

The CONGREGATIONALIST

Magazine of the Congregational Way since 1849

VOL. 166/NO. 3

CONGREGATIONALIST.ORG

SEPTEMBER 2014

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The Times, They Are A-Changin'

The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
 And God fulfills himself in many ways,
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

—Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*

Attendees at the Annual Meeting and Conference in Omaha got the opportunity to meet Kris Grauvogl, who for the past four years has adorned the pages of this magazine with her creative designs.

We brought Kris to the meeting because (1) her home base is not far from Omaha, (2) she might like to meet some NACCC people in the flesh, and (3) we wanted face-to-face feedback from readers on our coming magazine design makeover.

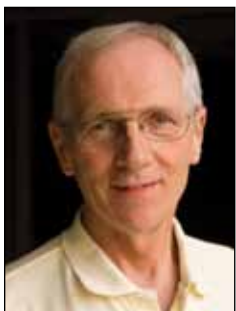
(In the magazine world, it's good to refresh your "look" every two or three years. Otherwise, you get so old-fashioned and dowdy-looking that the inevitable modernization, when it comes, is a shock to readers.)

This issue shows the first fruits of our research. It's not final and absolute; we'll continue tweaking and refining the design concepts embodied here. Please let us know what you think.

Also: We beg to inform readers that this particular inky wretch, who has handled the editorial duties since mid-2009, is on his way out. The editor of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* is like "Dr. Who"—it's good for the franchise to have a new one every so often. In this case, the transition will occur between now and 2016. We are planning a smooth transition to a capable new editor.

A search committee will be formed soon. Watch the *NACCC News*, naccc.org, and the December *CONGREGATIONALIST* for further information on the editorial search process.

Meanwhile, we will continue to entertain you with our particular approach to editing this distinguished and cherished publication.



Norm Lemberg

LARRY SOMMERS, *Editor*

The CONGREGATIONALIST

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VOL. 166/NO. 3

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SEPTEMBER 2014



Barry W. Szymanski

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

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Neither *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* nor the National Association has a creed or holds positions on social or theological issues; but we recognize the authority of each local church to do so for itself, if and as it wishes, and we encourage thoughtful and respectful discussion of our agreements and differences.

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ON THE COVER:

Berna Reinewald, a member of First Congregational Church, Rockwood, Mich., touches a clay cross in a pottery-making workshop, "He is the Potter, We are the Clay," presented by ceramic artist Linda Lacy at the 2014 Annual Meeting and Conference of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, Omaha, Neb., June 28, 2014.

Changing Means, Unchanging Ends

by Casey vanderBent

I've been thinking about the many changes we've been experiencing as an association. It's common for an organization to get so caught up in the minutiae that it loses sight of its purpose. We've had structural changes, staffing changes, IRS questions, governing documents to review and update, and so much more; we might be excused if we'd gotten lost in the details.

I'm here to tell you, though, that our association has never been more focused on its primary purpose, to serve our member churches and help them to carry out vibrant ministries in Christ's name. The volunteer leaders of the NACCC have invested a tremendous amount of time and energy in helping us step forward into our future. I cannot say enough about their diligence, their faithfulness, and their focus on our shared mission. I've never known a more committed and gifted group of people. They deserve our deepest gratitude for many sacrifices made in shepherding our association to this new and hopeful day.

Undergirding and complementing the efforts of all our volunteers is the staff of the association, who also provide dedicated, gifted, leadership and service—so that our churches may be supported in their work. Particularly worthy of praise is the work of the Center for Congregational Leadership, which, though still in its infancy, offers meaningful educational and practical resources to our churches and their leaders. This work is accomplished through the skilled efforts of staff and many volunteers; but the center would simply not be operating at its high level of effectiveness and professionalism without the masterful leadership of our executive in Olivet, Dr. Betsey Mauro; nobody on our team has had a more positive impact.

Now that we've finally received a positive response from the IRS (see "Caesar Speaketh" in "Along the Way," p. 38), so we can launch legally and fully into our new structure, I wanted to assure you of one thing: We, your volunteer leaders and staff, will continue to make our member churches the focus of our work, our top priority, and our reason for being. We look forward to doing great work together, in Jesus' name.

Blessings to you all!



CASEY VANDERBENT
Executive Secretary

More on Jonathan Edwards

Despite his reputation as a serious scientist, philosopher, theologian, and psychologist, Edwards was a very passionate man. That makes it all the harder to imagine him in the pulpit. By all accounts, he ... droned on in a monotonous voice ... never made eye contact with his congregation ... never even looked up from his written text. Apparently, even [delivering] his most famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” written at the height of the Great Awakening, he spoke in his usual dull manner.

And yet the reaction was tremendously emotional, as people shrieked and wailed and swooned at these powerful words: “The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire ... looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire. ... ’Tis nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment: ’tis to be ascribed to nothing else that you did not go to hell ... last night. ... And there is no other reason to be given why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God’s hand has held you up. ... O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: ’tis a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath ... you hang by a slender thread ... and you have ... nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.”¹

... Who knows how much this inner fire and outer impassiveness contributed to his alienation from his church in Northampton, Massachusetts. His parishioners felt that he had mishandled a case of church discipline, when some young men in the church were making obscene remarks to some of the young women. And many who had been admitted to church membership under the lax standards begun by his grandfather resented Edwards’s efforts to tighten those standards. ... The editors of *Jonathan Edwards Reader* comment: “The irony of ... the internationally revered theologian being summarily dismissed by his own congregation offers compelling testimony to the power of the pew in Congregational New England. ...”²

To be continued

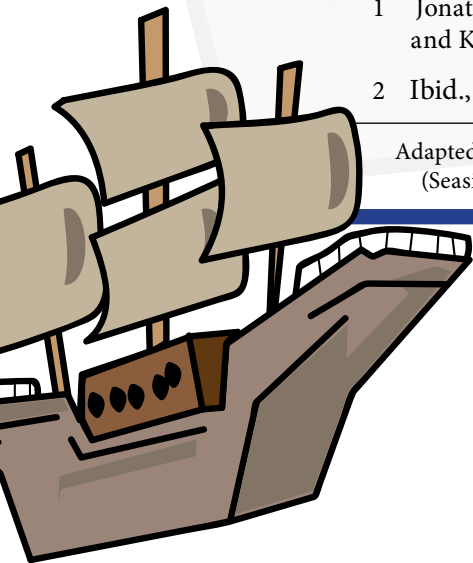
1 Jonathan Edwards, *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, eds. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 97-98.

2 *Ibid.*, xxiii.

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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)



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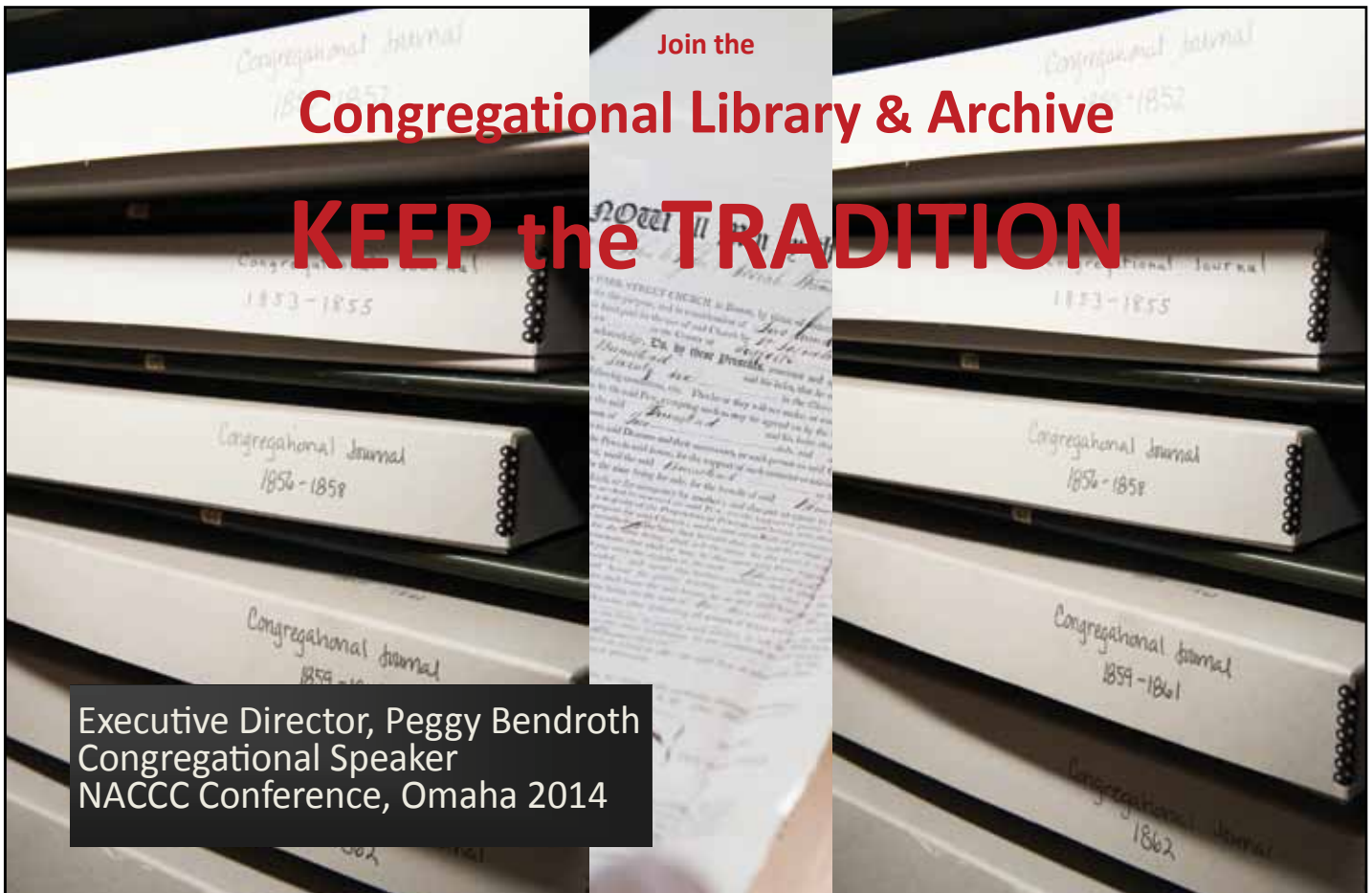
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Shoebox in the Cloud

“I love my new gadget, but I’m taking so many pictures that it’s running out of memory.”

Our digital tools have progressed to where an average person can create something cool enough to share with the world. But now that you’re a content creator, where do you keep all this stuff?

Instagram and DropBox.

They both operate on the same principle: Instead of storing pictures inside your gadget, you store them in the Cloud. It’s cheap and simple and it works.

Instagram is for pictures you don’t mind making public. (Not that most of them will ever get a lot of attention; you’re one of a gazillion people posting pictures.) The primary purpose isn’t to get exposure, it’s to get free parking. Post those non-private photos to Instagram with a description and some tags and you have a free, easily searchable archive of all the photos that don’t need to take up space on your gadget any more. And it’s free!

DropBox does the same thing, but more privately. Suppose you go on a mission trip with high school students. You don’t want to share photos of minors widely without permission. Further, a mission trip can be an intense experience; people might not want their photos public. At the same time, folks back home are hungry for information, and once everyone gets back they all want a copy of everyone else’s pictures. You need a shared space—but one that only certain people can access. That’s DropBox. And it’s free!

