

The CONGREGATIONALIST

Magazine of the Congregational Way since 1849

VOL. 166/NO. 4

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DECEMBER 2014

\$3.75



**FORGOTTEN
GIFTS**
from your
church's past

**MEASURE
SUCCESS**
by the
JESUS METRIC

**WHAT TO SAY
To Those in
GRIEF**

**INSTALLATION
—IS IT
CONGREGATIONAL?**


NACCC
Published by the National Association
of Congregational Christian Churches

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Going Our Way?

Elias Smith, 1769-1846, founded and edited the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, probably the first religious journal in the United States (1808) and a significant forerunner of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*.

Edward Beecher, 1803-1895—noted theologian, preacher, and Abolitionist—served as the founding senior editor, in 1849, of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*.

Henry Martyn Dexter, 1821-1890, personified American Congregationalism in the mid-to-late 19th century, wrote important books on the subject, and for many years edited *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*.

Joseph B. Polhemus, 1919-2013, who lives as “Joe” in the memories of many still alive, gained distinction in the fields of advertising, marketing, and business communications, and served for 15 years (1989-2004) as editor of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*.

These four shared a deep passion for communicating about things that matter—things at the heart of our faith journey.

Besides that, what do they all have in common? *Answer:* Each of them is memorialized on a simple-yet-elegant, coated-paper bookmark that we award to people who give \$100 or more to support this magazine through the Editor’s Round Table.

Those who give at exceptional levels qualify for one of the “named societies” commemorating Smith, Beecher, and Dexter. The rest of us get a simple brown bookmark, one which bears this observation by the late Joe Polhemus: “*THE CONGREGATIONALIST* and the NACCC are more dependent on each other than independent. Their future is the same.”

This week, mailing out personal letters of thanks to our recent Editor’s Round Table donors, it occurred to us that nobody gives that kind of money to get a paper bookmark, nor even to join a society named after Smith or Beecher or Henry Martyn Dexter.

Our dear, heroic Editor’s Round Table donors deserve our thanks for giving *strenuously, over and over again*, because they believe in the mission of *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*; they believe that our gathered, covenanted kind of Christianity has something to say to the world; and they want to be a part of that movement.

It’s not too late to get on board. We still have a few bookmarks left.



Norm Leimborg

LARRY SOMMERS, *Editor*

The CONGREGATIONALIST

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

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Except for service information clearly sponsored by the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches or its component parts, content does not necessarily reflect policies and opinions of the National Association.

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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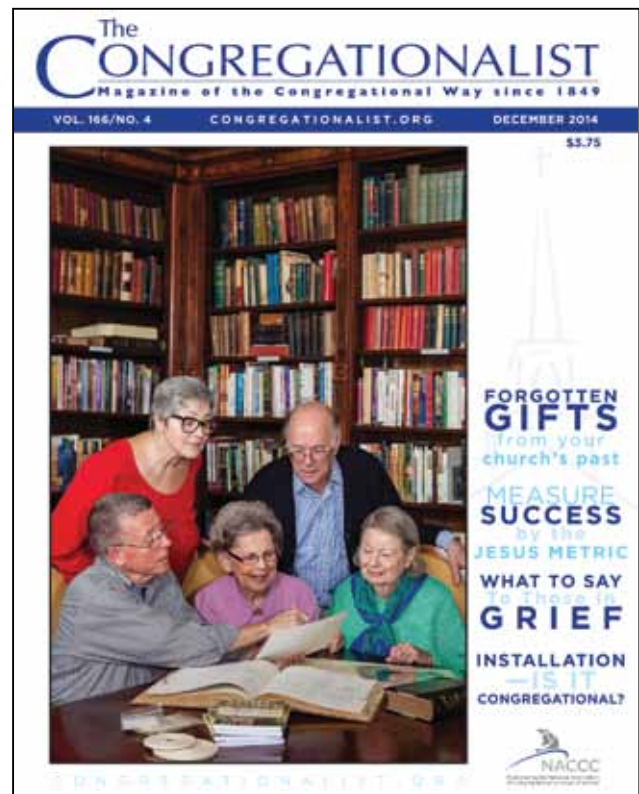
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ON THE COVER:

Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, N.Y., started archiving its papers and artifacts in 2004. Five members of Plymouth's History Ministry team are shown working on photos and books in the archive. From left: Kathie Lou Moser and Frank Decker, standing; Jim Waechter, Lois Rosebrooks, and Grace Faison, seated.

Great Joy, Profound Hope

by Casey vanderBent

When I began service as the interim executive secretary over 18 months ago, I wrote about my “great joy and profound hope” at the tasks before me. Now, nearing the close of this chapter of our shared journey, I still feel the same way. Much has happened in the past year-and-a-half. We have experienced many changes in the way our association looks and functions. We have welcomed new churches and new leaders, and we have said good-bye to old friends. We have worked hard together and have crossed the threshold of our structural change into a new day for our association.

It has been a tremendous joy to participate so fully in all of this; I cannot tell you what a blessing it is to know each day that I am exactly where God wants me to be. I pray that same sense of joyful certainty for your next executive director. Over the coming months, as I complete my service to you and await confirmation of my next calling, I will not relax in the enthusiastic pursuit of the best interests of this association and its member churches.

I’ve called these quarterly conversations, “By Way of Mutual Care,” from the Cambridge Platform’s list of reasons for churches to join in fellowship: “By way of mutual care in taking thought for one another’s welfare.” This mutual care continues to be the work of each of us, the work of every member church, the work of the Leadership Team and staff, and the work we are called to, as Christians bound in covenant in the Congregational Way.

Now, as we move forward into our shared future, I pray that you will renew your commitment to that mutual care that has bound us together since before the Pilgrims arrived on these shores. Ask for the Lord’s help in discerning how you can offer care in your locality, or how your church can engage in mutual care in fellowship with other Congregational churches. Be diligent—perhaps through the work of your church’s Year Round Delegate—in making the association aware of how it may care for you, and be just as diligent in caring for your association.

Continuing in the “profound hope” with which I began this journey, I pray for God’s continued blessing and guidance for the NACCC, for our churches, and for each of you. Thank you for giving me this opportunity and for walking this journey with me!



CASEY VANDERBENT
Executive Secretary

Jonathan Edwards, Conclusion

Sydney Ahlstrom [writes]: "... On 1 July 1750, he preached his farewell sermon [at the Northampton Church]. ... After dedicating twenty-three years of his life to Northampton, making it for a time a famous center of orthodoxy and revived spirituality, he was set adrift with a wife and seven dependent children." ¹ ...

"Edwards was lifted from the anxieties of his expulsion by a call to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, a frontier town where ... the Bay Colony's Board of Commissioners for Indian Affairs maintained a mission. ... Although he also had to carry on a double ministry, to the whites and to the Indians, he now was free from many time-stealing distractions. ... The Stockbridge years actually became the most productive in his life." ²

... In a later chapter, Ahlstrom sums up the communion controversy that caused Edwards's dismissal by his [Northampton] church: "The membership pledge he asked for was no more rigorous than the Anglican confirmation vow. Yet he did make a decisive break with the accepted principles of Stoddardeanism, and he cast a shadow upon the Half-Way Covenant. ... He rejected the older view that New England's total corporate errand was part of God's design. His grandfather's easy identification of town meeting and church meeting was found wanting. The church, he was convinced, must be gathered out of the world. On this general point Edwards's influence, exerted through his books, sermons, and example, was decisive; and he has been called in truth 'the father of modern Congregationalism.' ..." ³

... In today's theological jargon, Edwards would be called a postmillennialist. John von Rohr tells us, "He saw the Great Awakening as the beginning of the millennium soon more fully to come and, by God's providence, commencing in America."⁴

1. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 304.

2. Ibid.

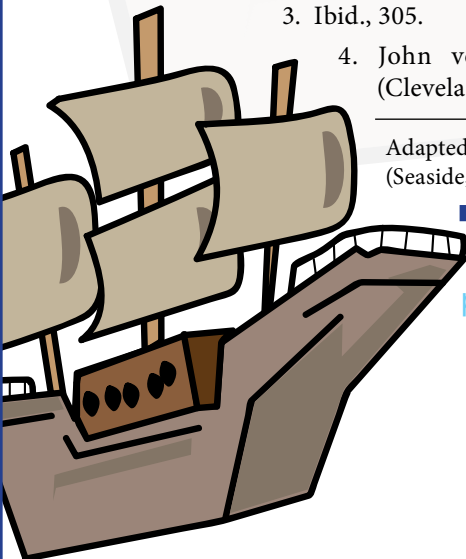
3. Ibid., 305.

4. John von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism, 1620-1957* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1992), 244.

Adapted and reprinted, with permission, from *The Congregational Minute*, by Robert Hellam (Seaside, Calif.: Robert Hellam, 2012)

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)



*Dig into your church's history with a team approach,
and discover unsuspected gold.*



Alan Barnett

John Arbuckle's gifts included the 4-story church house, arcade and garden pictured here, plus a gymnasium. Today these spaces house church offices, the Sunday school, a reception and music rooms, a thrift store and a 160-student nursery school.

Every church has donors and gifts from prior years that go unremembered by the current congregation. Discovering and honoring these past contributions can breathe new life into your church in the present day.

In celebrating an anniversary earlier this year, Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., dug in its archives and unearthed an exceptional example of a forgotten gift.

