church and the Crown wielded immense authority, each stretching its privilege to the limits. Bishops meted out imprisonment in their own names, while King Charles I dissolved Parliament in 1629 and extracted forced "loans"—never intended to be repaid—from his subjects. People did not take all this lying down; they fought back, with impassioned speeches by Puritans in Parliament, and with bold actions. Elizabeth and the Stuart kings looked with suspicion upon reformers who claimed they could still be loyal to their monarch while finding fault with the monarch's Church.

Reformation in 16th-century England meant reformation of the church, but by 1630 in Massachusetts it also meant reformation of civil government. Leaders of the Massachusetts Bay, including many who had suffered imprisonment for refusal to pay the king's forced loan, did not want such power in the hands of the governor and his few assistants. With the knowledge of the corrupting influence of power, Governor Winthrop extended the franchise to a broad range of adult males as early as 1631, allowing them their say in the election of men who would be their legislators and judges.

Readers less interested in the fascinating though lengthy history of English Puritanism can leap directly to Chapter 6 for information closer to home. There Winship explores the still-unsettled question whether the fledgling Congregational church in Salem blossomed full bloom in 1629 or whether it had a good deal of help from the Separatist flock down in Plimoth. Winship casts his vote, with only a handful of scholars, in favor of the latter. There is no doubt that his review of early Protestant church history in England presents a compelling argument.



LINDA K. PALMER is the founder and performer of the walking tour of 17th-century Boston called *Where Did the Puritans Go?* (puritan-tour.com). She holds a Master of Arts in Teaching from Indiana University and is a frequent lecturer at historical societies, libraries, and academic institutions throughout New England, including the Harvard Extension School and the Congregational Library.



News and Needs of Our Missions

NEWS

VISITING MISSIONARIES



Rev. Charles Sagay



Rev. SaDo



Rev. Matthew Oladele

Every summer, international missionaries visit as many NACCC churches as possible before and after attending the Annual Meeting and Conference. The Mission and Outreach Council helps arrange their itineraries. This year, the Rev. Matthew Oladele of **Christ to the Villages (Nigeria)** will visit churches in California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and New York, throughout the months of May, June, and July. Rev. SaDo of **Congregational Church of Myanmar (Burma)**, will visit churches in Florida, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Virginia, and Wisconsin during June and July. Rev. Charles Sagay of **Mission School of Hope (Cameroon)** will visit churches in New England, New York, and the Midwest from April through July.

If you would like one of these missionaries to visit your church, contact Linda at the NACCC office.

PILGRIM'S PRESENCE GETS A NEW VEHICLE

Thanks to the generosity of Sam and Lucy Shinozaki and their church, Meadowbrook Congregational Church, Novi, Mich., and a few other churches, **Pilgrim's Presence, (Kenya)** was able to purchase a



Geoffrey Lipale with the new truck.

Toyota Hilux compact pickup truck, which will help their ministry immensely. Geoffrey Lipale, mission director, is extremely grateful.

Pilgrim's Presence also operates the Keringet School for the Deaf. It is the only one of its kind in the entire region. The next closest school for the deaf is 370 miles away. Most of the hearing-impaired in the region are not educated. Even their families, who are basically illiterate, do not know how to communicate with them since they have not been taught sign language.

MORGAN SCOTT PROJECT OPENS A NEW CLINIC

A free medical clinic was opened April 3 by **Morgan Scott Project**

(**Deer Lodge, Tenn.**), in order to answer the need of the community. In December 2012, the medical clinic in town closed due to funding. Morgan Scott Project took a classroom and turned it into two exam rooms, office space for the doctor, a waiting area, and a place for the receptionist. Donations are welcome to support this clinic.



Dr. Kim and Ella Smith opening new clinic.

GRACE MINISTRIES TAILOR SHOP



The new tailor shop at Grace Ministries, Myanmar.

Congregational Church of Myanmar has a new project. Grace Ministries is operating a small tailor shop to train people to sew and make alterations. This will help increase their income.

PRAYERS ANSWERED

Fishers of Men (Mexico) raised enough funds to buy their 32-passenger bus. Now they can ride with everyone having a seat.

Other news from Fishers of Men: Several churches in Oklahoma are partnering with most of the Evangelistic Medical Mission Crusades for 2013. A team from Pennsylvania moved tons of earth in January, preparing the way to begin building the main house at Refuge Ranch and give the Zaragoza family much-needed additional space. Both daughters who had left home last fall have returned to the family, safe and hopefully wiser.