How to do it: First, go to DropBox.com and set up an account. This puts a virtual folder, labeled DropBox, on your computer. It acts like any folder, except this one lives in the Cloud. Initially, the only one who can see what you drag and drop into there is you. So you’ll need to add a new folder inside your DropBox, name it “Mission Trip Photos,” and right-click on it to invite other people via e-mail. If they accept, any pictures that any of you add to that folder automatically show up in the DropBox of every member of the group. It’s perfect for committees, teams, trips, or just for making space for more photos on the gadget of your choice.

But note this warning: Just because DropBox doesn’t share your photos publicly, that doesn’t stop someone else from doing so. *Technology* doesn’t fix people. The only way to truly keep a secret is not to tell anyone. But let’s be honest. Most of what we do isn’t interesting to anyone else anyway. Privacy matters, but don’t let it stop you from creating great content.



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.

*The NACCC's 60th Annual Meeting and Conference
abounds in events and opportunities.*

NACCC 60th Annual Meeting and Conference

Rejoicing In Omaha

Annual Meeting delegates voted to reshape the NACCC executive staff for the needs of the association's new organizational structure, trusting that "*The Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*"

That assurance from Joshua 1:9b, our conference theme, linked the three Bible Lectures by the Rev. Dr. Richard Cleaves (*see pp. 20-22*) but also pervaded business sessions as delegates and alternates from 116 member churches gathered, along with attendees, observers, missionaries, parliamentarian, and others at the Hilton Hotel in Omaha, "the Gateway to the West."

Moderator Neil Hunt moved the agenda along smoothly, aided by parliamentarian Sherry Glab. Interim executive secretary Casey vanderBent predicted the Internal Revenue Service would soon affirm the tax-exempt status of the Corporation for the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, the separate 501(c)(3) organization that handles the association's financial, legal, and fiduciary responsibilities. (His prophecy was quickly fulfilled; *see "Caesar Speaketh," p. 38*).

This year's Congregational Lecture, on Congregationalism as a long, ongoing conversation (*see pp. 18-19*), was given by historian Margaret ("Peggy") Bendroth, executive director of the Congregational Library in Boston. Bendroth, a regular attender of NACCC Annual Meetings, this year brought along two key staff members from 14 Beacon Street—development director Cary Hewitt and digital archivist Sari Mauro—to further cement the strong bonds between the association and the library.

STRATEGIC RESTRUCTURING

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches has recently restructured, with three Ministry Councils—one each for Growth, Vitality, and



Downtown Omaha street display.

Missions and Outreach—under the new Leadership Council, tasked with vision and programming. (Business affairs are under the board of directors of the aforementioned corporation.)

An *ad hoc* strategic staffing team recommended streamlining the staff structure with a single executive to be based at Olivet, Mich.—essentially combining the key functions of the two executives now known as the executive secretary of the association and the dean of the Center for Congregational Leadership.

This new “executive director” would supervise from a distance the office staff in Oak Creek, Wis., while continuing to guide the work of the center at Olivet and represent the association to the outside world. This plan was thoroughly discussed by many who attended a pair of informal “town hall” meetings before the motion came to a vote. Concerns were raised that one executive could not combine both roles effectively; but the executives now filling those posts, Casey vanderBent and Betsey Mauro, agreed that a single executive would be able to do the non-transferable functions of both positions. VanderBent, by the terms of his interim contract, will not be a candidate for the new position; Mauro is eligible to apply for the new position but does not have a guarantee of selection.

The association also approved changes to the Articles of Association and the Bylaws of the association, to finalize the new structure.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE NAMED

The Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the NACCC have named the following to the search committee for our new executive director. Please hold them in prayer as they undertake this important work.

Edith Bartley	Claudia Kniefel, Chair
Beth Borland	Curt Schmidt
Dawn Carlson, Secretary	Barry W. Szymanski
Kate Gabriel-Jones	Tom Van Tassell

If you are interested in receiving information about the position or would like to submit your confidential application, please contact the Rev. Dawn Carlson.

(E-mail dawncarl@aol.com; phone: 812-249-4389
20 McKinley Blvd., Terre Haute, IN 47803



Delegates approved a deficit of \$104,650 in the Shared Ministries Fund operating budget for the current fiscal year (begun April 1). Each of the three approved Ministry Council budgets projected small surpluses. The one-executive staffing plan is expected to produce balanced budgets for the Shared Ministries Fund in future years.

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Larry Sommers



Barry W. Szymanski



Barry W. Szymanski

1. The Rev. Elliott Wimbush on drum, and Deborah Nuss on keyboard, lead delegates and attendees in a spirited rendition of the African hymn “Siyhamba.” 2. Moderator Neil Hunt. 3. Carolyn Sundquist displays the Congregational Foundation’s new Annual Report.

Another highlight of the business sessions was the joyous acceptance of five new member churches:

- Christ First Community of Faith, North Haven, Conn.;
- Allison Congregational Church, Allison, Iowa;
- Oakham Congregational Church, Oakham Mass.;
- Paramus Congregational Christian Church, Paramus, N.J.; and
- Gomer Congregational Church, Gomer, Ohio.



Missionary Ella Smith reports on the Morgan-Scott Project in Tennessee.

“NON-BUSINESS” BUSINESS

Besides actions on the business agenda, the Annual Meeting and Conference featured reports, worship opportunities, informative workshops, and entertainments arranged by the host committee of the Iowa/Nebraska Association of Congregational Christian Churches.

The three Ministry Councils, created a year ago, all reported progress. The Growth Ministry Council, led by Mark Jurewicz, has activated task teams for Worship and Spiritual Growth, Church Planting, Technology, and Youth, and is organizing a team for Stewardship Resources. People interested in bringing their experience and energy to these activities are encouraged to contact Chris Meirose, the new Growth Council chair.

The Mission and Outreach Ministry Council, chaired for the past year by Laura Hamby, has

assumed oversight of the National Association’s 11 International, five National, and 11 Recommended missions and reported recent developments from many of those missions. Ten of our missionaries were in attendance at the meeting. The council is also working to strengthen the association’s partnerships with Piedmont College, Olivet College, the Congregational Library, and AMCO—the American Committee for the International Congregational Fellowship. Greg Jurewicz is the new chair of the Missions and Outreach Ministry Council.

The Vitality Ministry Council, led by Barbara Erlendson, has formed nine task teams, suggesting the wide range of its responsibilities and interests. The teams are responsible for Annual Meetings Workshops on Church Vitality, Annual Meeting and Conference Receptions, Congregational Identity and Practice, Center-sponsored Seminars, Ministers Convocation, Lay Ministry Training Program, Service Delivery, Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies, and Pastor Appreciation and Awards. “We have some task teams fully operating, others are just getting started and still others are waiting to begin,” Erlendson reported.

The Congregational Foundation, which has been quietly building a plan for the financial support and stability of the National Association, has issued a printed report this year and is raising its profile as the fund-raising and development organ of the association. After years of guiding the Foundation’s efforts, outgoing president Jim Hopkins handed over the leadership to Carolyn Sundquist.

The Rev. Dr. Arlin Larson reported on a project started two years ago by the Executive Committee which has now come to fruition: An ad hoc committee on misconduct in Congregational churches has produced a 24-page handbook on *Misconduct in Ministry* (see sidebar, p. 17).

The Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies celebrated the successful completion of its program by two seminarians, the Rev. Sarah Gladstone, now serving as senior minister at Hampshire Colony Congregational Church, Princeton, Ill.; and the Rev. Ian Macdonald, currently seeking his first call.

WORSHIP

The assembled body worshiped often and well, notably at Saturday's Opening Worship, which featured a meditation by the Rev. Tonna Parsons; the Sunday Worship, with a sermon on "A Curious Table" by the Rev. Tom Van Tassell; and the Closing Worship on Tuesday, in which Dr. Richard Cleaves delivered the message. Iowa/Nebraska Association leaders who also participated in the worship services included the Revs. Wendy Van Tassell, Tom Conrey, Jim Francisco, Kay Miller-Todd, Rich Miller-Todd, Harlan Nuss, Dan Vellinga, and Steve DeGangi; lay minister Linda Hauschild; choir director/song leader/general accompanist Deborah Nuss; and accompanist/bell choir director Elina Ozolins. The Revs. Casey vanderBent and Arlin Larson also took part in the Sunday Worship.

Besides these formal worship opportunities, there was the traditional Friday pre-conference Quiet Day, conducted by the Congregational Society of Classical Retreat Guides at the architecturally unique Holy Family Shrine, Gretna, Neb.; morning devotions before each meeting session; a Quiet Renewal Morning on opening Saturday; and evening worship services each day of the conference.

WORKSHOPS AND MORE

This year's conference featured an expanded menu of workshops,

crammed into available time slots on every day of the conference. Topics ranged from making religious objects with potter's clay to "What happened before the *Mayflower*?"

Annual, Continued on p. 46

NEW HANDBOOK AVAILABLE

Misconduct in Ministry, the new NACCC misconduct handbook, serves two purposes. It provides a practical guide to help churches respond to misconduct complaints, recognizing the inevitable distress of all parties. Second, it provides a framework for understanding many of the issues and considerations that come into play.



In it, one will learn that a church is called to be a place of rest and sanctuary that must always attend to the best interests of those it serves. Any sort of exploitation or harm is unacceptable. It is therefore a church's duty to discipline any clergy or lay leader who engages in misconduct. Because of the NACCC's system of local autonomy, the duty of discipline falls entirely upon the local church. This discipline is in addition to any legal remedies being pursued. We, therefore, recommend that a church work with an outside attorney.

A church should have policies and procedures in place to handle a misconduct complaint expeditiously and evenhandedly. These include appointing a "response team" to receive complaints and having a game plan for the pastoral care needs of victims, the accused, and the congregation. One will learn that a church must act on the "preponderance of the evidence" and not wait for "guilty beyond a reasonable doubt."

Where in all this is the NACCC? For one, it is a helpful resource for advice and perspective. Second, by maintaining "disclosure files" for our ministers, it provides a means for churches to put a misconduct complaint on record for other churches to see if they should consider hiring that person in the future.

Finally, the Handbook recommends "safe church" practices for minimizing the chance that misconduct will occur.

—Rev. Arlin Larson

Misconduct in Ministry: A Handbook for Congregational Churches (24 pp.), is available for download as a PDF file at http://www.naccc.org/CMSUploads/1525_NACCC%20Misconduct%20Handbook.pdf.

*Is Congregationalism a faith tradition, a covenant commitment ...
or a conversation that connects the generations?*

by Doug Gray

Congregationalism as Conversation

Dr. Margaret Bendroth captivated the room as she gave this year's Congregational Lecture. With the story-teller's gift, she invited us to go back in time to another June: To 1865 and the Boston Council of Congregationalists from across the nation.

In the turbulent wake of the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation, the opening of the West and the assassination of Lincoln—what did Congregationalism have to offer?

Dr. Bendroth—Peggy, to her many Congregational friends—has been executive director of the

Congregational Library in Boston for the past ten years. She received her B.A. from Cornell University and a Ph.D. in history from the Johns Hopkins University. She is the author of several books, including *The Spiritual Practice of Remembering* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), which summons readers to remember and honor the past.