Plymouth member John Arbuckle, early in the 20th century, donated land adjacent to the meeting house and paid for demolition of nine houses occupying the property. Then he donated the design, construction, and furnishings for a four-story "church house," gymnasium and arcade, plus a large garden. If these

by Lois Rosebrooks and James Waechter

gifts were made today, they would be valued at more than \$50 million. If not for two quotes from the donor over fireplaces in Plymouth's Church House reception and music rooms, this remarkable gift might have been forgotten forever.

So, who was John Arbuckle and how were his gifts almost forgotten?

Arbuckle came to New York City from Pittsburgh in 1871. The 32-year-old entrepreneur had worked in his family's grocery and spice business, but he now wanted to bring his innovations to the center of the

American coffee trade. Arbuckle settled in Brooklyn, joined Plymouth Church, and proceeded to transform America's coffee drinking habits.

Through the time of the Civil War, coffee was sold green; the beans had to be roasted—at home on a wood stove, or in a skillet over a campfire—before they could be ground and brewed into a hot beverage. One burned bean could ruin the flavor. Arbuckle and his brother Charles in 1865 patented a process for uniformly roasting coffee beans and using an egg-and-sugar glaze to seal in the flavor and aroma. They sold their beans in airtight one-pound packages. From the chuck wagons of the West to the dinner parties of the East, Arbuckle's "Ariosa" and "Yuban" coffee brands took the market by storm.

By the 1890s, Arbuckle's huge operation in Brooklyn was producing 839,000 pounds of coffee a day! His factories and offices occupied 12 square blocks, with piers on the Brooklyn waterfront for his fleet of ships and barges and a railroad for transporting coffee and sugar from the Brooklyn shoreline to the factories.

From coffee baron to benefactor

Arbuckle's vision and energy to transform an entire industry also extended to caring for his fellow man. Hundreds of New York City poor were given jobs in his factories. In addition to daily pay, workers received free health care in the company hospital and free lunch and dinner in company dining rooms. Arbuckle used his fleet of ships, the country's largest in private hands, to take employees and other non-elite New Yorkers out on harbor waters at night and on weekends for clean air and nutritious food.

Among Arbuckle's many humanitarian projects was a retirement colony for the city's elderly poor on Lake Mohonk north of New York City. The complex, including

Continued on p. 10



The arcade built by Arbuckle connects the church house and gymnasium with the sanctuary. Today this space contains historical displays, paintings of the church's settled senior ministers, and even a piece of Plymouth Rock.



An exhibit describing John Arbuckle's extraordinary gift to Plymouth Church is on display in the gallery of the building complex he had designed and built for the church. The portrait hanging on the wall nearby is of the church's first settled minister, the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher.

Early on, the History Ministry realized that illuminating church history is much more exciting when it can be related to the present and future of the church.



John Arbuckle moved to Brooklyn in 1871, joined Plymouth Church and proceeded to transform the coffee industry in America. Over the decades that followed, the man and his extraordinary gifts to Plymouth were nearly forgotten. Alan Barnett photo of oil painting by unknown artist.

hotels for his company's workers, made it a point to hire handicapped workers to teach them a trade.

One of Arbuckle's last projects was his extraordinary gift to Plymouth Church. He had belonged to the church for more than 40 years and greatly admired Henry Ward Beecher, Plymouth's first minister. His idea was to have the church provide a school and clubhouse for the penniless coming to New York to seek their fortune. Evenings and weekends, school attendees had the opportunity to study business subjects preparing them for business careers. Today the church makes use of these gifts every day of the week and in 2014 has been celebrating the 100th anniversary of the grand opening of the buildings and garden.

How could Arbuckle and his remarkable gift have been forgotten by Plymouth Church?

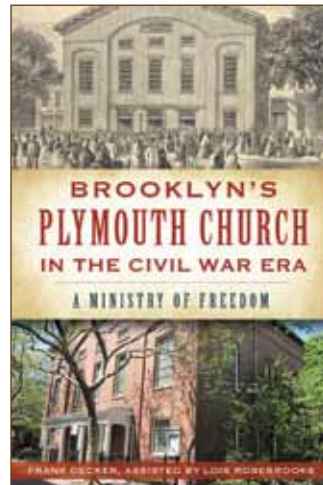
John Arbuckle died in 1912, prior to completion of the buildings. Two sisters in Pittsburgh inherited the company and eventually sold it to General Foods. Over time, all memory among friends and church staff of Arbuckle's role in the community and at Plymouth Church simply faded away.

How to reclaim church history

The institutional process of forgetting is not unusual, and at Plymouth several steps are being taken to recall more of the church's history:

1. *Forming a volunteer group of members interested in the church's history.* Called the History Ministry, this group started meeting regularly about ten years ago, establishing modest goals and celebrating accomplishments. Much of their effort focused on highlighting Plymouth's role in the Underground Railroad. Over time, relationships formed with other local, state, and national historical groups, and today tours of the church are given on a regular basis.

2. *Locating the church's archives.* Plymouth had an “old stuff” closet where every nook and cranny was filled with boxes of papers, and where things no one knew what to do with were stored. The History Ministry started the long process of collecting, cataloging, and preserving its archives and historic objects. Papers were organized and put into acid-free folders and boxes to slow further deterioration, and then everything was stored on movable racks to make it more accessible. The group quickly learned this archiving process was overwhelming, so help needed to be found (*see 3 below*). The current project, focused beyond the “old stuff” closet, is to photograph the church’s artwork, antique furniture and stained glass windows.
3. *Finding local interns to help with the cataloging and preserving process.* The History Ministry contacted local colleges and universities and the church archive became a class project. Students got class credit for working on the archive and summer interns were also brought in to help with the ongoing task. The good news is that all this work did not cost the church anything.
4. *Exhibiting some findings.* Plymouth is fortunate to have some exhibit space with display cases; two cases were donated by a local auction house owned by a member, and five cases came from a state agency because of the church’s role in the Underground Railroad. Themed exhibits are now developed and mounted by the History Ministry every 18-24 months. John Arbuckle’s story is the current exhibit. Another way the history of the church has been exhibited is through a book completed last year. Two members of the History Ministry, Frank Decker and Lois Rosebrooks, researched and wrote *Brooklyn’s Plymouth Church in the Civil War Era: A*



Brooklyn’s Plymouth Church in the Civil War Era: A Ministry of Freedom, by Frank Decker and Lois Rosebrooks (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2013), is available from Amazon for \$16.31 in paperback or \$9.99 for Kindle.



Alan Barnett

The History Ministry team enjoys its work. From left: Kathie Lou Moser and Frank Decker, standing; Jim Waechter, Lois Rosebrooks, and Grace Faison, seated.

Continued on p. 12

Ministry of Freedom. The book details anti-slavery activities of church members and friends before and during the Civil War.

5. *Connecting church history discoveries to the present and future.* Early on, the History Ministry realized that illuminating church history is much more exciting when it can be related to the present and future of the church. Plymouth's previous anti-slavery role has led to current participation in anti-human trafficking programs locally, nationally, and internationally. Members have also organized and operate a thrift store which donates a percentage of its profits to anti-human trafficking programs.

Plymouth Church made the choice to have history become a source of inspiration to the congregation. Current members have begun to embrace the church's

history when thinking about what Plymouth should be doing today and in the future.



A longtime member of Plymouth Church, **LOIS ROSEBROOKS** has been active on the Church Council and in the Plymouth Church Choir. She has led the children's Christian Education Ministry and has been active in the Adult Christian Education Ministry. Lois currently is the director of History Ministry Services at Plymouth and serves on the Vitality Council of the NACCC.



JAMES WAECHTER has been a member of Plymouth Church for 28 years, serving on the Plymouth Council, including as president. He chaired the NACCC Strategic Planning task force and served on the Executive Committee, including the task force to rewrite the by-laws. Jim's married daughter, HaeNa, lives in Brooklyn is actively involved at Plymouth Church.

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Lead people to Christ and into the family of God.
Encourage spiritual growth.*

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Also see our Web site at www.mcgratchurch.org.

NAPF/HOPE 2015

Scholarships Available!



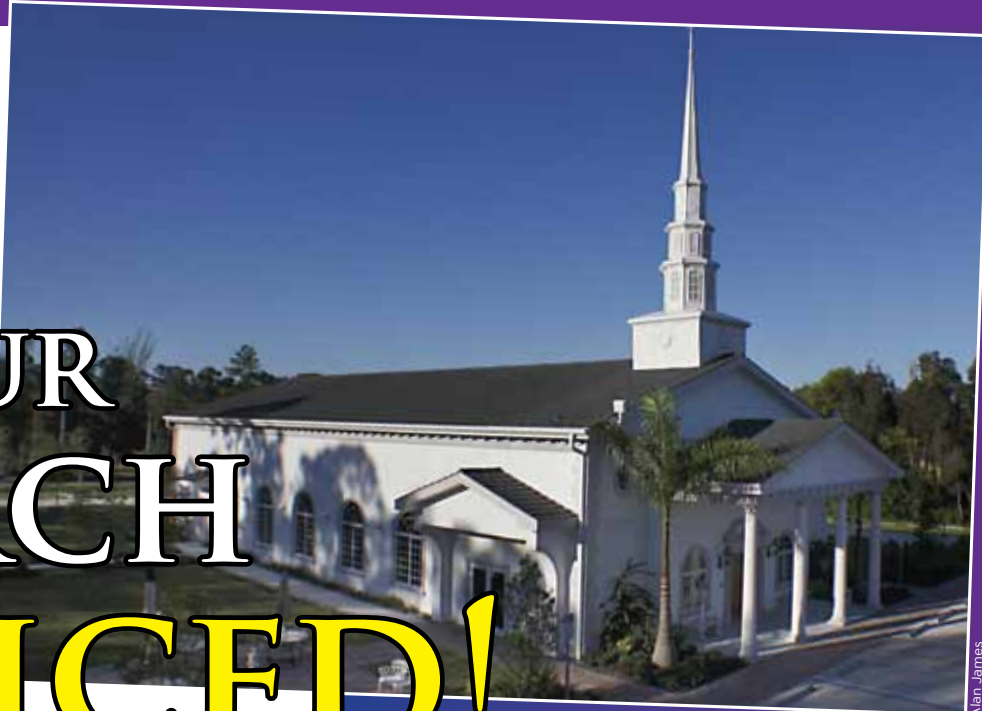
Application Deadline
January 2, 2015

If you need financial assistance to attend this year's **NAPF/HOPE Youth Conference**, go to naccc.org for a link to the Scholarship Application Form.