MUSIC COMES TO THE SEAFARER

The Rev. Loring Carpenter of **Seafarer's Friend (Boston, Mass.)** shares: "The most exciting accomplishment was the finding of a rental tenant for part of our building. In fact this was a gift from

God. It was a young man who was opening a studio to offer music lessons—only using Christian music for the lessons. He is building this ministry as a way to reach out to the youth of Chelsea and provide an alternative to the streets as well as character formation. A student of Chelsea High and Berklee School of Music, he is a wonderful fit to the ministry for us. In addition, once he builds the business he hopes to offer Bible Study as part of the program, and welcomes the participation of any seafarer in port.”

OTHER NEWS

Bread of Life (Plant City, Fla.) is alive and well. Their contact information has changed. Their new email is julioelba@juno.com. They have a new board of directors and are working out of the Methodist Church in Plant City.

NEEDS

THE ANGEL FUND

Menaul School (Albuquerque, N.M.) has a new program to help those students who have an immediate physical need. These needs can include breakfast or lunch on school days; clothing items for school, i.e., uniforms, shoes, athletic uniforms/shoes, coats; personal hygiene items; school supplies or other personal items determined by the Angel Fund Committee. Money is not given to the student. The item in need is purchased and then given anonymously to the student by the committee.

OTHER MISSION NEEDS

Congregational Church of Myanmar (Burma): Sewing machines for their new training center; funds for buildings and a mission vehicle; support for their teachers and students.

Hosanna Industries (Rochester, Pa.): Funds are needed for a used box truck with toolboxes. With this type of vehicle, they will be able to get rid of one of the tow-behind trailers, and improve their efficiency. Any donations would be greatly appreciated.

Mission Mazahua (Mexico): Sewing machines, laptops and wheelchairs.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Rebecca Mackish Mission (Kansas City, Kan.): Pray for Barbara Branch’s health.

Seafarer’s Friend (Boston, Mass.): Pray for wisdom of the board and executive director who are walking through some difficult personnel issues in the coming weeks. Pray also for the crews of our Icelandic vessels, who are facing an uncertain future as the company changes ports served and locations. There is clear anxiety on the part of crewmembers.

Mission Mazahua (Mexico): Pray for the success of Rev. Jack Brown’s mission trip in June; for future younger leadership; training for staff; and strength and health for *Hermana Ester* and *Hermana Eunice*.

Thank you for your support!

If you would like any of our missionaries to visit your church; to visit your state or regional association meeting; or to do pulpit supply, please call Linda at the NACCC office.

For more information on any of these missions, or to make a donation to any of the above projects, please contact Linda Miller at the NACCC Office, 800-262-1620, extension 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, 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

www.firstunionchurchquincy.com

Along the Way

News from the fellowship of churches

INNOVÉTION AT COLONIAL



Church members at Colonial Church of Edina, Minn., applaud the young social entrepreneurs awarded Innové project grants April 21, 2013.

Colonial Church of Edina, Minn., has awarded \$228,000 in Innové grants to six social entrepreneurs to help social change ideas or initiatives get started, or to accelerate existing initiatives.

Innové is about “growing new ideas to serve the world” for the sake of Christian gospel values of faith, service, grace, justice, love, redemption, and reconciliation. Of 139 grant applicants, 20 were chosen as semi-finalists after a thorough screening process. The church then paired each semi-finalist with an experienced mentor to guide him or her through the final selection process. A weekend workshop prepared semi-finalists to pitch their ventures to a panel of judges.

On April 21, the church announced grants to:

- **Rob Williams** of *The Sheridan Story*, a group that links churches and schools in order to provide hungry children with a supply of non-perishable food over the weekend.
- **Leah Driscoll** of *Twin Cities Mobile Market*, a nonprofit grocery store on wheels that will bring fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods to “food deserts” and other underserved communities.
- **Andrew Hanson** of *Mattoo*, a nonprofit founded to address the demand side of sex trafficking by educating males on the myths and realities of sex trafficking.
- **Tasha Myrah** of *Beyond Limits*, a collaborative partnership venture based at Bethany College, to foster independent living in a Christian college setting for young adults with disabilities.