She used the issues, approaches and words of the 19th century to help us understand the nature of Congregationalism and why history can teach us more than mere tradition. Is Congregationalism forever locked into the Pilgrims' beliefs and worship practices? What are Congregationalism's gifts to the Christian faith now? Some Congregationalists in 1865 wanted to emphasize the importance of tradition—to stay true to the treasure of Pilgrim faith, including strict Calvinism. Others at the Boston meeting called, from the trenches of the Western expansion, for something that lived and breathed, and could change the world. Everyone needed to understand Congregationalism, but, coming to agreement? Could it ever happen?

Stroke by stroke, Dr. Bendroth painted a picture of the perilous and promise-filled discussions held at Old South Church. Ironically, this conference held at the site of town-hall meetings that led to Revolution in the 1700s, seemed to hold little hope for a similar revolution in Congregationalism.

And then the surprise came: On a day trip to Plymouth, members of the council meeting came in prayer to the hill overlooking Plymouth, on which tradition had it that so many of the *Mayflower* Pilgrims were buried. As Alonzo Quint shared the declaration



Barry W. Szymanski

Peggy Bendroth delivers the 2014 Congregational Lecture.

he had scribbled hastily on the way down from Boston, tears began to come; the Spirit moved, and the Burial Hill Declaration was born. Really the most important fruit of that 1865 meeting was this declaration, except for perhaps the spirit they would take with them back to their churches. Disagreeing (and sometimes disagreeable), still they were seeking God together. Still they were in conversation.

It's a conversation that continues, Dr. Bendroth pointed out:

I suggest that instead of looking for a blueprint we imagine ourselves part of a conversation. We could say that in the 17th century the Pilgrims and Puritans came up with an idea that was so compelling, so important—and so packed with possibilities—that it provided conversation fodder for decades—centuries—to follow. There have been important points in the conversation—the framing of the Cambridge Platform, the Boston Council, and of course the merger debates of the 1940s and 1950s, that resulted in the creation of the UCC and the NACCC.

Each time we have the conversation we are in a different time and place ... and we come with different concerns, liabilities, strengths. Sometimes it's not all that fun or easy.

But being part of a historical tradition like Congregationalism isn't meant to be a walk in the park. It takes work. In fact, the more vigorous and creative the discussion, the better it is, the deeper our commitment to it.

And we who live today were challenged by this lecture to continue that conversation in the 21st century, conversing not just with ourselves, but with our spiritual parents. They thought and wrestled, cherished and needed Congregationalism to be faithful and to work in their day, as we do today in ours.

What could we bring to that conversation? Dr. Bendroth suggested perhaps that the Congregational emphasis on covenant could make it clearer that membership is “not a consumer decision [about] where to go but a covenant commitment” to Christ

and each other. Another place the Congregational tradition might have something to say is what the 18th- and 19th-century Congregationalists called “watch care,” promoting accountability and providing support by being aware of how others are doing. With our access to social media, this could have positive implications, such as compassion and accountability, as well as negative implications—“busybodies” and gossiping.

“This is how we can remain faithful to the founding vision,” Dr. Bendroth said, “not by copying it or guarding it like it is a deposit in a bank. ... We are all in this together as people who, though separated by death and time, share a common vision, one that the world needs today perhaps more than ever.”

The reality she outlines is one which we should find very freeing. My grandparents and my parents, on both sides, sought to authentically express and dynamically describe the Christian faith for their time—and by God's grace in their own ways, they changed their local churches and communities, Congregationalism, and the world.

But their time is not ours, and so the conversation includes our discovery of their time, so that we can separate what was unique to their experience, from what they grasped that is eternal. We, too, have the opportunity to make the eternal message of Jesus Christ authentic and dynamic for our day ... and we need to allow the same opportunity to those who come after us. Ultimately, we have this kind of dynamic faith, as Paul says, “in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).



PASTOR DOUG GRAY is a third-generation Congregational pastor and a Mayflower descendant. He now serves as pastor at the First Church of Squantum in Quincy, Mass. He and his wife, Cynthia, promise their children (Morgan, Hannah, and Caleb) they don't have to be ministers!

*“What is written in Scripture? ...
And what do you read there?”*

Reading the Old Testament in the Company of *Jesus*

When things go wrong it's good to talk.

And they needed to talk.

They knew all the theory.

The Lord your God is with you,
wherever you go.

But sometimes the theory isn't enough.

And this was one of those times.

So began the first of Dr. Richard Cleaves' Bible Lectures at the NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference. He took us down the road to Emmaus with the disciples, as told in Luke 24. After Jesus became known to them in the breaking of the bread and then left them, they said, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

Richard Cleaves is minister of Highbury Congregational Church, Cheltenham, England, and teaches Biblical studies for the Congregational Federation's Institute of Practical Theology in partnership with the University of Winchester. He and his wife, Felicity, grew up together in

by Tom Van Tassell

Clarendon Park Congregational Church, Leicester, and both were present at the inaugural meetings of the International Congregational Fellowship. Richard studied Theology at Jesus College, Oxford, and did his Ph.D. work at the University of Wales in Bangor, writing on the history of the interpretation of the Bible, studying under R. Tudur Jones, one of the foremost historians of Congregationalism. Many of us got to know Richard and Felicity at last year's ICF meeting in London, where his Bible lectures were well received.

At our Annual Meeting in Omaha, Richard led us through reflections on how we read Scripture, especially the Hebrew Bible (which we call the Old Testament). Based on our theme verse, "The Lord your God is with you wherever you go ...," the three lectures reminded us that God is with us . . .

- On the way to Jericho, reading the Law—Luke 10:25-37.
- On the way to Caesarea Philippi, reading the Prophets—Mark 8:27-9:1.



Larry Sommers



The Rev. Dr. Richard Cleaves delivers Bible Lectures at the Omaha meeting.

- On the way to the end of the age, reading the Writings—Matthew 5:1-2, 43-48.

Richard's presentations were easily accessible. With visual projections he brought us on our own journey through the three lectures, remembering how Jesus opened the eyes of the travelers on that road to Emmaus and opened the Scriptures to them. They had a way of reading the Scriptures, and they had gotten it wrong! If the disciples read the Scriptures in a certain way and had their expectations dashed, what can we learn from that? Especially in the face of the rise of fundamentalism across all religions, how do we read Scripture, particularly the Old Testament?

In Lecture One Richard said, "I think if we pay attention closely to the Gospels there are points at which the Gospel story gives us pointers to the kind of strategy Jesus used in reading the Scriptures. And it is one that we can take on board as we seek to read the Scriptures through the eyes of Jesus." He then turned to one of those points—in Luke 10:25-37, the Parable of the Good Samaritan—and asked us to pause to look at that passage projected on the screens. Then, for a few minutes, in conversation with those seated near us, we discussed "What's it about?" Small group discussion was part of each of the three Bible lectures.

Cleaves noted that many Christians tend to tie down definitive meanings in Scripture. In contrast,

the Jewish way is to ask questions of the Scripture. That is what Jesus does in Luke 10. A teacher of the Law asks Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replies with two questions: 1. "What is written in the law?" There were, among his hearers, those focused on the words, as there are today. But Jesus asked the second question: 2. "What do you read there?" In other words, what is the nub of the matter? What is the heart of the matter? Is it keeping the law to the last detail? Is it about purity of race and ritual cleanliness? Is it something else?

Then Jesus does something profoundly Jewish—he tells an interpretive story, a *midrash*, on the text being discussed, which is the Law. The story he tells is the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan shows by compassionate action a different reading of the Law from the other passers-by, the priest and the Levite. Then Jesus asks, "Which of these three was a neighbor?" As Cleaves put it—"Which of these people reads the Law and gets it right?"

Cleaves said we need a strategy for reading, and Jesus gives us one! Claim the promise of God's presence, then as Jesus is with us, read the Old Testament with his strategy. What is written in the Law? What do you read there? Be wary of whole edifices of doctrine and ethics based only on what is written—balance it with Jesus' questions and stories!

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After looking to the Law or Torah in Lecture One, Cleaves turned in Lecture Two to reading the Prophets, and to the Writings in Lecture Three.

Points to ponder in reading the Prophets: In the Prophets there are points of prediction, but there is more than that going on. Jesus has taken up the mantle of the prophets and calls for repentance—not just saying “I’m sorry,” but adopting a whole new way of thinking. The prophets spoke truth to power and held it accountable. Jesus fulfilled the prophets in one sense by doing what they did—preaching, calling for repentance, taking a stand against the powers that be. But in another sense he had an understanding that drew him to particular passages that show what it takes to rule in God’s way, in God’s kingdom. The “nub” or heart of the matter is to take up the mantle and recognize what it takes to rule in God’s way.

Points to ponder in reading the Writings: There are questions of identity, there is poetry and wisdom, and Jesus picks this up in the Sermon on the Mount, especially in Matthew 5:1-12 and 43-48. Cleaves challenged us with this thought: Elias Chacour, an Arab Christian, makes the observation that in Aramaic, the language of Jesus, the word that is translated here as “blessed” is a much more pro-active word. He suggests translating it, “Get up, go ahead, do something, move.” Try it and the Beatitudes become a call to action in the work of the kingdom!



Barry W. Szymanski

Richard Cleaves delivers the first of three Bible Lectures at the Omaha meeting.

I thank Richard Cleaves for the insights shared and for helping us realize, as did the two on the Emmaus road, that when we grapple with Scripture and with the problems of the world, we are not alone. For in Jesus we may be sure the Lord our God is with us wherever we go.



THE REV. TOM VAN TASSELL, co-pastor of the First Congregational Church of Spencer, Iowa, serves on the NACCC Vitality Council and chairs the Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies task team.

The full text of Richard Cleaves’ Bible Lectures, as well as a blog of his and Felicity’s travels in the U.S., can be found at <http://withyouwhereveryougo.blogspot.co.uk/>. Also see congregationalism.blogspot.com/2014 for various reflections posted during the lectures and the conference.

*Share the joy of the NACCC youths as they extend
a helping hand to people in Nashville.*

NA Youths' *Great and Amazing Week*



1. From left, Grace Schaaf, Laingsburg, Mich.; Meghan Webster, Farmington Hills, Mich.; Matthew Cole, Lynn, Mass.; and Paden Graham, Laingsburg, Mich., cut framing members for a ramp at Sheila Perry's house. 2. Quinton Rice gets a hug from Sheila Perry. 3. Jake Knight talks with a young attendee at the Under the Bridge Tuesday night dinner.

Young Congregationalists descended on Nashville, Tenn., June 22-28 for the 2014 Youth Conference combining members of National Association of Pilgrim Fellowship and Heritage of Pilgrim Endeavor—our high school and college-aged youth groups, respectively—for worship, inspiration, fun, and mission.

The conference theme—“Walk the Line,” based on Ephesians 4—was expounded and focused by the Rev. Stu Merkel, program speaker. Participants included 65 NAPF members, 25 HOPE members, and 27 counselors and leaders from local churches. Altogether 17 churches were represented, including two of our newest member churches.

A series of local mission opportunities in Nashville was arranged through Mission Discovery, a Tennessee organization that also coordinated lodging for the NAPF/HOPE attendees at Vanderbilt University.

The youths built wheelchair ramps at ten homes. “These were people who have had their freedom and

mobility taken from them,” reported Ryan Prendergast, a member of the Commission on Youth Ministries. “The look of joy and hope on their faces as we pulled up to their homes is something I’ll never forget.”

They deep-cleaned classrooms at Warner Elementary School and prepared them for the next school year.