DO NOT DELAY!

Applications are due January 2, 2015.

GET YOUR CHURCH NOTICED!



First Congregational Church, Naples, Fla.

by Les Wicker

The folks on Madison Avenue do not have the inside track on marketing, but we can learn a great deal from them and grow our churches by applying their techniques—approaches that increase the appeal of whatever is being promoted.

We may be reluctant to use the term, but we all “market” our church at some level, whether just speaking well of it, or having an intentional plan to grow church membership through a diversified approach, including the use of media in any form.

I firmly believe every church can grow its membership, whether rural or urban, large or small, traditional or contemporary. It is only a matter of applying certain principles which are time-proven.

Question: Why do you buy a certain product and pay more for it than another, similar, product? Why do the New York Yankees have such a following of fans? Why is there a waiting list to obtain a seat in Lambeau Field to watch the Green Bay Packers? It is all the same basic reason.

Marketing plants a thought in our heads that one product is superior to another, and people like to follow winning teams. Both the teams we root for and the products we buy



Alan James



Alan James

Exciting and interesting things are happening in your church. Let people in your community know about them!

Does Your New Year's Resolution Include Exercise and Weight Loss ?....

Then You Must Hear Lisa Rambo ~ NBC's 'Biggest Loser' Finalist !

Lisa will be speaking at First Congregational Church of Naples January 18, 5:30 PM and January 19, 10:00 AM



- NBC's 'The Biggest Loser' Contestant Shares Her Story.
- Lisa's Faith Empowered Her to Change Her Lifestyle.
- Inspirational and Entertaining!
- This Pastor's Wife Says She Did It for Her Family.
- The Year That Changed Her Life.
- Lisa's Story Can Change Your Life
- Lisa's Motto: "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

Information: 514-3500
Address: 6630 Immokalee Rd
www.naplesfcchurch.com
Google Search: Losing It with Lisa

• Saturday Dinner with Lisa Speaking...Tickets Required
• Sunday Morning Message by Lisa



A Church Where Positive Things Are Always Happening!

are reflections of who we see ourselves to be. It's a lot about our self-image in purchasing a product or rooting for a team that makes us feel good about ourselves.

Whether we admit it or not, the same principle is true of why people are attracted to one church over another. Our church is an extension of who we see ourselves to be; and while

we want to believe there are more virtuous reasons for choosing a particular church, our self-image and what we have been led to believe about a particular church, do come into play.

So why market your church?

First of all, you are marketing the church to its own members. Whatever form of marketing a church chooses to promote its programs, it will discover the very first people to receive the message are the members themselves. Marketing energizes people and gets them excited about themselves and their own church. When the energy starts

flowing, good things begin to happen. Members get on board and begin to promote their church.

When the energy flow starts streaming, people feel it. Just like the products we buy or the winning teams we like to identify with, church folk will get excited about their church. Truth is: If the members of a church are not excited, who will be?

Secondly, marketing draws attention. Period. Exclamation point!



We never think about the media that is flowing into our living rooms or dens, or that is on the air waves every day. We are

Dear Quarry Neighbor,

As a resident of The Quarry and also the pastor of First Congregational Church of Naples, I invite you to attend the Easter Services at our church. From the Palm Sunday Service on April 13; the Maundy Thursday Service on April 17, and the Easter Services on April 20, you will find inspiration and meaning for your journey of faith.

Yours in our Lord's service,
Rev. Les Wicker
9520 Ironstone Terrace



Palm Sunday Service, April 13

- Children's Procession of the Palms
- Vocalist James McDuffy
- Palm Sunday Message

Maundy Thursday, April 17

8:00 PM

"The Last Supper Drama"
(Based on de Vinci's Painting)



Easter Sunday, April 20

8:00 AM Early Service

8:30 - 9:30 AM Easter Breakfast
(The church's treat)

10:00 AM Easter Service
(Easter Music, strings, and brass)

11:00 AM Butterfly Release 

11:30 AM Easter Egg Hunt 

Impact cards like those shown here can be mailed to any number of addresses in your community at a reasonable cost.

not even conscious we are being influenced by the marketing gurus, but the subliminal message is being planted. When we go to a store, consider buying a car, or pull for a team, we are already programmed to go in a certain direction, and we don't even know it. The same principle works in growing a church. People do not come to you; you must go to them. You must develop a plan and stick to it. A pro-active church that "markets its wares" will always grow.

Over the years I have taken many approaches to marketing: Radio spots, billboards, newspaper ads, televising the services, impact cards, newsletters, electronic newsletters, attendance campaigns, free "stuff," visitations, press releases, e-mail blasts, free food, a "Thought for the Day," and every possible approach I could think of to get the church's name out in front of the people. What I have found is what I share with you. It works at any level. It gets people excited and it grows the church. Such a simple thing as mailing out unused bulletins to members who did not show up on Sunday is worth far more than the effort it takes.

Newsletters should be exciting, positive, and upbeat—a lot less copy, and a lot more pictures of people involved in ministry. People love to get newsletters from their church, but more than just "getting a newsletter," they love to hear the exciting things that are happening. After all, since it is their church, it is them—it is who they are. The homebound, especially, read newsletters word-for-word. Constant Contact and other e-mail blast methods are inexpensive ways to get messages out. Grow those lists! Just go to ConstantContact.com and you will be on the way to staying in touch on a weekly basis at a nominal cost.

Impact cards are a way to reach thousands of people with a personal message about your church on a colorful 5½" x 8½" postcard. You can probably find a local printer that will create and mail these to any ZIP code you choose; we've done that, and we've also gone

online to Vistaprint (www.vistaprint.com).

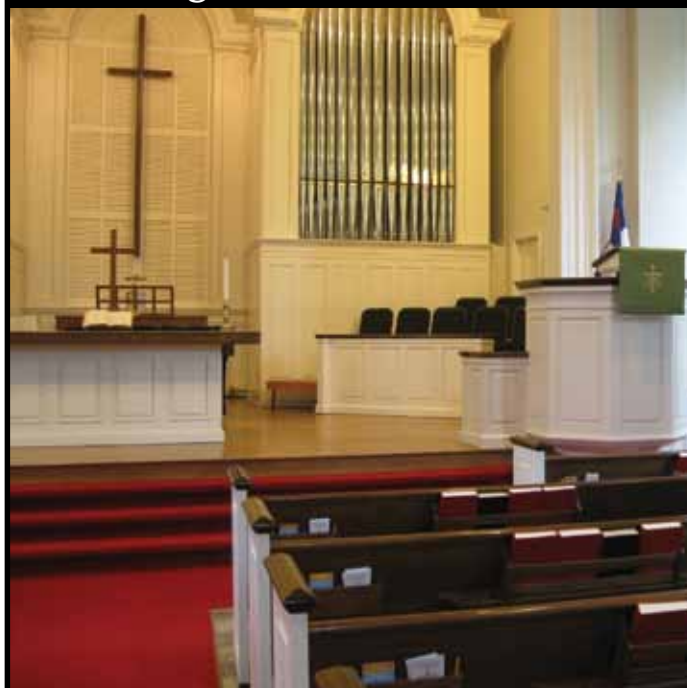
Finally, remember: "Beginning is half the job." By the time you take it through every committee and board of the church, it might take six months or longer and people lose their enthusiasm. Also remember: "Every person is a prospect." Just do it! Make it happen and you'll be glad.



The REV. DR. LES WICKER is a graduate of the Divinity School of Duke University and holds a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He has conducted numerous seminars on church growth. UCC churches he served in North Carolina and Florida each grew from memberships of 500 to over 800. He currently serves First Congregational Church of Naples, a new church plant in 2004 that now has more than 200 members.

North Shore Congregational Church Fox Point, Wisconsin

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and www.NACCC.org

*The pastor of a growing church cautions that success
must take a back seat to love.*

The Jesus Metric



by Don Mayberry

From time to time I think about the little church I grew up in. It was a small gathering of our neighbors, who always seemed to be there whenever the church doors were open. They did the work of being the church, way before I knew

that worship meant “the work of the people.” I never wondered if we were successful or if we would grow in size but there was always something good and warm and loving happening there that I took for granted as a kid.

If the leaders of that small

church ever thought about growth or success, the kids never heard the discussion. We heard about Jesus, love, and grace (and a little too much about sin, but that's another story). We felt nurtured and cared for.

It makes me wonder. How do we measure the value of a church and determine if it is “succeeding”? What is success for a church, anyway?

As I was leaving the room where I had just taken part in a panel on church growth at the NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference in Omaha, I recalled something a pastor friend told me that he had recently said to his church.