Rob Williams



Leah Driscoll



Andrew Hanson



Tasha Myrah



Megan Dooley



Anne Brelje

- **Megan Dooley** of *The Helpery*, a direct-to-consumer Web site (thehelpery.com) that will offer personalized printed materials such as business cards, calendars, and signs, and use profits to empower people in extreme poverty while educating customers about how their purchase has helped people around the world.
- **Anna Brelje** of *Exodus Lending*, a financial program designed to provide stressed borrowers with a just pathway to financial stability, using a proven, innovative alternative lending model to provide free and low-cost payday loans combined with an incentivized savings plan and financial coaching.

Winners receive start-up funding, consulting, financial and business planning assistance, a stipend, and office space, in partnership with Colonial Church.

“This church has long had a passion for missions, and lately we’ve had a passion to do more,” said **Daniel Harrell**, senior minister of Colonial Church. “This isn’t just about writing checks, though. We will come alongside these social change entrepreneurs and provide them with coaching, mentoring, skills training, and a wide range of human capital resources, from incubation to the launch, and hopefully beyond.”

The successful pitches of the winners, known as Protégés, can be viewed at innoveproject.org/category/protoges/.

A JEWEL ON BEACON HILL



Larry Sommers

The main reading room at the Congregational Library, Boston, Mass.

The Congregational Library in Boston is an institution with “many hats.” Library Director Peggy Bendroth reports: “As the ‘memory bank of the Congregational churches, we host visitors of all kinds, whether they are coming for tours or brown-bag lunches with authors or just to sit and read a book. We are also, of course, a top-notch research library and are always looking for new ways to make our collection available to researchers.

“This year the Library took a major step forward by joining the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium (NERFC). This is a network of 17 other institutions in the northeast, including the major Harvard Libraries, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Boston Athenaeum, and

all of the New England state historical societies. NERFC offers fellowships to researchers needing to visit at least three of these collections, and now we are a participating member.

“Needless to say, this is great company for us. ... Our rare book collection contains an impressive array of 17th-century Puritan books and sermons—in fact, one of the best in the country. It also includes an original of the Cambridge Platform (1648) and a copy of John Eliot’s “Indian Bible” (1685). We are immensely proud of our extensive collection of 17th- and 18th-century Congregational church records—our “Hidden Histories” project, which you can learn about on our Web site (congregationallibrary.org). Add to this some 15,000 sermons, 1,500 periodicals, and hundreds of books and pamphlets of all kinds, not to mention an expert and helpful staff, and you can see why we are a jewel on Beacon Hill, a resource that all Congregational churches can be proud to support.”

Continued on p. 30

Along the Way

Continued from p. 29



Richard Blackburn speaks on "Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations."

CONVOCATING—Congregational ministers from around the country gathered at the annual Ministers' Convocation in Mundelein, Ill., April 8-11. Featured speaker **Richard Blackburn** of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, Lombard, Ill., presented a program on "Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations" to the 36 clergypersons in attendance. The ministers also spent time in prayer, reflection, song, and conversation at the event, which provides inspiration and comfort to those in ministry.



Congregational ministers sing.

Letters

TELL STORY OF THE WORLD'S PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

I write to remark on an article which has not yet found its way into your (our) fine journal.

Our historical roots and connections are the most noble in all the Land. The Scrooby region, as fleeing Separatists; Holland as refugees; the cruel sea as Pilgrims; Plymouth in the New World, as a freedom-loving people. But everywhere beset by terrible trials and tortuous treatment and hardships.

Yet, nearly four hundred years later, we may possibly lack something: A sense of kinship with those now being persecuted for their Christian faith. Our Christian neighbors in countless countries and regions are hunted down and driven away, or stoned, or tortured, or burned, and killed.

Of all peoples, we [Congregationalists] ought to aid fellow Christian believers who are persecuted now, as were our forbears at the first days of the Congregational Way.

Perhaps there is a congregation or two amongst us which is already trying to help the Persecuted Christian. We should hear from them. The story should be told. *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* can do it.

BURKERT CREE
Zurich, Switzerland

GAYS LIVING A SINFUL LIFESTYLE

Active homosexuals are living a sinful, abnormal lifestyle—they need to hear the truth from our church just as much as heterosexual persons who are living promiscuously—the actions are wrong. The Scripture is most clear on the issue of what is right and what is wrong here; the Ten Commandments and elsewhere in the Scripture states that adultery is against God and likewise homosexuality is a sinful lifestyle. Yes, see

Romans 1:26 and beyond: "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature ..." (ESV) And as a trained Ph.D. research scientist I say indeed homosexuality is clearly against nature.