They cleaned, painted, and set up a new site for Sophia’s Heart, a ministry to homeless families. “One particular area we worked on was preparing a room to become a cosmetology school,” reported commission member Joanne Simpson. “We also donated numerous books to their children’s library.”

The Bridge Ministry is a weekly event for homeless and disadvantaged people, held under a bridge in downtown Nashville; it includes a dinner, a worship service, and food distribution. NACCC youths worked in a warehouse stocking shelves and getting food and supplies ready for The Bridge’s Tuesday night dinner; and HOPE members provided child

1. Stu Merkel speaks.

2. NAPF Youth Conference attendees surprise the HOPE contingent by breaking out in a line dance during worship.



Jean Lewis

Jean Lewis

care during the worship service, which drew more than 500 people, and participated on its prayer team. “It started with one woman and a pot of jambalaya,” reported HOPE officer Mary Brooks, “and now consists of more volunteers than they know what to do with, enough food to feed the hundreds who show up on a weekly basis to receive a meal and God’s word, and bags of food and basic

hygiene products to give away to those in need. We were blessed to help out the night they were baptizing new believers, and we watched 15 people get baptized in the name of the Lord.”

“We have found a great partnership with Mission Discovery,” commented Prendergast. “It is amazing to get to travel the country, praising God and doing good deeds through him. ... It [was] a long and tiring week but I never once saw anyone sitting down or complaining. It was always, ‘What can I do to help? Is there anything I can do for you?’ ... The churches of the NACCC should be so proud of their youth!”

The group also found time to attend the Grand Ole Opry, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and a Nashville Sounds baseball game.

“Working in Nashville was such a great experience,” reported Prendergast. “It was amazing feeling God’s presence over us the entire week. ... Through him we were able to truly help and change the lives of a small group of people in the Nashville area. I can’t wait for next year!”

Thank You

For the last 31 years **North Shore Congregational Church**, Fox Point, Wis., has been blessed to have **Rev. Karl Schimpf** and his lovely wife, **Dottie**, faithfully serve our church. Their dedicated and loving service has been a blessing to us all. Karl has recently announced his retirement. The congregation will greatly miss Karl as our senior pastor and Dottie as our parish nurse. We want to take this opportunity to thank them and to wish this caring and gracious couple the joyous and rewarding retirement that they so richly deserve.



Special thanks to Lynn Merkel, Joanne Simpson, Ryan Prendergast, Mary Brooks, and Mindy Jaster for compiling this report.

Why do Congregational volunteers return year after year to help rehabilitate New Orleans?

Why We're Still in NOLA

by Lys Kennedy and Sharon Jenks

Why do we still go to New Orleans nine years after Hurricane Katrina hit the city on Aug. 29, 2005? Is there still a need? Why can't they do it themselves?

We keep going back because there is still work to be done!

Everyone remembers the disturbing TV images of people crowded into makeshift shelters in the Superdome and Civic Center. These were primarily poor people, dependent on public transportation—which had stopped running—to get them out of the city.

The eye of the hurricane passed just southeast of downtown New Orleans, most severely striking

nearby St. Bernard Parish, where 81 percent of housing units were damaged or destroyed. The official death toll was 1,836 people, making it the deadliest hurricane to hit the U.S. since 1928. Total property damage was \$81 billion.

In NOLA (short for “New Orleans, Louisiana”), where hurricanes are not uncommon, locals refer to Katrina as simply “The Storm.” Beyond the storm itself, the breaking of the levees was the real culprit. NOLA lies below sea level, and levees are used to hold back the water. The storm surge caused more than 50 breaches to the levees, causing the worst engineering disaster in U.S. history. In less than two days, four-fifths of the city was flooded; some areas were buried under 15 feet of water. Floodwaters lingered for weeks.

After the storm, there was much mismanagement of funds by corrupt politicians and contractors. Many affected by the storm and flooding were poor and had no insurance. Many had lived in family homes for years, but could not prove they owned the house. Some, who had the means to buy supplies and fix their homes, were re-victimized by contractors who took their money and disappeared. Supplies were often stolen from unsecured houses.

Experts say it will take at least 15 years to overcome Katrina.



John Bell

A St. Bernard Project supervisor explains the "Opportunity House" concept to Congregationalist volunteers.

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Lys Kennedy

Liane and Mark Jensen speak with Shigeki Terashi, Toyota's president and COO for North America. Toyota has partnered with the St. Bernard Project, providing both funds and project planning expertise to help restore housing in the devastated community.

Our eight-year journey began when the Rev. Linda Anderson went down to volunteer in New Orleans over Martin Luther King Day 2007, almost a year and a half after Hurricane Katrina struck. They saw there was still a huge need for help, and Linda vowed to return with more helpers! She approached the Rev. Chris Richards, who chaired the Mission Board of the Southeast Michigan Association of Congregational Churches. An informational meeting was held at North Congregational Church, Farmington Hills, in October 2007. With a strong showing of interest from area churches, and after much discussion on dates, a trip was planned for Martin Luther King Day week in January 2008, with 20 participants from five churches. The next year we grew to a team of 35 and then reverted to a steady 20-25 team members each year. We have also changed our dates from mid-January to late February each year.

We stay in old schools, converted to dorms for volunteers, where we get our bunks, our showers and three meals a day at a very reasonable rate. We started at Camp Hope, which Habitat for Humanity started for volunteers in the early days, when there were no other housing options. After the first three years, changes in the status of Camp Hope led us to relocate to Camp Restore, housed in the former Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and operated by Recovery Assistance, Inc., a ministry of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. That first year at Camp Restore, we stayed in the cramped confines of cargo containers and bought fans to assist with air movement! The situation improved the following year, when RAI regained access to school classrooms, which they outfitted with bunk beds and mattresses, and we have bunked there ever since.

We have had a variety of experiences in NOLA. Each year is different; we never know what our task will be until we arrive. We have worked with Habitat for Humanity, building new homes, and with the St. Bernard Project, renovating existing homes. For the past four years we have worked exclusively with SBP since we liked what we saw.

Liz McCartney and Zack Rosenberg, volunteers from Washington, D.C., started the St. Bernard Project to help families return to their homes. From St. Bernard Parish, they have expanded to provide resources wherever there is a need in NOLA. They have now partnered with tornado-ravaged Joplin, Mo., and Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts in New York and New Jersey; they serve as a model for communities to recover in a prompt, efficient, and predictable way, thanks in part to corporate help from Toyota. To this day, they have rebuilt more than 445 houses in NOLA. However, there are still 8,000 families who can't afford to rebuild the homes that they own in NOLA.

Some of the things we have done:

- Laid sub floors
- Roughed in a house
- Planted 5,000 tree saplings in the bayou
- Did finish work including building a porch and roofing on houses in Musician's Village
- Put siding on a house in wind, rain, and snow
- Mudded, sanded, painted, caulked, and hung dry wall in many houses
- Laid ceramic flooring, hung doors, and attended both a Press Conference and a "Welcome Home Party"
- Guttled two "Opportunity Houses," abandoned houses to be repaired and then sold at a discounted cost

- Worked in protective masks and gear doing mold remediation
- Built a prototype pre-fabricated home in the SBP warehouse, where no volunteers had worked before

If it weren't for AmeriCorps, communities like New Orleans, Joplin, and coastal areas of New York and New Jersey would have a harder time rebuilding. AmeriCorps volunteers get a small stipend to live on, and they commit to 10 months of service with the option for an additional 10 months. They range in age from 18 to 70 and come from all walks of life and from all over the country. They have been our volunteer coordinators at Habitat and SBP as well as our on-site work supervisors. Our experience for the most part has been most favorable. We've found wonderful people giving of their time and talents.

Why do we keep serving in New Orleans? Well, why not New Orleans? We go back to other mission locations year after year.

NOLA has come a long way since our first trip 2½ years after Katrina, when we saw no stores open and 20-foot-high piles of debris still on street curbs in the hard-hit St. Bernard Parish and the lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans. However, the needs are still great. There are people who need God's love extended to them in their continuing adversity. We continue to be thanked by the organizations we work for, homeowners we work with, business owners we visit, and strangers we meet along the way.

Our core group from eight years ago was Mark and Liane Jensen, Chris Richards, Sharon Jenks, Polly Bodjanac and Lys Kennedy. All still participate. Many have made the trip five years or more. Dedicated volunteers from Southeast Michigan, as well as friends and relatives from elsewhere, have made a commitment to the people of New Orleans that has bonded us in faith, family and fellowship. New Orleans gives us a break from Michigan in the



Mary Jean Bell

Three Michigan Congregationalists appear garbed for dusty, hazardous demolition work.



late winter and accommodations that are affordable, comfortable, and favorable to the strengthening of our friendships.

We plan to stay at Camp Restore and work for St. Bernard Project Feb. 22-28, 2015. You can find additional information at semaccmission.com; camprestore.org; and stbernardproject.org. Please join us for a fun but worthwhile trip, one you will not soon forget.



LYSBETH KENNEDY has been a member of North Congregational Church, Farmington Hills, Mich., for 29 years. A Xerox retiree, Lys has been a primary organizer of the NOLA Mission Trips for the last seven years. She currently chairs the Southeast Michigan Association of Congregational Churches Mission Board. Lys lives in Fenton, Mich., with her husband Mark. They have two adult children and six grandchildren.



SHARON JENKS has been an active member of First Congregational Church of Clarkston, Mich., for 33 years. Retired from AT&T, she has been going to NOLA since the first trip in 2008. Sharon has also spent additional months at Camp Restore for each of the past two years, working with their recovery program. She is the mother of three adult children and grandmother of four grandchildren and lives in Waterford, Mich.

An Ohio pastor and his son share their eye-opening experience of God's work transforming the Mexican countryside.



Corey Hernandez



Polly Bodjanac

*God's Providence and Grace at Work in **Mexico***

by Chuck Moeller

Very soon after we came to the Congregational Christian Church in LaFayette, Ohio, the oldest of our four children, Nathan, was invited to join a mission trip planned for June 2014 to Misión Mazahua in Mexico. After Nathan and I discussed it with my wife, Karen, and we prayed about the opportunity, both Nathan and I felt led to go.

Neither of us had ever traveled outside the United States. Time in which to get documents and immunizations was short, but God is good: We managed to secure everything we needed with a week or two to spare.

The group we were going with came from several Ohio churches and included six adults, five teenagers, and one infant. We would link up with other short-term missionaries in Mexico, making a total team of 40 individuals called to serve.

The team's leader, Pastor Jack Brown of Olivet, Mich., explained in a phone call the overall goal and objective of the trip: To support, equip, and encourage the mission's full-time staff in whatever ways they needed. As Jack

described some of the projects we would be working on, my eyes were slowly opened to the challenge of doing work projects in Mexico, as compared with my American experience of work projects.

On June 19 at 2:00 a.m., our group boarded two vehicles and drove to Dayton International Airport for our flight—first to Charlotte, N.C., and then on to Mexico City, where we arrived in early afternoon. We greeted the rest of the mission team as they arrived over the course of several hours and began to get to know the people we would call family for the next week.

The final leg of the journey was prolonged. Because of flooding in Mexico City, the normally



Opposite Page: 1. Chuck Moeller rinses a bucket as American team members and local workers press to complete a concrete cistern. 2. Marisol Malloy gets a kick out of helping a small camper during the Special Friends camp at Misión Mazahua. 3. Mark Jurewicz, offers a drink to Lalo, a camper at the Special Friends camp for the disabled.