“We are bigger than we think; more than we appear to be,” he told them. By that he meant that although the size of the congregation might not be numerically impressive, the impact they had in their community and in the lives of one another was of great significance. They had missions within the community such as a food pantry, literacy volunteers, and mentoring efforts; and ministries within the church—worship, study, support, and fellowship.

It was a beautiful remark and an encouraging reminder that there are more ways than one to measure the “success” of a church. This comment might be especially meaningful to many small churches

in our association, that often are indeed “bigger than they think.”

I enjoyed taking part in that panel on church growth and sharing some of the things that have helped us grow in size and in spirit at

We are told to love.
Love is the marker in
the Jesus Metric.

First Congregational Church in South Paris, Maine. Furthermore, I felt the comments from others on the panel and from the room full of attendees were all good and healthy. Still, I had the feeling we were missing something.

All too often we measure our churches by the wrong metric. We are so accustomed to thinking bigger is better, and more is a sign of success, that we focus on the numbers and can easily forget what we hope to accomplish as churches in the first place.

I understand the desire to “grow a church” in size and admit taking satisfaction when the church I serve has experienced growth. After 20 years as a pastor, I do understand the financial pressures we are all operating under. There is an unspoken hope that, in addition

to people joining the church for all of the “spiritually good” reasons, they will help us carry the water financially too.

However, when we look at our fellowships through what I will call “The American Success Metric,” we miss the more important “Jesus Metric.”

Let me draw a distinction between the two measurements. The success metric is a business viewpoint. Although it is understandable how it happens, using this measurement for a church is unfortunate. We can and should celebrate when new members join, when we meet our budgets, and when the community values us—but there is more. Recall the promise of Jesus, that where two or three are gathered he is also present.

A “Jesus Metric” would measure our gentle presence in the community, the love and affirmation we offer one another as we strive to let our faith take root and grow. This way of measurement would look at things such as our work in feeding the hungry, welcoming “the other,” lifting up God’s Word, and offering a healing balm. Instead of measuring people in the pews, it would measure the spirit in the church body as we visit the sick, comfort the grieving, and pray for one another.

As we drove home from Omaha, we stopped at the Mississippi River where the water was wide and the

current was swift. There was a ferry that crossed the river, taking cars between Missouri and Illinois. As we stood by the banks of the river, we watched this ferry laboring against the current as it made its way across the water. It struck me as a beautiful metaphor of the work of the church: There is a powerful current at work in the world right now. The church has a role as a counter-balance in what can be a bitter and self-oriented world.

We are called to offer a different way, the Jesus way. Don’t just counter intolerance with tolerance—take the next step and love. Scripture doesn’t say “Tolerate one another as God has tolerated you.”

We are told to love. Love is the marker in the Jesus Metric.

This world loves to hold a grudge, loves to be angry and resentful and when possible, to get even. Jesus talks about evening the score not through retribution, but through grace and forgiveness. The church is present to speak the language of God into our communities. As we preach, teach, and model such grace we become the salt of the earth, adding a flavor that would otherwise be missing.

With the Jesus Metric we are no longer counting people in the pews but counting on the people in the pews to live, love, and move in such ways as to make God present. When that takes place we become bigger than we know.

There is often a beautiful side benefit of living the Jesus Metric. People will want to join you. When love and encouragement are offered in sermons and in works from a congregation, slowly, one by one, people will join you. They may or may not arrive every Sunday morning at 10 a.m. for services, but you will feel a comradeship of Spirit that will show up in conversations in the food store, at a funeral, or in other community settings. This “salt of the earth” flavoring has appeal. As much as I want to “pack the pews,” I think Jesus wants us to impact our communities with grace and humility.

In South Paris, Maine, we have been blessed with a remarkable growth for a church in a rural setting. We have done very little to bring about this growth, apart from striving to let Jesus show. In a world that is polarized, we have offered hospitality to one another.

When many churches stub their toes on the drama of the day we purposely remind ourselves that we have joined a church, not a drama club. When hungry neighbors come to our door—and in a rural community where poverty is rampant, they come in droves—we attempt to feed them. When there is a joy we share it, and when there is a loss we grieve together. When there are pastoral needs in the community, this church has encouraged me to be present.

None of this is done to grow the


church, but to be the church. The size of the congregation is less important than the heart of the congregation.

It is humble work we are called to; so humble sometimes that we miss its beauty and value. When we have victories that can be measured on a business success metric, give thanks. But

if you are a small church that seems destined to remain small, and struggling to pay the bills, measure your efforts on the Jesus Metric—recalling the words, “Beautiful are the feet of those who bring the Good News.” Then simply put one foot in front of the other, giving thanks for God’s gift of the local church.



THE REVEREND DON MAYBERRY has been senior pastor at First Congregational Church in South Paris, Maine, since 2001. He has been a moderator of the Maine association and has done committee work and Annual Meeting presentations for the NACCC. Don was ordained in the American Baptist tradition in July 1997.



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WHAT DO I SAY TO THE *Grieving?*

by Elizabeth E. Bingham

More than 30 years ago I wrote an article for this magazine called “What Shall I Say to the Grieving?” I wrote it because I saw so many people who were uncomfortable in the presence of grief. They felt awkward and tongue-tied and didn’t know how to respond. I wanted to help them. I wrote from my experience as a chaplain, and as the assistant minister at the Congregational Church of the Chimes, Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Today I write from a different place, as a different person. In November 2011 my husband, Paul, died after battling leukemia for a year. Suddenly everything changed. I was still minister, and still mother. But now I was widow too.

And sadly enough, in the months that followed Paul’s death, ten other women in our congregation found themselves widowed too. We meet regularly and share some of what we struggle with—from filling out paperwork to taking out the trash. We are surprised that most of us have the television on every evening just to fill the silence. We understand how tears come

unexpectedly. We even admit how sometimes we get angry—when sprinklers break or the dogs need to be walked or we are simply tired of going everywhere alone.

We also talk about what has helped us through the shadows as others have reached out to us. In answer to the question ...

WHAT DO I SAY TO THE GRIEVING? SAY SOMETHING!

What should you say? Don’t worry about saying something that will hurt. Because we hurt so much already that nothing can hurt us more.

Don’t walk away from us, or exclude us, or avoid us because you are afraid you will say something wrong. We understand that. Your words may feel awkward or inadequate to you, but your willingness to talk to us and be with us is priceless. We may not be able to respond well, but it means a great deal to know that you have cared enough to say a word or write a note.

What should you say? Nothing has meant more to all of us than the memories that you have. Don’t be

afraid to talk about the person who died, because you think it will be hard for us to hear. We may even get misty-eyed at your remembering but hearing about our loved ones from those who knew them is priceless.

I learned things about Paul I never knew, and I still smile and laugh at the stories from people I didn't know from times long before I was a part of his life.

What should you say? Because every relationship is different, every loss is experienced differently. So instead of saying "I know just how you feel," you might say something like "I can't imagine how you feel. It must be so hard." I may not say anything back, or I may tell you just what it is like. And if I do, if I open up to you, please stay with me and know that I am trusting you with my feelings and that is precious to me.

I can chuckle now remembering the Saturday morning not long after Paul died. I was leaving the gym when a friend was arriving. "How are you doing?" he asked. I answered honestly: "Not so well right now." For some reason early mornings to and from the gym were hard for me. I looked at him gratefully for caring enough to ask. He looked at me in utter panic. The next time I saw him he waved to me—from afar—and didn't come over to talk.

What should you say? Say something.
And...

DO SOMETHING!

I have said it so many times, and I have meant it. I heard it so many times and I know that the people who said it meant it too. "Let me know if there is anything I



can do to help. Call me if you need anything."

But the problem was I had no idea what I needed. I hadn't ever felt this way. I hadn't been on my own for a long time. And as my widowed friends suggested, asking for help wasn't something any of us did very easily.

What really helped was when someone called with a specific offer—whether it was bringing food or giving a ride to the mechanic, or just coming over to help go through paper work. And while I know my friends didn't want to "intrude," and while I sometimes wasn't ready to go to a movie or take a hike, the offers were never intrusive. They were comforting and loving and healing.

Please don't stay away. Our world has become terribly lonely and while we might not be good company, we need good company. The hardest part has not been people who say something "wrong," or who have trouble finding words at all. The hardest part has been when the people we have known disappear at a time when we need them the most.

In my earlier article I wrote about Job's three friends who sat with him for seven days without speaking. They stayed with him in his sadness and sorrow, bearing his burden with him. That was a great gift.

What do you have to offer someone who is grieving? Nothing more and nothing less than kindness and

friendship and love and presence.

Jesus said, "*Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*"

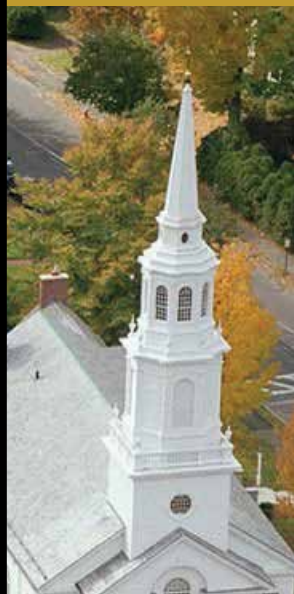
Let us be comforters to one another.



THE REV. ELIZABETH E. BINGHAM is in her 21st year as senior minister at Pilgrim Congregational Church in Pomona, Calif. Pilgrim has a strong tradition of pastoral care including parish nursing, a caregivers' support group and lay visitation. Beth previously served NACCC churches in Fox Point, Wis., Sherman Oaks, Calif., and Anchorage, Alaska, and was a hospital chaplain in Milwaukee.