ROBERT W. TRIMMER, PH.D.
Granger, Ind.

IT'S TIME TO ACCEPT THE GAY COMMUNITY

In the late '80s I heard the news that a newborn baby girl had died of an AIDS-related illness; the mother had passed it on to her baby. A certain Christian minister, asked to officiate over the funeral, denied the request. He was repelled by the idea of anyone with such a disease.

To be sure, this newborn deserved to be honored with the sacredness of a Christian burial. I was stunned that a so-called Christian would deny this call. If only I could be there, I thought, I would wrap this precious child in a soft velvet dress and a beautiful velvet blanket and would give her all the love and care that our Lord Jesus Christ would expect.

Too many in our society still stand for denying the Gay Community. It also brings to mind one aspect of the seriousness of adversity: The percentage of gay teenage boys who have committed suicide is much higher than for straight teens.

When I read, in *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*, words of scorn for those who are not heterosexual, it saddens me deeply. It is hard to fathom that we still have to discuss issues surrounding sexual orientation in 2013.

We are all God's children.

REV. JOAN MARGARET LASKA
Los Angeles, Calif.

Pastorates and Pulpits

RECENT CALLS

First Church of Squantum, Mass., has called the Rev. Doug Gray as senior minister.

Plymouth Congregational Church, Lansing, Mich., has called the Rev. Robert Hagle as senior minister.

ORDINATIONS

First Congregational Church of Breckenridge, Mich., ordained the Rev. Margaret Wallin with concurrence of a vicinage council, April 13, 2013.

North Shore Congregational Church, Fox Point, Wis., ordained the Rev. Julie Sheridan Smith with concurrence of a vicinage council, April 27, 2013.

IN SEARCH

SENIOR MINISTERS

Baleville Congregational Christian Church
Newton, N.J.

Bethany Union Church
Chicago, Ill.

Community of Faith and Fellowship
Limerick, Maine

First Congregational Church
Durand, Mich.

First Congregational Church
Kingston, N.H.

First Congregational Church
Orsego, Mich.

First Congregational Church
Porterville, Calif.

First Congregational Church
Rochester, Mass.

First Congregational Church
Kenosha, Wis.

Hampshire Colony Congregational Church
Princeton, Ill.

Ingle Chapel Congregational Church
Milton-Freewater, Ore.

Lakewood Village Community Church
Long Beach, Calif.

Riverpoint Congregational Church
West Warwick, R.I.

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

PART-TIME MINISTERS

Congregational Christian Fellowship Church
Winchester, Va.

Second Congregational Church
Jewett City, Conn.

Calendar

June 8

Navigating the Waters of Church Change and Conflict
—*Olivet, Michigan*

Contact Marie Steele, msteele@nacc.org or 800-262-1620, ext. 1614

June 22-25

NACCC 59th Annual Meeting and Conference
—*Orlando, Florida*

nacc.org/yearbook/annualmeeting_2013.aspx

June 22-26

NAPF/HOPE Youth Conference—*Orlando, Florida*

nacc.org/CMSUploads/1102_2013_NAPF_HOPE_Info_Reg_Schol.pdf

July 29-Aug. 2

International Congregational Fellowship Conference
—*London, UK*

intercong.org/conference-information/the-2013-conference/

Aug. 3-13

CFTS British Seminar—*United Kingdom and the Netherlands*

Contact Mike Fales, mfales@olivetcollege.edu or 517-231-6818.

Aug. 19

General copy deadline for
THE CONGREGATIONALIST September 2013 issue

Contact Larry Sommers, larrysommers@gmail.com or 608-238-7731.

SAVE THE DATE

Feb. 7-9, 2014

Word & Note, with Amy-Jill Levine and Mainstreet Brass Quintet—*Wichita, Kansas*

Contact Don Olsen, dolsen@plymouth-church.net

June 19-26, 2014

Short-term Mission Experience
—*Misión Mazahua, Mexico.*

Contact Jack Brown, pilgrim_pastor@hotmail.com
or 269-749-2631

June 28-July 1, 2014

NACCC 60th Annual Meeting and Conference
—*Omaha, Nebraska*