Right: Every day at the mission begins with an hour of praise, prayer, and sharing in the mission's chapel, before breakfast is served.

two-hour bus ride to the mission took almost seven hours. At 2:00 a.m., more than 24 hours after leaving home, we finally arrived at Misión Mazahua. Staff members greeted us and showed us to our beds, where we gratefully collapsed into sleep.

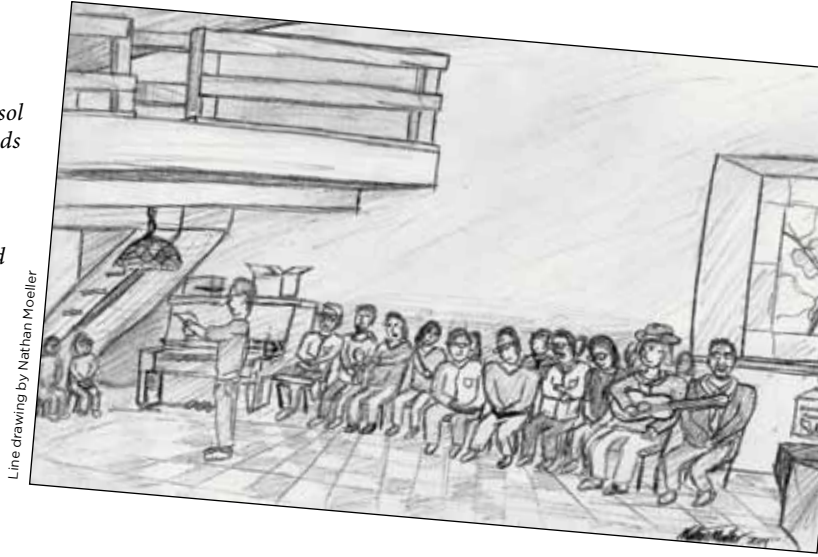
The next morning, we started our work. Our 40-person team was asked to help with the following projects: Building a new above-ground concrete water cistern; stripping and refinishing wooden chairs; pouring a new concrete walk at the mission's Las Rosas annex; leading a Vacation Bible School day program for children of the mission staff; helping in many ways with a special needs camp; sewing potholders and oven mitts; and taking school supplies on horseback to some of the area schools. We were split up into teams, each team given a leader, and not quite knowing what to expect—but excited and willing—we went off to serve.

One of the things I was concerned about was the language barrier. Our team leaders from LaFayette, Nathan and Christina Seidner, who had been to the mission before, helped give us a basic understanding of some words and phrases before we left—but I still found it was difficult to have a good conversation without a translator nearby. Thank goodness for translators!

As you may imagine, there was also a lot of laughing that went along with each day as we attempted to communicate using pointing and charades.

We were challenged by a gastrointestinal illness that afflicted not only our team of 40 but even some of the mission staff members. One by one, two by two or even three or more individuals were getting sick each day; by the end of our journey, 35 of 40 team members had gotten sick.*

* An unusually high rate of illness for Mazahua team members, perhaps caused by a form of food poisoning—Ed.



Line drawing by Nathan Moeller

This started to affect the capabilities of the team as we strove to be a help and not a burden to the mission. Each morning, we got an update on who was sick among the members of both the short-term team and the full-time staff. Work teams were adjusted to make sure they were adequately staffed, and everyone was encouraged to watch out for one another. I think, by the end of our time there, it was through sheer determination and God's grace that things were getting done. Despite illness, our team completed both concrete projects, refinished 50 wooden chairs, hosted the VBS and special needs camps, sewed the potholders and oven mitts, delivered the school supplies, and did other miscellaneous projects for the Mission.

Reflecting on our time at Misión Mazahua and the journey that it was, I see God's providence and grace. As my son and I prepared to go, we had no idea how we would pay for a trip of this magnitude. We knew that God was urging us to go—and in true God fashion, He paid for our trip through generous individuals who shared the heart and vision for the mission.

I was unsure how 40 individuals with varied backgrounds and experiences would work and live together, but the group meshed wonderfully. There was joy in getting to know one another, and one person's weakness turned out to be someone else's strength. We found mutual encouragement and strength to get projects done and to finish them with joy.

Although I have been on local mission trips and projects here in the States, the opportunity to take this step with my son and to experience God's hand at

Continued on p. 47

Corey Hernandez

Listen to a Millennial express what the church needs to be for her generation.

Children of the Millennium Part 2

How Can We Reach the Millennials?

by Sarah Gladstone

In our June issue, the Rev. Sarah Gladstone, herself a member of “Generation Y” or “the Millennials,” explained that those born between 1980 and 2000 tend to be independent-minded, idealistic dreamers who seek out meaning and mastery, sometimes even at the expense of practical considerations. In this second half of her article, she ventures a few suggestions for churches wanting to connect with this exciting group of young adults now coming into their own.



One of the biggest fears that I encounter among church leaders, as a young pastor, is that I might demand a worship experience that reflects my generation and my generation alone; that I might trade out the organ for a praise band, that I might burn all the old hymnals, that I might start using vague or trendy sermon illustrations, that I might be irresponsible and forget about pastoral care.

All in all, the church is afraid of what might come of a generation that is spoken of as lazy, fickle, and materialistic.

Be Authentic, Relational, and Rooted

But, you want to know a secret? Millennials don't really care about what style worship music we sing on Sunday.

We love worshipping alongside the other generations. We love having kids in the sanctuary. We love smart sermons. We love missions. We love small groups. We love Jesus. And we love you.

Millennials are looking for authenticity, relationship, and rooted-ness! To answer our earlier question: That is where the Millennials are.

The young adult years are full of a lot of lessons. But for a wide-eyed, educated, open-minded generation like the Millennials—the lessons are coming fast and furious. We are currently learning that life is tumultuous, and a lot of things we thought were guaranteed—such as home ownership, a career, retirement, family, health—are not necessarily so, or perhaps they might not last.

Millennial worship is an expression of what Millennials know to be true about the world. They are gravitating towards small communities that can tend to their needs for purpose and relationship with the Lord of all.

However your church community expresses your faith, whatever that is, Millennials want to know that it is authentic and rooted. The church is seen as the string to our kites in this world. Something to keep us grounded as we continue to search for independence, meaning, and mastery. (Side comment: This is why we tattoo our spirituality on ourselves ... we are looking for things that stick.)

Give us a church home that is holy, welcoming, grounded in the wisdom of those who have come before us, and relational, and we are putty in your hands. Crazy, right!? That's the secret to attracting and welcoming in Millennials.

You can't fake it

But be warned, there is a catch. Millennials are born with two abilities: We naturally speak technology and we were born with an ingrained ability to smell phony church propaganda.

The church can be a great home for Millennials as long as the church is authentic and has a clear ministry. At this years NACCC Ministers' Convocation, John Wimberly pointed out that to reach out to Millennials will take three things: Intentionality, Alignment and Teamwork.

Intentionality for Millennials means inclusiveness. Churches can unintentionally be the most unwelcoming place in the world. Christians talk about eating the body and blood of Christ. Christians praise a "father" (for those coming from unique or difficult family histories, this can be a challenging concept). Christians send the children out of the sanctuary in order to worship. Christians stand up and sit down in a foreign pattern. The list can go on and on. The point is, hospitality is a serious issue. We have only one shot at being open and welcoming to God's children. The last thing a visiting young adult wants to think about on Sunday morning is whether or not an infectious optimism, or a tattoo, is going to offend someone.

Alignment is the next thing that has to be addressed. Wimberly used the image of a boat full of rowers to represent the church, and asked the question: Who is in your boat? Church members, or course. Non-members, staff, visitors, youth, elderly, musicians, some programming, and a pastor. To get anywhere, the boat full of rowers has to all be heading in the same direction. What is that direction? Evangelism? Social Justice? Education? Finding the focus and direction of the body of Christ is challenging. But what a beautiful privilege, to engage in that conversation—to find that focus and dive in wholeheartedly.

Go, Team!

And last but not least, Teamwork. This is where the Congregational Way is truly valuable to the Millennial generation. Congregationalists are locally grown, rooted, autonomous and fellowship-driven. The Christian church is a marvelous thing. It was given a task by Christ: To be a beacon of Christ for the community. To draw people in to a place where they can be cared for, and supported by our God and God's children. That is our purpose, which takes teamwork and willingness. Every church is filled with a unique group of people; with its own culture, drive, and opportunities. And in the Congregational Way we can shape our systems to fit our unique culture, to accomplish our holy work.

Of the 85 million Millennials in this country, about 60 percent don't have anything going on Sunday morning. But let me assure you that they are all looking for community, looking for purpose and an outlet to ponder and serve our Savior. I encourage you not to fear the Millennials but to embrace their optimism, open-mindedness and search for relationship with God.



THE REV. SARAH GLADSTONE is pastor of Hampshire Colony Congregational Church in Princeton, Ill. In the past she has served as a licensed minister of the First Congregational Church of St. Johns, Mich., and as a chaplain to the Appalachia Service Project. She is an M.Div. graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.

One of the NACCC's financial leaders tells how to empower your church for mission by carefully developing a donor-friendly endowment fund.

*Endowing the **REAL** Work of the Lord*



Endow: to give or bequeath an income or property.

by Rick Bauzenberger

The words “church endowment” bring to mind large, cathedral-like structures with only a few old folks attending Sunday worship—churches that can no longer maintain their facilities based on current member support.

But if the church’s mission, or reason for existing, is to foster spiritual growth, then an endowment fund can support not only the physical plant, but also the living church and all elements of its outreach and vision. It can be a powerful tool for the Lord’s work, helping to move the focus of the church from “us” to the wider world.

How can we develop this powerful tool?

FIRST: FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT

The makeup of an endowment committee or board is critical and in many churches is misdirected. The committee’s focus should be on development, marketing, and communication—not on investment management.

You can and should hire an independent professional investment advisor (conveniently available to NACCC churches through the Congregational Investment Trust) to safeguard and grow the fund’s assets; the job description of volunteer endowment board members should focus on developing gifts and bequests into the fund.

As with so many things in life, there is an “80/20 rule” for fund raising. Approximately 80 percent of endowment funds should come from testamentary bequests, and the remaining 20 percent from current gifts. Unfortunately, many churches focus on current gifts, which must come from personal incomes that are already stretched pretty thin.

The efforts of the endowment committee are most effectively spent helping church members develop testamentary bequests as part of their overall estate planning. Tithing ten percent of our wealth after we die is a lot easier to budget, since our worldly needs will no longer exist. (Yes, members will need to explain to the kids that they will get 90 percent, not 100 percent, of their wealth.)

Consider creating a brochure for seniors that shows the church’s endowment fund as a tool for supporting the church’s spiritual priorities. Include information, resources, and suggestions on how to include the church in members’ discussions with estate-planning attorneys.

Bequests are stipulated in wills and revocable trusts; the church should always receive and maintain copies of all such documents that name the church as a beneficiary.

At the same time, do not neglect the 20 percent of endowment gifts that come from donors’ current incomes. Consider encouraging endowment gifts in printed memorial and funeral bulletins. A gift to the church’s endowment can be a nice way for members to honor the passing of a church friend.

DEVELOP A DONOR-FRIENDLY STRUCTURE

Offer both restricted and unrestricted accounts. While most gifts may be perpetual or restricted, some donors may allow the church the discretion of spending principal by making an unrestricted gift. Allowing choice will benefit the church.