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What miracles may we witness with Christ as our guide, even “to the ends of the earth”?

Lost and Found

*through
God's grace*

Photos and story by Kristen Schuyler



A thin strand of dark hair fell in front of her face as she bowed her head slowly. Her small, bony arm reached out to touch my shoulder as she tried to smile, but instead her eyes became moist as she kept her face to the ground.

She was a single mother raising three children, all under the age of 15. She lived in a tiny shack, no bigger than the size of an average American garage, and the walls and roof were just giant scraps of metal. There was a stream right beside their home where dozens of banana and mango trees flourished, beginning at their driveway and spreading down the stream and over the hills.

Amid the beauty of the Tahitian mountain on which we stood, this family was obviously struggling. With torn clothes and muddy feet, the children giggled and chased tiny kittens around the yard. My friends and I stood with this woman as she shared her heartache with us: She had just been diagnosed with cancer, and her oldest daughter was preparing for the journey of taking care of her siblings all on her own.

The woman's name was Painu, which means “lost” in Tahitian.

We all placed our hands on her and prayed for her and her family; for healing, restoration, and guidance. In that moment, she accepted the love from a Redeemer who revealed Himself to her in His own divine way despite language barriers, and she no longer felt the physical pain her cancer had been bringing her just minutes prior to our prayers.

I could barely believe it. Did God just do something completely and absolutely supernatural in this woman's life? There was no physical evidence that I could see with my own eyes, but this poor, broken woman had been given an unimaginable hope. There was a new glimmer in her eyes that made her able to look at us face-to-face and accept the groceries we had brought her without looking ashamed, as she had when we first arrived.

Painu explained in French that she felt someone wanted to save her, and that person was trying to knock on the door of her heart. Our friend Anne-Marie was able to translate Painu's story to our group. We were truly amazed at how God could display His power when we allowed Him to do His work.

So often we ask God to bless the things we have decided to do, without understanding that He already



The YWAM mission team prays for Painu and her family.

has a path filled with blessings ordained for each of us. This past year, I learned to walk beside God wherever He is walking instead of asking God to walk with me where I want to go.

Last year as I approached a new chapter of my life—graduating high school and seeing all of my classmates applying for college and planning out their course—God gave me the verse Proverbs 16:9: “The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”

At that point, I was simply going to do what all my classmates were doing—apply to college, attend in the fall, and go through the motions, flowing in the direction the river-current of life is pushing. But God tugged at my heart through a spontaneous but intense desire He placed in my being: I needed to go to Australia.

I researched missionary organizations and decided to take a five-month course with Youth With A Mission. God gave the plan, the organization, the money, and miraculously, the courage to fly across the world and start an extremely intimate journey with Him.

I spent 12 weeks studying, doing ministry, and working at the YWAM base in Sydney before our team decided God was calling us to Tahiti, Thailand, and Cambodia. We split up and spent the final eight weeks on outreach in these places. This journey was a completely transforming experience.

One major topic the Lord worked with me on is the idea of surrender. He taught me about His character and His nature, and we worked on my lack of trust in

Him. Through this, however, I discovered that He is trustworthy.

God has anointed each of us for something spectacular. As we grow older, we decide what we do and don't like to do, and we make crucial decisions about our futures and careers without asking God—because we are afraid God will not approve of our happiness and success. On the contrary, God loves happiness and success!

The reason why God has such a strong desire for us to walk with Him and surrender our own plans is because He has much bigger plans for us than we could have ever imagined ourselves. He might even send you halfway around the globe just so you can understand that truth.

I would have never discovered this mystery about God if He hadn't blessed me with not only a desire to seek wisdom, but a church to grow up in where I was taught that God would walk with me with each step I took. Being involved in the Congregational Church of Bound Brook, N.J. [see *“The Little Church that Could,”* March 2012, pp. 24-25], I learned that I could go straight to God with anything, and God would speak directly to me rather than through leaders in my church (although sometimes He does this as well). I didn't need to get a word from a priest or ask permission from my pastor to understand what God was calling me to do.

This was very important in this journey, because God directly influenced and changed my heart. God is holy, but God has also reconciled us to Himself. Having a direct relationship with my Lord was essential for me to be able to understand what His will is and to understand where He needs me to be.

My friends and I waved to Painu as we pulled out of the narrow road beside her house and drove away. She and all three of her children waved back, huge smiles on their faces.

“We should change her name from ‘Lost’ to ‘Found,’” said Holly, one of our team members,

Continued on p. 38

When a minister is installed, just who does the installing—
the local church, or some higher body?

Who Installed Paul?

by Harvey Lord

I have attended services of installation for Congregational Christian ministers during my years in the ministry, and have even taken part in such services; but with reluctance—reluctance because such services have the potential for abuse and misunderstanding.

If it is made clear that the *church* is installing the minister, with assistance and concurrence of the



Rae-vaughn Lucas

council of the vicinage (other churches in its vicinity), then such a service may not be inappropriate, according to our Congregational Christian way of church government. The freedom of the local church to order and carry out its affairs would be preserved.

However: If the letter missive summoning the vicinage council, and the actions and statement of the vicinage council itself, give the appearance that the *council* is the installing unit, then very serious questions are raised.

There needs to be an emphasis on the primary role of the church.

Is the new minister not adequately settled in his or her pastorate prior to the installation service, on the basis of an issued call by the church, and by acceptance of that call? Is he or she any more fully equipped to serve the church by virtue of the installation service? The answer to the first question should be “yes,” and the answer to the second question should be “no.”

Recognition by sister churches is a worthy thing to have. But the word “installation” carries some baggage that the Congregational Christian churches might well view with apprehension. Charles Emerson Burton, in his *Manual of the Congregational Christian Churches* (1936), says it is necessary to call a church council of the vicinage for the dismissal of a pastor—where the pastor has been previously installed. Burton seemed to recognize that pastors are not always installed; and perhaps it is better they not be installed, if a church must then consult a council prior to the dismissal of its pastor.

Other Congregational Christian manuals, such as Henry David Gray’s *Bluebook of Congregational Usage* (1966-76), mention installation services favorably as well. But I do not believe there is adequate appreciation of the basic meaning of the word “install.” Webster’s Dictionary tells us that it means “to place in office or dignity by seating in a stall or official seat”; or “to establish in an indicated place, condition or status.” Clearly, if a person is not in office until installed by council, then the same or similar council should have a role in his dismissal from office. But *that is more presbyterian than congregational*.

How much better it would be if Congregational Christian churches dropped the word “installation” from their vocabulary—except as it might pertain

to refrigerators and public address systems. How much better if we instead celebrated “recognition” services, at which sister churches would have adequate opportunity to pay their respects to the new minister shortly after he takes office.

In this regard, it is not facetious to raise the question, “Who installed the apostle Paul?”

Many clerics in our time are caught up in the liturgical revival; many speak favorably about a return to Canterbury and the episcopal way; it appears that many yearn for the stability and security of the so-called apostolic succession. There may be some in our own fellowship who would insist that they not be dismissed from a church except with the consultation of a council of sister churches. But in his letter to the Galatians the apostle Paul makes it quite clear—his independence of church councils.

“For I would have you know brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me is not man’s Gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it; but it came

through the revelation of Jesus Christ. ... when He who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me, in order that I might preach Him among the Gentiles. I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia. ...” (Gal. 1:11-17).

Paul apparently believed that his ministry was fully and adequately legitimized by the call of God and by the opportunity that he had, to preach wherever the Gentiles might give him a listening ear. He appears on the occasion of this letter to have encountered a problem, in that the Galatians were sliding back into the enslaving traditions of religious hierarchy. “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

If Paul had waited for a council of elders from Jerusalem to “install” him before he set forth on his church planting mission, he might never have been able to depart from Judea. Likewise, Martin Luther might never have dared to defy the Roman pope. Elder Brewster might never have dared to break with the Puritans, who were content to stay within the connectional structures of the Anglican Church.

If we are truly Congregational Christians, then we ought to be always as pilgrims. We ought to be careful to make it clear that we are seeking a homeland beyond this world, that we are people who desire “a better country, that is a Heavenly one.” Such do not need the security of being installed by their fellow clerics. “Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:16).

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THE REV. HARVEY LORD is a World War II infantryman who later graduated from the University of Maine and studied theology at Bangor Seminary and Hartford Seminary. He served Congregational churches in Maine, Connecticut, Michigan, and New Hampshire between 1960 and 1993 and is now retired in South Paris, Maine.

He first submitted this article to *The Congregationalist* in 1990 or 1991. It was not published at that time; but undaunted, he resubmitted it recently, and it now appears, 24 years later. Our editorial wheels may turn slowly, but they grind exceeding fine.

Repent your sins, and forgive those of others, if you would seek forgiveness.

Christian Forgiveness — Unconditional?

Not entirely, says a scholar

by David Brattston

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12).

Although we frequently utter this in prayer, most Christians forget an important aspect to it: God requires something from us or He will not forgive our sins.

In the same way, Christians need not automatically forgive people who have wronged them, but can require something from the wrongdoer, or we are free to hold their sin against them.

Two verses after the line quoted above, Jesus elaborated on what we must do to merit pardon: “If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15). The parable of the Unmerciful

Servant predicts punishment for Christians who do not forgive, and warns: “So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart” (Matthew 18:35).