For restricted accounts where only interest can be distributed, interest or earnings should be calculated at 1 to 1.25 percent of the fund’s market value per quarter (4 to 5 percent per year). This will go a long way towards (1) allowing gifts to grow at the rate of inflation, preserving the purchasing power of accumulated gifts;

The committee’s focus should be on development, marketing, and communication—not on investment management.

and (2) avoiding the temptation to skew the portfolio towards high-yield, high-risk investments.

Assess legal risk. While many churches use their tax-exempt status to provide a tax shelter for earnings, this approach exposes the endowment fund to liens and lawsuits against the church. You can protect your church’s endowment fund against such liens by creating a Sec. 509 (a)(3) Supporting Organization. To do so, you need to seek the help of an attorney who has experience in this area.

Provide many endowment choices to encourage donor commitment. Not everyone has the same passion, nor is it unreasonable to want a certain amount of control over how your gift or bequest is used. Be ready to add endowment choices for your donors. Consider some of the choices already being offered by your sister churches, such as: missions fund, meetinghouse fund, seminary scholarships fund, youth programs and camps fund, minister’s mortgage fund, organ fund, music fund, message and music fund, visual arts fund, and prestigious speaking fund (guest ministers).

Avoid potential conflicts of interest. While everything may be running smoothly now, endowment board

Continued on p. 34

members change over time, and conflicts of interest may arise and become very divisive. Investing can bring out strong opinions, some of which may not be prudent. Hire a professional fiduciary with no ties to the church. The Congregational Investment Trust (CIT) offers strong fiduciary oversight and excellent professional management via Vanguard Asset Management Services. Also, the CIT combines the assets of the NACCC, the Congregational Foundation, and many member churches, which results in a lower cost per \$1,000 invested.

CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENTS AND SUCCESSES

Involving the youth in endowment-supported events is a must. Youth mission trips provide great

experiences and long-term memories. At North Shore Congregational, we send a group every year on a mission trip, recently to assist Hosanna Industries in Pennsylvania. While it is good experience for the kids to raise their own travel expenses, they can also take along a meaningful endowment check to aid the mission or outreach project.

Find ways to celebrate. Consider an annual breakfast or dinner to acknowledge and give thanks for the many projects, groups, and initiatives supported by the endowment in the past year. This will allow all members to be involved and to learn of the good works of the church.

Finally, don't allow your church's endowment fund to become a rainy-day reserve. While donor's wishes need to be respected, meaningful distributions are the purpose of the fund. And, it is those distributions to worthy causes that will endear member support. Remember, there's no need for hard selling when you are presenting opportunities to endow the outreach and missions of the living church.

I hope this advice helps in initiating or enhancing your church endowment fund. If your church is experiencing endowment fund successes not mentioned here, I'd like to hear from you. Also, call or e-mail me if you have any questions.

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RICK BAUZENBERGER chairs the Congregational Investment Trust Oversight Committee. He and his wife reside in Mequon, Wis., and are members of North Shore Congregational Church, Fox Point. Rick may be reached at 262-241-0852 or e-mail rbauzenberger@gmail.com.

A top consultant says churches do better when they are aligned with a clear sense of purpose.

Aligning a Congregation

by John Wimberly

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Many of us have had the disconcerting experience of driving an automobile that is not properly aligned. When driving such a car, we are fighting the vehicle's lack of front-end alignment; if we take our hands off the steering wheel, the automobile begins to pull off to the left or right. Besides producing unnecessary wear and tear on the tires, it does the same to the driver.

Many pastors have had the equally disconcerting experience of having our hands on the steering wheel of an unaligned congregation. Like a car, the minute we take our hands off the wheel, the congregation begins to go off in other directions. Unlike a car, sometimes it goes off in unintended directions even when we have our hands on the wheel!

In April 2014, I had the privilege and joy of discussing congregational alignment with a group of NACCC leaders at the serene Weber Retreat Center in Adrian, Mich. I started our conversations by laying out three key elements of alignment. First, for a congregation to be aligned, there needs to be very great clarity of purpose. Second, there are the actual mechanics of getting the various elements of a ministry aligned. Third, teamwork is needed to get things aligned and keep them aligned.

CONGREGATIONS ARE LIKE ROWING CREWS

To demonstrate the challenges of alignment, I like to use the image of rowing crews. In a single-rower



John Wimberly addresses the Ministers' Convocation at Adrian, Mich., April 2014.

Barry Szymanski

boat, the issue of alignment is almost non-existent. One rower does his or her best to win the race and that is that. In a boat with two rowers, the task is much more difficult. The rowers not only must exert themselves physically and mentally; they also have to stay in sync with their partner in the boat. Jump to an eight-crew boat and the issues of alignment overwhelm almost everything else. If one rower's oar catches in the water, it can throw off everyone else in the boat.

Rowing with an eight-member crew is a piece of cake in comparison with the alignment challenges in a congregation.

Who is in our boat? We have people: Members, non-members, and staff. We have programs: Christian education, worship, mission, youth, music, and more. We have staff: Pastor(s), musician(s), secretary, janitor in many congregations. People, programs and staff are each like a boat unto themselves; however, they are all in the same boat. And if they are rowing in the same direction, at the same speed, life is good. If not, life is not so good.

CLARITY OF PURPOSE

Before a congregation can be aligned, it needs to understand its purpose. Indeed, oftentimes the problem isn't a lack of alignment *per se*, it is a lack

of clarity of purpose. It is impossible to create alignment in a congregation if there are multiple understandings of the congregation's purpose. Without clarity of purpose, the subtext is always "Align with what?"

Patrick Lencioni, a great synthesizer of organizational insights, offers the following keys to achieving clarity of purpose in an organization:

- Create Clarity of Purpose
- Create a Cohesive Leadership Team (Staff and Lay)
- Over Communicate Clarity
- Reinforce Clarity

We live in a world that is rapidly changing; change is part of life. Pastors and congregations who don't like change probably won't like ministry. Pastors and congregations who embrace and even relish change find ministry to be among the most fascinating occupations possible.

Given the changes around us, we need a plan for moving into the future. I am convinced that Moses, Jesus, Paul and the other great builders of religious communities had strategic plans. Obviously, they didn't call them strategic plans. However, they had a vision of where they were headed, broad goals to get there, and specific strategies to realize the goals. Those are the core elements of a strategic plan. Jesus had some fairly rigorous performance measures!

A strategic planning process should generate clarity of purpose about a congregation's life for a three- to five-year period. The defined purpose can then shape most of the congregation's decisions going forward. The plan creates an internal discipline that is sorely lacking in many congregations. So, for example, if a

Without clarity of purpose, the subtext is always "Align with what?"

member approaches the governing board with an idea for a program, the board no longer starts a debate about the value of the program. Instead, the board begins by asking itself, "Does this program contribute to our primary purpose? Or, is it a tangent that will divert energy and money away from our primary purpose?"

John Kotter, a Harvard academic who writes on organizational issues, insists (correctly, in my opinion) that the clarity of purpose should be explainable in a matter of a few minutes. He isn't arguing for sound bites. He simply realizes that if we can't summarize the purpose of our congregation in a few minutes, then we probably aren't clear about the purpose. Clarity of purpose leads to clarity of language.

In an aligned congregation, everything will relate to the established purpose. A congregation's leaders will ask themselves, "What type of staff do we need to accomplish our purpose? How much money do we need to realize our purpose? Do we need to make changes or upgrades to our facilities to achieve our

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Also see our Web site at www.mcgraftchurch.org.**

purpose?” As important, leaders will evaluate current programming and ask, “What new programs do we need? What existing programs should be cut because they distract us from our purpose?”

OBSTACLES TO ALIGNMENT

What keeps a congregation from being aligned? I have developed a list of things that come from Lencioni, Kotter and other organizational gurus. A few of the problems we discussed at the Weber Retreat Center include:

- The right behaviors are not rewarded. If a congregation has an under-performing staff member and gives that person a raise at the end of the year, what is the message? The employee may conclude, “Well, I must not be doing too badly. Otherwise, why would they reward me with a raise?” Another example: If a team of people renovates the Sunday school rooms and their efforts aren’t mentioned in worship and elsewhere, they can reasonably conclude that no one cares about their work. Behavior that contributes to the purpose needs to be rewarded and recognized. Behavior that distracts from the primary purpose needs to be changed, not tolerated.
- Information flow within the organization is bad. Pastors go a little nuts when people say, “I never was told about that.” We go nuts because we mentioned it in worship three straight Sundays and had it in the newsletter. Despite these irritations, we need to be constantly working on a communication strategy regarding our primary purpose. Any communication specialist will tell us that we need to repeat our primary purpose until people are sick of hearing it and then repeat it again. At that point, they may hear it.
- Strategies are oriented toward past, not future. Most congregations today are wondering how

they can attract the millennials. They are the largest generation of our time, and polling shows them to be very open to the spiritual dimensions of life. My first suggestion is to stop using strategies that attracted the post-World War II generation and baby boomers. Millennials aren’t particular about the style of worship but they want it to be authentic and relevant; they are busy and don’t want to waste time on committee meetings; they prefer working in teams. So let’s create strategies that are focused on what people want today and tomorrow, not what people wanted in the past.

- Strategy execution isn’t a high priority. Let us not create a strategic plan unless we are committed to implementing it vigorously for the next three years.
- There is little enthusiasm for new strategies beyond the core leadership. Part of strategic planning should involve creating buy-in from the entire congregation as the process moves forward. If a plan is presented as a fait accompli, it will be difficult to build congregational support afterwards.

In Adrian, clarity of purpose was one part of what we discussed in regard to alignment. Without clarity of purpose, there will be no alignment. Without alignment, it is very difficult to grow a congregation or engage in a consistently faithful ministry.

Aligned with God, aligned with a well-defined purpose, congregations can and will grow.



JOHN WIMBERLY served three congregations over a period of 40 years as an ordained Presbyterian pastor and is now with Congregational Consulting, a group of former Alban Institute consultants found online at www.congregationalconsulting.com. John specializes in strategic planning, church growth, and financial and staff issues within a congregation’s life. He can be reached at jwimberly6243@gmail.com.

News from the fellowship of churches

CAESAR SPEAKETH—The Internal Revenue Service on July 25 ruled that the Corporation for the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches is a public charity under Section 509(a)(3) and a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

“Contributions to you are deductible under section 170 of the Code,” wrote Tamara Ripperda, director of Exempt Organizations for the IRS. “You are also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under section 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the Code.” The ruling is retroactive to Aug. 15, 2010.

Although no one has suggested that any previous gifts to the NACCC or its Corporation were not tax-exempt, the ruling was sought in order to clarify the status of the Corporation before the formal adoption of the new organizational structure developed as a result of the association’s three-year strategic planning process. The official ruling from the IRS removes any possible legal impairment and clears the way for the full, final adoption of the new association structure.

Whew!

THE SEARCHERS—The Board of Directors of the Corporation has appointed a search committee for the new staff position of NACCC executive director. Members of the committee are: **Edith Bartley**, Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.; **Beth Borland**, First Congregational Church, Detroit, Mich.; **Dawn Carlson**, First Congregational Church, Terre Haute, Ind.; **Kate Gabriel-Jones**, Rockland Congregational Church, Rockland, Maine; **Claudia Kniefel**, First Congregational Church, Anchorage, Alaska; **Curt Schmidt**, Congregational Church of Bound Brook, N.J.; **Barry W. Szymanski**, First Congregational Church, Wauwatosa, Wis.; and **Tom Van Tassell**, First Congregational Church, Spencer, Iowa. At its first

A GIFT FOR THE GIFTED—Due to a genetic disorder, Hugh Malosh, pianist for the Rockwood First Congregational Church in Rockwood, Michigan, is dying from liver failure. For over 18 years, Hugh has blessed his brothers and sisters in Christ with his special gift of music. Despite constant daily pain, he continues to play for services, fearful that some day soon, it may come to an end. Hugh’s only hope of survival is to find a living donor for a partial liver donation. If you are compelled to donate by the grace of God, please contact Hugh’s family at 734-678-9595. God Bless.

—submitted by the Rev. Dr. Charles Packer

meeting, Claudia Kniefel was elected chairperson and Dawn Carlson secretary. Those interested in the position should contact the Rev. Dawn Carlson, dawnCarl@aol.com, 812-249-4389, 20 McKinley Blvd., Terre Haute, IN 47803.

JOINT MISSION—Heritage Congregational Church of Madison, Wis., ministered to its own local community by providing hospitality to a Massachusetts group on a mission June 22-29. The 21 youths and eight adults came to Madison from First Congregational UCC in Needham, Mass.



Adults and youths from Needham, Mass., bring their energy to a series of mission projects in Madison, Wis.

Michael Hammer

The visit was planned by Heritage pastor, the **Rev. Cindy Bacon Hammer**, and the **Rev. Jamie Green Klopotoski** of the Needham church, with assistance from Orchard Ridge UCC in Madison and Joining Forces for Families, a local family support group. The Massachusetts youths scraped and painted the house of a woman with severe health problems; painted hallways of an apartment building in a low-income area; fenced a community garden in another low-income area; and renovated the common area of the Joining Forces for Families building.

The Heritage congregation provided meals, bedding, and sleeping space in the meetinghouse. The Needham youth group also experienced a poverty simulation event, recreation, and worship, and still had time to scrape and paint the portico of Heritage Church and to build a picnic table for the Heritage daycare.

SWIM INTO CAL-WEST—The *Southwest Inter-Mountain Fellowship of Churches*, known as SWIM, dissolved June 2 with assurances that its members will be joyfully welcomed into the *Association of Congregational Christian Churches and Ministers of California and Neighboring Western States, Incorporated*, known less formally as *Cal-West*. The SWIM fellowship, started in 1991 by **Dr. John Alexander**, founder of the *Congregational Church of Sun City, Ariz.*, and former executive secretary of the NACCC, at its height boasted 14 churches in Texas, Wyoming, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and Colorado; however, its membership dwindled over the years to six churches—four very small ones and two large churches, those of Sun City and *Salt Lake City*.

After discussions within SWIM favored dissolution, the **Rev. Ed White**, SWIM's moderator, wrote to his Cal-West counterpart, the **Rev. Fa'afouina Solomona**, asking that Cal-West absorb the SWIM churches. Solomona responded May 27 with a letter of warm welcome and on June 2, White sent a letter to SWIM member churches and friends, announcing SWIM's

demise and its welcome into Cal-West. The association donated its cash balance of \$791 to the NACCC, half for NACCC Missions and half for host committee costs for the Salt Lake City Annual Meeting and Conference in June 2015.

UNPRECEDENTED—At least, as far as we know: An ordained mother-daughter duo pastoring a local church.

It became official June 21, when *St. Jacobi Congregational Church, Richfield, Wis.*, ordained (with concurrence of a vicinage council) the **Rev. Pamela Viets**—mother of the **Rev. Hillary Viets Bowser**, the church's pastor for the past nine years.

Viets' call to ministry was discerned gradually, beginning around 2000, when **Dottie Schimpf**, pastor's wife and parish nurse at *North Shore Congregational Church, Fox Point, Wis.*, encouraged her ministry to older people, the dying, and patients with Alzheimer's disease. Early in 2013, when Bowser's second child was born, her mother began working with the St. Jacobi church: Bowser, who was working about half-time for the church, needed the help.



“We started talking about the needs of the church and her needs and it all fell into place,” said Bowser.

The arrangement makes Pam Viets the junior partner in ministry to her daughter, Hillary Bowser. “My mom and I are very close. Things work very well,” Bowser said. Viets preaches once or twice a month and is active in counseling, visitation, and Bible study.

NEWS

NEW MISSION

The **Honduran Congregational Mission** will no longer be supported by the Mission and Outreach Ministry Council, due to irreconcilable differences with its board. MOMC has voted to change support to the **Ministerio Vida Hospital (Honduras)**. The NACCC will join in partnership with In the Light Ministries, Harrisburg, Pa., and the Community Church of Plantation, Fla., to support this new hospital. Dr. Josue Hernandez, who operated the clinic for the Honduran Mission, will be the director of this new hospital. It will open on September



Dr. Josue Hernandez

1 as a clinic, while waiting for licenses to become a full operating hospital. Medical brigades will be sent to outlying villages every quarter. Eventually these brigades will be sent monthly. This hospital will serve the people of San Pedro Sula.

The hospital has four apartments for volunteer groups, a full kitchen and a chapel. The Rev. Julio Hernandez will be the hospital chaplain.

NEW EXECUTIVE

Meredith Connell is the new executive director of **Seafarer's Friend (Massachusetts)**. She comes with a wealth of experience in the corporate and non-profit worlds. She has established and developed offices overseas for a multinational corporation, consulted for several non-profit agencies, and served as executive director of a humanitarian aid relief agency in the U.S. Meredith brings a unique professional background as well as a vibrant enthusiasm for serving others, which is crucial to the mission of Seafarer's Friend.

NEW INITIATIVE

Piney Woods School (Mississippi) started a new program entitled the "Transforming Superboys into Supermen" Initiative. A total of 120 young minority males benefited from four fulfilling weekends of mentoring in this project.

The first session focused on "Culture, Race, and Awareness." The boys were mentored on how to handle racial issues and show respect for other cultures. The second session zeroed in on "Education and Personal Responsibility," whereby the boys were mentored on the importance of secondary and post-secondary education in the minority



Piney Woods event mentor and kids.

"It was pure enjoyment from beginning to end."

—Jeannie Hart, Naples, Fla.

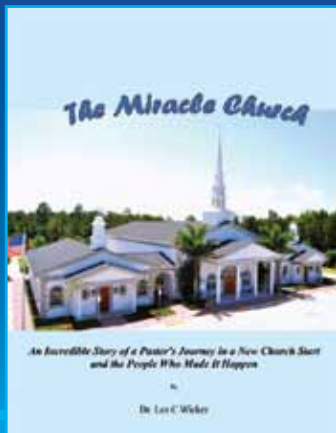
"What you accomplished in Florida was indeed a gift from God and the book tells it all."

—Grace Faison, Plymouth Church, Brooklyn

This award-winning new book by Dr. Les Wicker tells the journey of the pastor and people who stepped forward to embrace a new Congregational Church in Naples, Florida. Reading this incredible story, you will understand why people refer to this church as "The Miracle Church."

Outskirts Press, 204 pages.
\$12.95 paperback.

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Linda Miller, Editor

community. The third session dealt with “Social Justice and Civic Engagement;” boys learned the importance of voting and why being a positive role model in their communities is so important. The fourth session focused on “Physical Activity/Mental Health,” providing a mini-boot-camp session that showed them the importance of taking care of their physical and mental health. They were

introduced to how important it is for young minority males to be great fathers, sons, brothers, and community officials. They were mentored about the detrimental effects of illicit drug use, sexually transmitted diseases, and other risky behaviors. This session ended with a fellowship lunch where each participant received a certificate of completion.

NEEDS

SCHOOL SUPPLIES NEEDED

Missions that work with children can always use backpacks, art materials, and other school supplies. **Bread of Life Mission (Florida)**, **Menaul School (New Mexico)**, **Maine Sea Coast Mission (Maine)**, **Morgan-Scott Project (Tennessee)**, and **Panamerican Institute (Mexico)** are a few of the missions that have these needs.

CHRISTMAS IN OUR MISSIONS

Now is the time to start planning your Christmas giving for our missions. Donations must be in our office by Nov. 15, in order to get to our missions by Christmas. Here are some of their wishes:

Asociacion Civil Cristiana Congregational (Argentina)—Small parcel containing cakes, candies and other sweets to each child, elderly person and Sunday School teacher (\$2).

Christian Mission in the Far East (Philippines)—Donations to a feeding program for the needy children in the community.

Happy Life Children’s Home (Kenya)—A \$30 appreciation gift for each worker, a Christmas celebration for 70 people, toys for the children.

Congregational Church of Myanmar (Myanmar)—Money, gifts and a Christmas meal.

Panamerican Institute (Mexico)—A Christmas basket (\$40) to each student.

National Association of Congregational Churches (Philippines)—Grocery packs for 44 pastors and workers and a Christmas bonus (\$70) for each.

Bread of Life (Florida)—Gift cards for shoes, clothes, and food.

Indian Trails (Arizona)—Small personal items such as hair brush, barrettes, and small toy cars.

Maine Sea Coast Mission (Maine)—Toiletries, puzzles, pajamas, large print books, movies.

Morgan-Scott Project (Tennessee)—Toys for children, gifts for teenagers and money for holiday programs, also mittens and hats, gift cards for Walmart.

Piney Woods (Mississippi)—Gift cards, gift/goodie bags, etc.

Seafarer’s Friend (Massachusetts)—Toiletries for ditty bags, plus caps and gloves for the seafarers.

Thank you for your support!

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, 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, and click on “Missions.”

ROGER LAUTZENHISER

The Rev. Roger E. Lautzenhiser, 91, died Dec. 27, 2012, in Angola, Ind. He was a graduate of Ball State University and Garrett Biblical Institute, where he received his M.Div. in 1951. He married Alice G. Mullins in 1949; she preceded him in death on March 21, 2000. After serving the Methodist Church in the northern Indiana for 13 years, Rev. Lautzenhiser moved to Lakewood Village Community Church in Long Beach, Calif., now an NACCC church, where he served for 34 years, retiring in 1996. He was survived by five children, eight grandchildren, and one sister.



LOUISE AUDETTE

Louise Thankful Audette, a staunch supporter of the International Congregational Fellowship, the National Association, and the New Hampshire Fellowship, died April 6, one day after she turned 101 years of age.

A lifelong resident Derry, N.H., she was a 90-year member of Central Congregational Church and was organist there for 46 years. The morning after her organist retirement dinner, someone noticed her going through the neighborhood, quietly distributing the roses given to her the night before.

Almost to the end of her life, residents of Derry’s convalescent homes enjoyed Louise’s piano concerts in which she mixed their favorite hymns with all the “old songs.”

The photo here was taken on her 100th birthday. “Louise Thankful Audette was a living example of the Biblical truth that ‘A cheerful heart is good medicine’ (Proverbs 17:22),” wrote the Rev. Grove Armstrong. “Her middle name and the peace of the Lord characterized her in every way.”



VERA WARD

Vera Bantz Ward, 92, died May 19 in Evanston, Ill. She received her bachelor’s degree from Northwestern University and there met her husband, Donald Ward. An accomplished stage actress, she played leading roles opposite Vincent Price, Cesar Romero, Jeffrey Hunter, and David McCallum, among others, and had numerous theatrical and broadcasting roles and interests. After her husband’s entry into the Congregational ministry, she was his helpmeet at churches in Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Evanston, and Mackinac Island, and was first lady when he served as president of Yankton College in South Dakota. After his death in 1994, she continued to enjoy travel and attending the theater. She is survived by three children, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

GLORIA WALSH

Gloria G. Walsh, 84, died July 3 at the Congregational Home in Brookfield, Wis., after an extended illness. She was a longtime member of First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa; her husband of 61 years, Jim, was treasurer of the National Association from 1996 to 2005 and served on the Investment Advisory Committee from 2005 to 2010.