God’s price for His pardon is repeated in Luke 6:37, Ephesians 4:32, and Colossians 3:13: Christians must forgive people who sinned against them as a condition for being forgiven themselves. Mark 11:25 in the New Revised Standard Version is the same, while some ancient Bibles contained a verse 26: “If you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Another of God’s conditions is that we repent, as in the case of Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8:22—“Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to

the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.” The Apostle Paul commended Christians who punished a wayward believer so that he would repent and be forgiven (2 Corinthians 2:6-7). As we shall see, an injured Christian may insist on repentance as a condition for pardoning someone who sinned against him or her.

This is not merely one interpretation of the Bible among many, but was the meaning shared by saints

God's pardon is not without conditions, but requires that we at least repent and forgive others, or we ourselves will remain unforgiven.



FORGIVE

who knew the apostles personally and ministered with them. Around A.D. 110, Polycarp, whom Revelation 2:8 calls “the angel of the church in Smyrna,” wrote to Christians in the town of Philippi: “Forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you; be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy” (*Letter to the Philippians* 2:3). The identical thought was expressed in the *First Epistle of Clement* (13:2), a letter from the church in the City of Rome to sinning Christians in Corinth. It dates from the second half of the first century, when some apostles were still alive, and may have been composed by the Clement mentioned in Philippians 4:3. More dramatically, it urges: “Let us fall down before the Lord, and beseech Him with tears, that He would mercifully be reconciled to us” (*1 Clement* 48:1).

This epistle was so highly esteemed and authoritative in the early centuries that it was included in some versions of the New Testament.

Another epistle found in some early Bibles is that ascribed to Paul’s co-worker Barnabas, although it did not appear in its present wording until sometime between A.D. 70 and 132. If its author(s) did not live in apostolic times, he or they overlapped with the lifetime of Polycarp and perhaps Clement. This epistle pressed the need for repentance: “By thy hands thou shalt labor for the redemption of thy sins” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 19:10).

Christian writings from the time of Jesus, and for a hundred years thereafter, thus exhibit a harmony among their authors that God’s pardon is not without conditions, but requires that we at least repent and forgive others, or we ourselves will remain unforgiven.

Must a wronged Christian forgive unconditionally and automatically, or can we insist on an apology or other amends from a wrongdoer? Matthew’s version of the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant is often misquoted, in isolation, to support this proposition: “Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times’” (Matthew 18:21-22).

Looking at the whole of Christian literature in its first century, instead of at isolated verses out of context, we should consult the parallel passage in Luke: “Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive” (Luke 17:3-4). Note that this fuller exposition involves repentance and a specific request for pardon for

wrongdoers against human beings as well as God, or at least gives the right to withhold forgiveness without them. We should also consider the *Gospel of the Nazaraeans*, an alleged record of Christ's teachings preserved among Christians who remained closer to Christianity's Jewish roots than the main body of the church. It comes from early in the second century: "Jesus said: 'If thy brother has sinned with a word and has made thee reparation, receive him seven times in a day.' Simon his disciple said to him: 'Seven times in a day?' The Lord answered and said to him: 'Yea, I say unto thee, until seventy times seven times.'" Note the requirement of repairing the wrong and specifically asking for forgiveness.

Even the all-loving and all-merciful Almighty

stipulates conditions that must be fulfilled before He forgives. The Apostle Paul often acknowledged that, by nature, Christians and other humans are more cold-hearted than God. Can God demand that we be more tender-hearted than He Himself?



DR. DAVID W.T. BRATTSTON is a retired lawyer and judge on minor tribunals residing in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. He has been a self-directed student of ancient Christian writings since a teenager. His more than 250 articles on early and contemporary Christianity, and the synthesis between them, have been published by a wide variety of Christian denominations in every major English-speaking country, including **THE CONGREGATIONALIST**.

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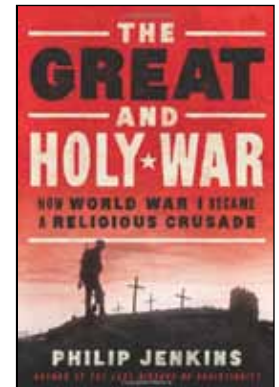
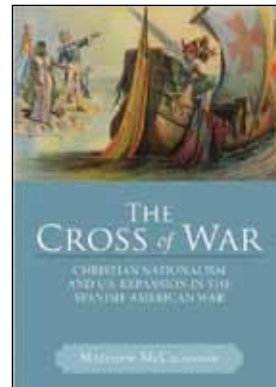
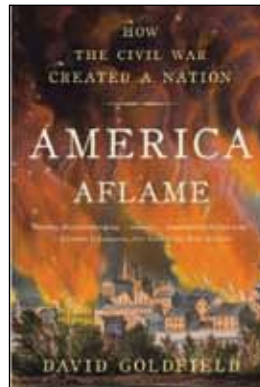
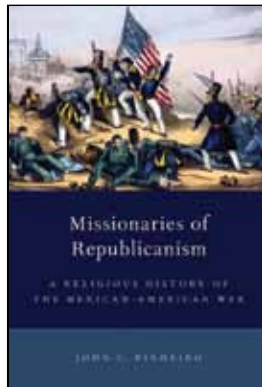
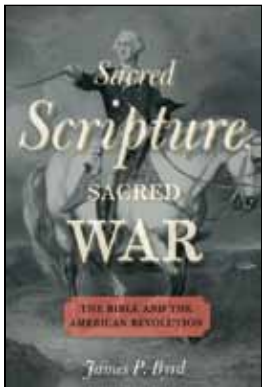
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Winter Reading Suggestions for God's Free People

by Steven Blackburn



Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution by James P. Byrd. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 256 pages; 9.99 Kindle, \$25.16 hardcover (Amazon).

Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War by John C. Pinheiro. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 256 pages; \$35.99 Kindle, \$40.50 hardcover (Amazon).

America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation by David R. Goldfield. New York:

Bloomsbury Press, 2012. 640 pages; \$1.99 Kindle, \$24.01 hardcover, \$13.67 paperback (Amazon).

The Cross of War: Christian Nationalism and U.S. Expansion in the Spanish-American War by Matthew McCullough. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014. 281 pages; \$13.99 Kindle, \$25.55 paperback (Amazon).

The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade by Philip Jenkins. New York: HarperOne, 2014. 448 pages; \$13.99 Kindle; \$19.72 hardcover; \$13.25 paperback (Amazon).

In this centennial year of the outbreak of the War to End All Wars, the foregoing titles treat five of the first six major conflicts in which the United States was involved. All five works analyze, to a greater or lesser extent, the role of religion in the conduct of war. And American history being what it is, the leading role of Congregationalism comes especially into focus in the first three of these conflicts.

There are many views of war, some of which have an explicitly religious character. Theories of “just war” from Augustine onward often appeal to religion for a sense of what justice consists of, coming to the conclusion that war can be a necessary evil undertaken to combat greater evils. Pacifism rejects the notion that any war can be just, and pacifists have often appealed to the spirit of Christ to make their case. Still others see in armed conflict a

metaphor for the wars between good and evil fought inside “the human breast.” Such characterizations are certainly varied, just as the role of Congregationalism in these conflicts was certainly complex.

James P. Byrd, in his study of the American Revolution, *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War*, treats Congregationalism largely in the context of the Puritan experience on the 18th-century New England frontier. In his analysis of the sermon as “martial preaching,” Byrd cites a number of New England divines and discusses Abigail Adams’ perceived link between patriotism and Christianity. While the imagery and biblical texts for such preaching rely heavily on Old Testament imagery, echoes of the “social contract” (think John Locke) is also found in Puritan thought, showing the clear resonance between Enlightenment thought and religiosity helping to fuel fervor for Independence.

Missionaries of Republicanism, by John C. Pinheiro, presents an entirely different take on religion in war. Many in Congregationalism, including Lyman Beecher, defined the struggle of the Mexican-American War in terms of “American” Protestantism versus Catholicism, as part of the fight to retain Congregationalism’s diminishing position of pre-eminence in the American religious world. However, the use of war to extend Congregationalism by “opening” Mexico to Protestant missions was opposed by figures such as Horace Bushnell—though not for entirely altruistic reasons.

While *America Aflame* does not have as its main thesis the idea that religion was the central factor in the Civil War, author David R. Goldberg does assert that the political issue of slavery was redefined by the churches, many of them in Abolitionist New England, as a religious issue—thus preventing a political solution. Goldberg’s idea that the question of slavery could have been dealt with peaceably before the end of the 19th century is controversial,

to be sure. The idea that the faith which says “blessed are the peacemakers” resulted in peacemakers being marginalized is cause for reflection.

Matthew McCullough is a well-recognized figure as a writer of history; perhaps less well known is his role as a Protestant clergyman, currently serving a church in Nashville. Thus his view of the role of pastors as interpreters of the events of the Spanish-American War to the broader American public comes from a sense of one of the things that clergy do. In *The Cross of War*, Congregationalist clergy figure as important in McCullough’s analysis; what is interesting is that, in contrast to the Mexican-American War half a century earlier, Catholic religious leadership now helps inform the American civil religion rather than standing outside.

Philip Jenkins in *The Great and Holy War* suggests that World War I was something of a throw-back, religiously speaking. The wars of religion that had wracked Europe through the 17th century were supposedly a thing of the past, especially as Europe itself became less overtly religious. But religious sensibilities re-asserted themselves in the 1914-1918 conflict. America became involved relatively late, joining the fighting only in the final year. Congregationalism’s role in influencing attitudes towards the conflict was correspondingly limited. However, Jenkins’ thesis regarding how religion can both hijack and be hijacked by civil, political, and military conflicts provides much for us, as people of faith, to ponder now in this 21st century, which appears to be no more peaceful than our earlier history.



THE REV. STEVEN BLACKBURN, PH.D., is Hartford Seminary’s Library Director. He has served Congregational Christian Churches in Connecticut and Massachusetts, and was elected to three terms as executive secretary of the Connecticut (now Northeast) Fellowship. He has also chaired the NACCC’s World Christian Relations Commission.

NEWS

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

The Mission and Outreach Ministry Council has been collecting donations for hunger relief in Kenya. At the beginning of October, there was \$1,800 in donations, \$1,000 of which has been sent to **Pilgrim's Presence (Kenya)**.

The Council also sent \$640 to **Christ to the Villages (Nigeria)** to purchase new tires for one of their vehicles.

MISSION CDS AND DVDS FOR SALE



Give the gift of music from one of our missions:

- “Merry Christmas”—Burmese Christmas songs sung by Naw Pale Say, wife of Rev. SaDo of **Congregational Church of Myanmar (Myanmar)** and Saw True Man, Congregational Bible College graduate.
- “Heart Trails: Timeless Hymns of the Ages,” sung by Nina Castillo, wife of Symphony John Castillo of **National Association of Congregational Churches (Philippines)**.

Contact Linda Miller at the NACCC office to purchase them. \$20 each, includes postage and handling.

UPDATE FROM HOSANNA INDUSTRIES

Hosanna Industries (Pennsylvania) is already planning for its 2015 volunteer schedule. If there is a church or school group who would like to get on the schedule, contact Emily Cadenhead, emily_safran@yahoo.com.

On Sept. 12-14, a dozen service learning students from Olivet College, led by the Rev. Mike Fales,

volunteered for a weekend. The students worked on Saturday, helping an elderly woman and her daughter, then helped the First Congregational Church of Etna celebrate its 165th anniversary on Sunday.

North Shore Congregational Church, Fox Point, Wis., teamed up with Ozaukee Congregational Church, Grafton, Wis., for a week of service. A brief slide show of their trip can be seen at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/d4n7xvh42q8bde9/MissonT%28HD%29.WMV?dl=0>

So far in 2014, over 100 needy families have been helped. The work exceeded \$800,000 in market value.

They estimate a need for 10 furnaces to support needy families this winter.

MORGAN-SCOTT UPDATE

The Morgan-Scott Project (Tennessee) has been very busy. This year they provided seeds, plants, and fertilizer to help 385 families plant gardens, enjoy fresh vegetables this summer, and can or freeze their extra vegetables for the winter. They gave \$2,000 in scholarships to three graduating seniors for college this fall. They hosted six work groups totaling 76 volunteers who built three wheelchair ramps, put a new floor in a home, and built a bedroom for a young boy with muscular dystrophy.

Their free medical clinic saw 60 adults. They gave out food to 513 families. Morgan-Scott also provided emergency aid—such as paying utility bills, rent, or prescription co-payments, buying eyeglasses, or offering dental assistance—to 55 families at a cost of \$9,000. Their dream is to open a dental clinic.

NEWS FROM ARGENTINA

Dr. Harding Stricker and his father, the Rev. Teodoro Stricker, of the **Asociacion Civil Cristiana Congregational (Argentina)**, traveled in October to the southern Brazilian city of Panambi where a

symposium of the Theological Commission of the International Congregational Fellowship took place. They both were presenters.

HOSTING A MISSIONARY

The Rev. Hector and Diane Mendez of Stafford Springs Congregational Church, Stafford Springs, Conn., hosted the Rev. Charles Nyane, **Word Alive Mission (Ghana)**, after the NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference.

“It was both an honor and a pleasure to have the Rev. Charles Nyane share our home,” wrote Hector. “He has a wonderful testimony about how faith has provided for him and all that he has accomplished with the Word Alive Mission in Takoradi, Ghana. ... As Rev. Charles spoke of the conditions in his village and of the neighboring communities, we were reminded of the opportunity we have to share our blessings with those who lack dependable resources such as transportation,

power, plumbing, etc. Rev. Charles does so much with the little that he is given, I felt humbled by his presence. He was a blessing to me and to my wife and we will never forget the time he spent with us.”

MENAU SCHOOL'S PRESIDENT GILBERT VISITS CHINA

President and Head of School Lindsey Gilbert, and International Student

Advisor Dr. Feng Zhou, travelled this summer to visit **Menaul School (New Mexico)**'s “Dual Diploma”



partners in Weifang and Taiyuan, China. For more information about Menaul School's international programs, go to http://www.menaulschool.com/programs/irtenational_programs/

NEEDS

CHRISTMAS IN OUR MISSIONS

Christmas needs of the missions are listed on the NACCC Web site, at http://www.naccc.org/CMSUploads/1562_2014_Christmas_List_website.pdf

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Prayers for Charles Sagay, **Mission School of Hope (Cameroon)**. He went to Nigeria in September for his mother's funeral and then the government closed its borders due to the Ebola outbreak. At press time, Charles cannot yet leave Nigeria.
- Prayers for **Christ to the Villages (Nigeria)**. They are having a difficult time paying the teachers' salaries.
- Prayers for Rev. Philip Malakar and his family, **Indian Community Fellowship (Northern India)**. They have been given notice to leave their

home because they are Christian. They are looking for a permanent home so they don't have to face this kind of persecution in the future.

- Prayers for **Fishers of Men (Mexico)**. Victor Zaragoza will be taking a team to Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. They will hold a Medical Crusade there from November 18-24, 2014. They ask for prayer support from October 18 through Dec. 24. This is one of the most dangerous cities in Mexico. Prayers are needed and appreciated.

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 or lmiller@naccc.org.

The Mission and Outreach Ministry Council, 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.”

Always Room for Trello

If you've never heard of Trello, that makes two of us. Turns out, the Vitality Ministry Council of the NACCC has been using it for about two years to stay organized and keep in touch, and other NA entities are starting to climb on board as well.

Trello is a slick, simple, cloud-based planner for groups. If you've ever used Post-It notes to organize your thoughts, or collaborated with a friend using 3x5s and a bulletin board, then you get the idea exactly. Only, underneath all that simplicity, there are some surprisingly complex features.

First, the whole thing is cloud-based, and they have a snazzy app for tablets, which means it works across all different kinds of computers. All users are up-to-date all the time, and your data is backed up pretty much continuously. No lost files. Nobody's out of the loop.

Second, every one of those little Post-It-like notes has room for an ongoing conversation with your team, shared checklists that track completion, and an attachment archive that will hold pretty much any digital file you like. The iPad version I'm using to write this article even links straight to my DropBox.

To quote the Rev. Dr. D. Elizabeth Mauro, Dean of the Center for Congregational Leadership, "I really appreciate having the materials we need for meetings in front of me, organized in a way that minimizes

hunting for them. I also like the fact that it decreases the number of e-mails with attachments that need managing as minutes, and other documents can be posted directly to Trello by any user of the board."

Obviously, these benefits come with a privacy cost. Trello offers three tiers of privacy: private to you, private to your organization, and public to the world. But even a "private" setting doesn't change the basic rule of the Internet. Once it's out there, you can't get it back. Use your brain.

To sum up, Trello is a free and functional online organizer, simple enough for regular people, and definitely robust enough for small to mid-size churches.

Trello's Welcome Board makes it easy to get started.

Continued on p. 38



THE REV. ROBERT J. BRINK writes for us on how to make computer-age technology work for churches. If you have a technology-related question for "Net Mending," e-mail Rob@RevSmilez.com or write Rev. Rob Brink, 1116 Blaine Ave., Janesville, WI 53545.

LOBB STILL MISINFORMED

Doug Lobb is at it again—presenting conjecture as truth!

In his recent response to Steven Schafer’s “Mithraism and Christianity” [*Delighted by Schafer, however ...*, September 2014, pp. 45-46], he is still insisting that Robin Meyers is correct, that Emperor Constantine is the one who “engineered” our current version of Christianity, and that Jesus is not really the Christ at all. Both beliefs are fictitious inventions.

Many documents from Constantine’s time are extant, and nowhere did he ever set the day of Christian worship, much less invent Christian doctrine (of which he knew little), or merge it with Mithraism as Meyers claims. In *The History of the Christian Church*, from the early 4th century,

Eusebius states that churches everywhere had always followed the teachings of Jesus as related in the Gospels and in the letters of *Paul, et al.* Constantine had nothing to do with any of this.

Furthermore, Lobb is wrong to insist that he is following Jesus, “rather than worshipping Christ.” When Jesus asked Peter who he was, Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:13-17). To really follow the Jesus of history is also to believe in the Christ of faith, for they are one and the same.

WARREN R. ANGEL
Oceanside, California

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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.

News from the fellowship of churches

A CLAAS ACT

Pastor David J. Claassen retired after nearly 40 years in the pulpit of *Mayfair-Plymouth Congregational Christian Church, Toledo, Ohio*.

A Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies graduate of Trinity



Diann, left, and David Claassen are honored by their Toledo congregation. Gifts were presented by Associate Pastor Rupert Loyd and the church's new lead pastor, Joe French, right.

Evangelical Divinity School, he began his pastorate at Mayfair-Plymouth in August 1975 and saw the church through numerous changes over the years, including a major building expansion, institution of an associate pastor position, and the addition of a contemporary Sunday morning service and a Saturday evening service.

As a ventriloquist, Dave and his pulpit-buddy “Ricky” taught and entertained both children and adults. A prolific writer, Dave is the author of more than ten books, weekly columns for several newspapers, and many articles in *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*. An avid and accomplished photographer, specializing in nature and landscape photography, he has published photos in magazines, on church bulletin covers, and online.