Gloria had a beautiful smile and a great sense of humor. She will be missed by a wide circle of friends here in Wisconsin and in Sarasota, Florida where she and Jim spent much of their time.

Continued on p. 47 col. 2

RECENT CALLS

Trinity Congregational Church, Grand Rapids, Mich., has called the Rev. Israel “Izzy” Young as pastor.

First Congregational Church, Mukwonago, Wis., has called the Rev. Kevin Clark as pastor.

First Congregational Church, Albany, N.Y., has called the Rev. James Eaton as pastor.

North Deering Congregational Church, Portland, Maine, has called the Rev. Robin Norcross as pastor.

Second Congregational Church of Biddeford, Maine, has called the Rev. Catherine Anglea as pastor.

Oneonta Congregational Church of South Pasadena, Calif., has called the Rev. Lincoln Skinner as pastor.

First Congregational Church of Barkhamsted, Conn., has called the Rev. Sue Wyman as pastor.

ORDINATIONS

People’s Congregational Church of Bayport, Minn., ordained the Rev. Lisanne Winslow with concurrence of a vicinage council, May 31, 2014.

St. Jacobi Congregational Church of Richfield, Wis., ordained the Rev. Pamela Viets with concurrence of a vicinage council, June 21, 2014.

Founders Congregational Church of Harwinton, Conn., ordained the Rev. Geoffrey Smith with concurrence of a vicinage council, June 1, 2014.

Congregational Church of the Chimes, Sherman Oaks, Calif., ordained the Rev. Ian Macdonald, June 15, 2014.

IN SEARCH

SENIOR MINISTERS

Ashby Congregational Church and Hyannis Congregational

Church (share pastor) *Ashby and Hyannis, Neb.*

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

First Congregational Church *Ashland, Neb.*

First Congregational Church *Hanson, Mass.*

First Congregational Church *Vermontville, Mich.*

First Congregational Church *Wayne, Mich.*

Continued on p. 44



SEEKING A SENIOR MINISTER

Plymouth Church, a thriving 500-member church in Brooklyn, New York, seeks a **SENIOR MINISTER** to take us to the next level of spiritual development and growth.

- Founded in 1847, first pastored by Henry Ward Beecher, we continue our Christ-centered ministry of adult and children’s spiritual education, and ministries to our local and global communities.
- Aligned with and housed in the church buildings is the Plymouth Church School, a 2-year-through-kindergarten preschool, which also runs a summer camp.
- Our congregation includes families, particularly those with young children; a large number of professionals; and longtime members of the community.
- While Plymouth is a member of NACCC, our members are from diverse religious backgrounds. We are united in our desire to continue to grow together in community and faith.

We seek an experienced, energetic minister who is a dynamic preacher and a collaborative leader. Successful candidates will have at least a M.Div. or equivalent and 15 years’ experience as a minister, with at least one post as a senior minister. Compensation package includes salary, benefits, and housing. For detailed information, please visit our web site: Plymouthsearch.org

Contact our search committee by email at search@plymouthchurch.org or Search Committee, Plymouth Church, 75 Hicks Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201. All inquiries strictly confidential.



First Congregational Church
of Maltby
Snohomish, Wash.

LaMoille Congregational
Community Church
Marshalltown, Iowa

McGraft Memorial
Congregational Church
Muskegon, Mich.

North Shore
Congregational Church
Fox Point, Wis.

Orthodox Congregational Church
Petersham, Mass.

Peoples Congregational Church
Bayport, Minn.

Pine Hill Congregational Church
West Bloomfield, Mich.

Plymouth Congregational Church
Minneapolis, Minn.

Plymouth Church
Brooklyn, N.Y.

SouthCross Community Church
Burnsville, Minn.

Union Congregational
Christian Church
Marbury, Ala.

PART-TIME MINISTER

Second Congregational Church
Jewett City, Conn.

NON-NACCC CHURCH

Prairie View Christian Church
Norway, Iowa

CALENDAR

OCTOBER 20 - General copy deadline for *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* December 2014 issue. Contact Larry Sommers, editor@naccc.org or 800-262-1620, ext. 1610.

SAVE THE DATE _____

APRIL 20-23, 2015 - 46th Annual NACCC Ministers' Convocation—
Weber Center, Adrian, Michigan

JUNE 18-25, 2015 - Missionary Assistance Corps trip
to *Misión Mazahua, Mexico*,
Initial information posted at
http://www.naccc.org/CMSUploads/1540_MM_Newsletter_2015_Prospectus.pdf

JUNE 20-23, 2015 - NACCC 61st Annual Meeting and Conference—
Salt Lake City, Utah

DISAGREES WITH GARBER

I am disappointed with [William F. Garber's letter, "Keep Congregationalism Pertinent to Today" (*June 2014*, p. 35), in which he says, "I do not think we should look upon ourselves as an exclusive club that has the keys to the hereafter."]

The truth is we are part of "an exclusive club." Those who believe in Christ as their Savior do know the only way to Heaven. Christ did say, "I am the Way, the Truth, the Light." That is about as limiting a statement of how to get to Heaven as there is and if one does not believe that statement, one is not going to get there by any other means, including being "good people."

Congregationalism is not what is important to keep pertinent, the truth about Jesus being Lord and Savior is.

CANDICE E. CASSIDY
Sandown, New Hampshire

DOESN'T DISAGREE WITH ROBERTS, BUT ...

I don't disagree with anything Tim Roberts said in "How to Read Scripture" (*June 2014*, pp. 10-13). It is shortsighted to limit ourselves always to a literal reading of Scripture texts. But I had to stop and think about his example of a statement that might have multiple layers of meaning: "If you hear me say, 'I'm hungry!' you may rightly interpret it metaphorically, but you will neglect an important part of my humanity if you ignore the literal meaning."

True; but, I might wrongly interpret the utterance metaphorically if Dr. Roberts really only wants a ham sandwich! While the literal meaning can sometimes be almost totally insignificant, such as the lion in Revelation 5 who is able to open a book even though

he turns out to be a slain lamb, sometimes the literal meaning asserts itself in defiance of any and all fanciful transformations attempted on it—for example, the careful reporter's detail of the 153 fish in John 21.

A careful reader or listener ought to try hard to discover the writer's or speaker's intended meaning.

BOB HELLAM
Seaside, California

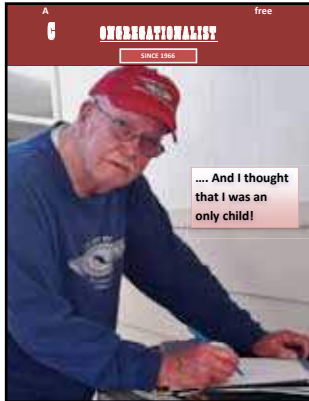
DELIGHTED BY SCHAFER, HOWEVER ...

I was delighted to see the article ("*Mithraism and Christianity*," *June 2014*, pp. 18-20) by Steven Schafer, a clergyman I greatly admire; however, I don't believe Steven accurately critiqued what I wrote in December ("*Following Jesus*," *December 2013*, pp. 21-23).

Nowhere was it suggested that Christianity is a carbon copy of Mithraism or Mithraism a copy of Christianity. What was stated by Robin Meyers, and quoted by me, was that Constantine engineered the merger of Christ worship and Sun worship in the fourth century. This merger was a politically expedient decision and has resulted in some elements of Mithraism surviving to this day.

The real issue is that the early Church leaders compromised the religion about Jesus and paid too little attention to the religion of Jesus. Even more, the Church Fathers of the fourth century took what they believed and created a creed known as the Nicene creed, still recited by some. It was a bold attempt to solidify the authority and power of the Church to control adherents. This changed the emphasis from Jesus the teacher to Christ the Savior, whose forgiveness was now granted to the believers of credal statements in a controlling system created by the Church leaders.

Continued on p. 46



Dear Reader: We were mildly astonished, and definitely amused, to receive the image shown here, with this note of explanation—

When the June issue of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* arrived in a neighbor's mail box (poor address reading by the mail carrier), the neighbor brought it to our house pointing and asking if that was me on the cover. ... Well, one thing led to another. ...

DON BURKLO
Soquel, California

Burklo's home-made cover, based on his own likeness, is shown here next to our actual June 2014 cover, featuring Mike Henry, First Congregational Church of Redlands, Calif. It shows what a Californian with too much time on his hands can accomplish.

That is why I am trying to follow Jesus rather than worshipping Christ. It's not easy, but neither was his life. Yet, because of his love of God and all humanity, the world and its ways is constantly challenged.

May the evolution of faith continue. Blessings to all sincere seekers.

DOUGLAS L. LOBB
Boise, Idaho

Annual, Continued from p. 17

As if all this were not enough, the host committee arranged evening entertainments including square dancing lessons, eclectic Iowa folk music duo Amy and Adams, and dinner and a jam session at the Storz Brewery & Grill.

This year's conclave was planned and executed by the Annual Meeting and Conference Team, chaired by Wendy Van Tassell and co-chaired by moderator Neil Hunt. Kay Miller-Todd, Linda Barnes, and Chris Barnes co-chaired the Iowa/Nebraska Host Committee, whose presence was felt in the form of 39 ever-helpful host workers, marked by the bright green bandannas they wore.

Altogether, Neil Hunt had ample cause for satisfaction as he passed the moderator's gavel to vice-moderator (moderator-in-waiting) Jim DeLine, who will moderate our next Annual Meeting and Conference, to be held in Salt Lake City June 20-23, 2015.

Mexico, Continued from p. 29

work in our life together was even more fulfilling. At times, Nathan and I reassured each other that things would be okay, especially as he was not feeling well. We pushed each other to either step it up a little bit more or (in my case) to slow down a little bit. Nathan and I were able to watch God at work together and to realize that we are truly loved and cared for. We didn't always work together; we would go our separate ways for projects or tasks, so that we could have our own experiences that we would discuss later.

It was a wonderful, faith-stretching trip. The vision that mission leaders Lisa and Norberto Cortés have for Misión Mazahua is amazing, and the impact they have had on the area and the staff is wider than I could have imagined. The support that the Congregational Christian churches provide for the mission, both financially and by sending individuals to serve, is an important part of what the mission is able to do. I look forward to visiting Misión Mazahua again and taking other family and church members along to support the Cortéses in their mission.

You can find them on the Web at www.mazahuamission.com.



THE REV. CHUCK MOELLER
is pastor of the Congregational
Christian Church of LaFayette, Ohio.



His son, **NATHAN MOELLER**, is a
freehand artist and drew the
illustration for this article.

Necrology, Continued from p. 42

She is survived by Jim and by their two children, by her brother, eight grandchildren, and a daughter-in-law. She was preceded in death by one son and by her parents.

Memorial gifts may be made to the First Congregational Church, Wauwatosa, to the Congregational Home, or to a charity of your choice.

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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.*

61ST ANNUAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

IN RUSTLING GRASS
I HEAR HIM PASS...

*“Let the rivers clap their hands,
let the mountains sing together for joy”*

—PSALM 98:8