Dave and his wife **Diann** plan to continue in service, dividing their time between Florida and Mexico, near their children and other family members. In a retirement celebration Oct. 12, members of the Toledo congregation prayed for the Claassens and gave them two handmade crosses, one for each of their new homes.

YOU COULD HAVE HEARD A GAVEL DROP—On Sept. 29, 2014, “The last regular meeting of the Executive Committee/Board of Directors of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches was called to order by Chairman, **Bill Trump**, at 2:00 PM CDT by conference call,” according to official minutes recorded by NACCC Secretary **Judy Campbell**.

Thus ended the existence of the 12-member committee of dedicated volunteers, serving staggered four-year terms, that had managed affairs between Annual Meetings since the association’s birth Oct. 25, 1956. Already in place were two new structures: A Leadership Council of nine voting and six non-voting members, tasked with the association’s vision and programs, and a seven-member Board of Directors to oversee finances and fiduciary responsibilities.

Time will tell how well the new structure will serve the NACCC, but there were promising indications in the brisk activity of the new teams activated by three Ministry Councils—for Missions and Outreach, Growth, and Vitality—under the Leadership Council. An innovation designed to expedite work flow and information sharing throughout the association is the use of Trello boards—a kind of “slick, simple, cloud-based planner for groups,” according to *THE CONGREGATIONALIST*’s tech guru **Rob Brink** (see “*Net Mending*,” p. 33). Each of the leadership entities in the new structure has its own Trello board, where members can post agendas, schedules, plans, and working documents.

WHITHER YOUTH?—In its Oct. 23 telephone conference, the Leadership Council unanimously

approved a new policy, proposed by the Growth Ministry Council and its Youth Task Team, giving the team broad autonomy in planning the style, location, and time of the annual youth conference.

“The NAPF/HOPE Task Team has the authority to plan and implement a conference or mission trip for teens and young adults of a style and at a location and time which best meet the needs and desires of the local churches and the youth who participate in these events,” states the new policy. “Appropriate ways will be used to communicate the nature and experiences of these events to the gathered delegation of the NACCC. In addition, the NAPF/HOPE Task Team will attempt to hold conferences or mission trips in close proximity to the NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference and, when possible, will make every effort to facilitate interaction between youth and young adults gathered for the NAPF/HOPE conference or mission trip and the gathered delegation of the NACCC.”

The new policy grew from the desire to build on recent successful youth conferences, which have featured a strong mission component in localities with outstanding human needs, while accommodating the



John Douc

The Rev. Robert Livingston, head pastor at First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor, opens the Saturday session of the two-day Michigan Conference annual meeting.

desire of both adult and youth attendees for frequent intergenerational gatherings.

TWICE THE FUN—The Michigan Conference of Congregational Christian Churches held its annual

Continued on p. 38



First Squantum meeting house, ca. 1914, left, and today.

SQUANTO WOULD BE PLEASED—*The First Church of Squantum [Mass.] (Congregational)* kicked off its centennial celebration Saturday evening, Sept. 20, with a candlelight worship service, followed by a catered dinner with community story-telling, historical photo and memorabilia displays, and dance by the Brady Academy for Irish Dancing. Special guests included former pastors, Quincy mayor **Thomas Koch**, state representative **Bruce Ayers**, and members of sister Congregational churches. Sunday’s worship featured a Service of Rededication.

The church was originally dedicated Sept. 20, 1914, thanks to the efforts of Christians of different denominations. “First Church’s founding seems to be very organic, rising up out of the community’s need to have shared space to worship God and meet together,” the **Rev. Doug Gray**. The church’s first pastor, **Rev. Thomas W. Davison**, had been organizing and teaching summer-only Sunday School for children starting in 1910, as a mission outreach of the Atlantic Memorial Church.

The First Church of Squantum continues this tradition of community service, hosting Cub Scout and Boy Scout troops, Daisy and Brownie troops, Squantum Community Association lectures, a community book group, a “Mommy and Me” program for pre-schoolers and their adults, and dances for middle-school students. This summer the church offered Vacation Bible School free of charge to anyone who wanted to come. Says Rev. Gray, “This fellowship’s commitment to reaching out to the community, to being a light of grace in Squantum is part of what drew me to this church last year. ... I think we are really making a difference for God!”

meeting Oct. 17-18, hosted by *First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor*. The association has resumed its traditional two-day format, after years of doing one-day annual meetings. This year's meeting, like last year's two-day conference at *Sutton's Bay Congregational Church*, was deemed a great success.

In addition to the business meeting—led by the association's moderator, the **Rev. John Doud**, *Arbor Grove Congregational Church, Jackson, Mich.*—the event featured three special presentations:

- A Friday evening program by **Dr. Michele Johns** on "Church Hymnody." Explored, considered, and sang from the diverse hymns and text of the *New Century Hymnal and Hymns for a Pilgrim People* (edited by the **Rev. Cynthia Bacon** of *Heritage Congregational Church, Madison, Wis.*).
- A performance, later on Friday evening, by Our Own Thing Chorale, led by founder and director **Willis Patterson**, a University of Michigan professor emeritus. The culturally diverse chorale is committed to preserving and performing African-American spirituals and traditional contemporary choral compositions.
- Saturday morning's keynote address, "Religious Liberty in the United States: Then and Now," by

Christopher Lund, J.D. Lund addressed the ever-changing legal climate of religiosity in America from the Revolutionary era to today, touching on the meaning of prayer in public places, and the place of political conversations in churches.

Altogether 53 people (17 ministers and 36 lay delegates) represented 21 churches on Friday, and 59 people (19 clergy, 40 lay) represented 23 churches on Saturday. Five other churches sent voting proxies through churches that attended.

SWIM INTO CAL-WEST COMPLETE—The Cal-West Association received into membership the six churches of the Southwest Inter-Mountain Fellowship of Churches upon the latter's formal dissolution.

"Six churches from SWIM requested church membership in Cal-West in May and the Association granted it. They are: *Community Church of Warren, Bisbee, Arizona*; *Congregational Church of Sun City, Arizona*; *Congregational Church of the Valley, Chandler, Arizona*; *Old Stone Congregational Church, Lyons, Colorado*; *Community Congregational Church, Big Piney, Wyoming*; [and] *First Congregational Church, Salt Lake City, Utah*," reported *The Cal-West Congregationalist* in its Autumn 2014 edition.

Mission continued from p. 22

breaking the awestruck silence that filled the vehicle. I nodded in agreement.

"Found" by a relational God who chooses to interact with us personally: That is the Lord we serve.



KRISTEN SCHUYLER, at 19 years old, is in her first year at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pa. She grew up in Manville, N.J., and has attended the Congregational Church of Bound Brook, N. J., since she was in elementary school.

Net Mending continued from p. 33

But, it doesn't matter how much I like something. If nobody uses it, it's useless. So before you announce anything, make it easy for people to get involved.

First, take the time to plan a few projects yourself. Second, take some more time and build a useful collection of notes, checklists, and attachments so that when people join, they can see the benefits right away. Third, introduce it as an experiment: "It's free. We're going to try it out for three months. If it doesn't work as well as we hope, we can always ditch it and we're not out a penny." Follow those three guidelines and your church just might gain a tool that people actually use.

PASTORATES AND PULPITS

ORDINATIONS

Mt. Hope Congregational Church, Livonia, Mich., ordained the Rev. Justin Olivetti, with the concurrence of a vicinage council, Sept. 28, 2014.

IN SEARCH

SENIOR MINISTERS

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

Colebrook Congregational Church
Colebrook, Conn.

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 of Maltby
Snohomish, Wash.

Glenolden Congregational Church
Glenolden, Pa.

LaMoille Congregational Community Church
Marshalltown, Iowa

McGraft Memorial Congregational Church
Muskegon, Mich.

North Shore Congregational Church
Fox Point, Wis.

Orthodox Congregational Church
Petersham, Mass.

People's Congregational Church
Bayport, Minn.

Pine Hill Congregational Church
West Bloomfield, Mich.

Plymouth Church
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Plymouth Congregational Church
Minneapolis, Minn.

SouthCross Community Church
Burnsville, Minn.

Union Congregational Christian Church
Marbury, Ala.

Westchester Congregational Church
Colchester, Conn.

PART-TIME MINISTER

Second Congregational Church
Jewett City, Conn.

NON-NACCC CHURCHES

Elm Street Congregational Church
Bucksport, Maine

Prairie View Christian Church
Norway, Iowa

Wakeman Congregational Church
Wakeman, Ohio

Wyben Union Church
Westfield, Mass.

CALENDAR

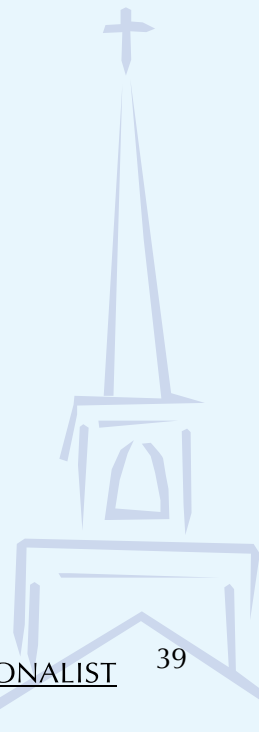
JANUARY 26 - General copy deadline for *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* March 2015 issue. Contact Larry Sommers, editor@naccc.org or 800-262-1620, ext. 1610.

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



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

HE TRUSTS US WITH HIS WORLD...

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

—PSALM 98:8