



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

TO: NACCC MEMBER CHURCHES

FROM: NOMINATING COMMITTEE

RE: Nominations for positions to be filled by vote of the Delegates at the Annual Meeting & Conference, June 2023, and current terms. Respective terms begin at the conclusion of the meeting.

MODERATOR, Two-Year Term:

[Two-year Term to end 2024; vote was taken in 2022, first year of nomination]

Rev. Art Ritter, Meadowbrook Congregational Church, Novi, Michigan

Art is Minister Emeritus of Meadowbrook Congregational Church in Novi, MI, having retired in April 2021. He is a native of Stanton, MI, and grew up in the Traditional Congregational Church there. Art has a B.A. from Alma College and an M.A. from Central Michigan University and worked first as a Parks and Recreation Director in Bridgeport, MI. He graduated from the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and the Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies in 1985. Ordained in that same year, Art has also served National Association churches in Toulon, IL; West Bloomfield, MI; and Salt Lake City, UT. He has been active within regional associations and the National Association, with terms on the Christian Education Commission, Nominating Committee, Division for Ministry, Congregational Church Development Division, Executive Committee, and the Annual Meeting and Conference Committee. Art and his spouse Laura have two adult daughters, Maren and Amelia.

VICE-MODERATOR, Two-Year Term:

[Two-year Term to end 2024; vote was taken in 2022, first year of nomination as Vice-Moderator, serves two years as Vice-Moderator; may be nominated for two years as Moderator]

Jodee Lord, Oakwood Heights Community Church, Staten Island, New York

Jodee Lord is a member of Oakwood Heights Community Church on Staten Island, N.Y. She is actively involved in life at Oakwood and its community, serving on the Board of Deacons, Church Council, Pastoral Search Committees, Board of Trustees, Church Choir, and food pantry volunteer. Jodee sits on the Board of Directors of S.I. Council of Churches as Chairperson of the Scholarship Committee and Congregational Support and Outreach. She has a deep dedication to the NACCC. She is currently serving as Vice Moderator and chair of the Board of Directors. Jodee serves on the Racial Justice Task Team, Planning and Action Committee, and Bylaw's Task Team. She was also Chairperson for our most recent search for an Executive Director. Jodee has served on the NACCC's Women's Commission, Division for Ministry, Transition Team, Nominating Committee, Annual Meeting & Conference Committee, and Sexual Abuse Task Team. She has served as the Moderator of the NY/NJ Regional Association. Jodee is a retired Preschool Director with a degree in Education and Psychology. Jodee and her husband Fred of forty-six years are the proud parents of daughters Sarah and Julia.

SECRETARY, One-Year Term:

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

Kate O'Dell has lived in Alaska since 1981 and has been a member of the First Congregational Church of Anchorage (FCC) for 25 years. She has served the congregation in many roles including Moderator, Clerk, chair of various boards and ministries, and as a member of the Host Committee for the 2010 NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference in Anchorage. She was the FCC Administrative Assistant for eight years, retired, but is now in that position again (retitled Church Secretary) since the previous person moved to Kansas when her husband answered the call of a church there. In 2020, Kate was elected for a second term as Clerk of the Pacific Northwest Association of Congregational Christian Churches, and she is FCC's Year-Round Delegate to the PNACCC. This year, Kate began serving on the Host Committee for the 2024 NACCC Annual Meeting and Conference in Spokane, WA. In 2006, Kate retired as Professor Emerita of Teacher Education with the University of Alaska Anchorage College of Education. Her most recent service to that program was as a contributing editor for accreditation self-studies. Kate has served on boards of several nonprofit organizations, frequently as the secretary or chair of a communications committee.

TREASURER, One-Year Term:

Patrick Stewart, First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa [Re-elected this year]

Patrick served as the volunteer Youth Leader at his member church, LaMoille Congregational Church for nearly 20 years and is currently serving as the Chairperson of the Iowa-Nebraska Association Youth Task Team. Patrick has attended NAPF-HOPE conferences since 2005 and served as either an attendee, CIT, or counselor/small group leader. He has served as the Youth Representative on NACCC Leadership Council and is currently on the Annual Meeting Committee and is serving his fourth year on the NAPF-HOPE Planning Team. In September 1999, Patrick received his Associate's Degree in Accounting with Honors from the American Institute of Business in Des Moines, IA. He has over 20 years of bookkeeping, budgeting, and finance experience. Patrick is currently an Assistant Auditor with the State of Iowa's Auditor's Office-Finance Division in Des Moines, IA. He enjoys listening to music, singing, playing co-ed softball and men's

church league basketball, and watching the Iowa State Cyclones, Kansas City Chiefs, and Chicago Cubs. He really enjoys spending time with the church youth group doing fun activities and giving them the same experiences he had as a youth. Patrick looks forward to once again serving as the NACCC Treasurer for the next year.

HISTORIAN, One-Year Term:

Rev. Norm Erlendson, First Congregational (Road) Church of Stonington, Connecticut [Newly elected this year]

Rev. Norm Erlendson has pastored Congregational churches in the NACCC since 1990. He is currently pastor of the historic Road Church, First Congregational, Stonington, CT, founded in 1674. He holds a master's degree in History from the University of Washington, and a Master's Degree in Christian Theology and Ethics from New College, Berkeley, California. He has taught Congregational History and Theology at the Boston Seminar, and also teaches the New Testament and Church History Survey courses in the Lay Ministry Training Program. He and his wife Barbara live in Pawcatuck, CT.

YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE – LEADERSHIP COUNCIL, One-Year Term:

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

Melinda has been serving on the Christian Ed Committee and as a Youth Leader for almost 20 years at First Congregational Church of Elkader starting in high school. She has also served on the Diaconate Committee for almost 15 years. For the past several years she has been part of the Iowa-Nebraska Youth Committee. Melinda first attended NAPF in 2003. Since 2009 she has attended NAPF-HOPE as either an attendee or counselor. For the past several years she has been videoing and taking pictures at the conference making a video for those attending the conference. Melinda is employed by BassPro/Cabelas at the Distribution Center in Prairie du Chien, WI, working in the inventory department and cross-trained in other areas to help as needed. She enjoys reading, listening to music, spending time with family and friends, and traveling.

MINISTRY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES SERVING ON THE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

One-Year Term as Nominated by their Elected Council

Growth Ministry Council Reps:

Rev. Irvan Gammon, Florence Congregational Church, Florence, Massachusetts

Rev. Dr. William R. "Ron" Toliver Th.D., Crystal Congregational Church, Crystal, Michigan

Mission and Outreach Ministry Council Reps:

Rev. Richard Miller-Todd, Berwick Congregational Church, Berwick, Iowa

Gerald (Jerry) Zwaga, Community Congregational Christian Church, Citrus Springs, Florida

Vitality Ministry Council Reps:

Cynthia Hardy, Congregational Church of the Valley, Chandler, Arizona

Rev. Robb Tarr, Gahanna Community Congregational Church, Gahanna, Ohio

ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEMBER-AT-LARGE – LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2023-2026]

Rev. Dr. Karen Robu, Plymouth Congregational Church, Wichita, Kansas

The Rev. Dr. Karen Robu began serving Plymouth Congregational Church in April 2011. She earned her M.Div. from Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, OK in May of 2013 and her D. Min., also from Phillips, in May of 2022. Before coming to Plymouth, Karen served for seven years as Director of Children and Youth Ministries for University Congregational Church in Wichita, Karen received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre from the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada. She continues to be involved in theatre and performs and directs shows in her spare time. Her favorite roles include Emma Goldman in *Ragtime*, Rose in *Gypsy*, and Ursula in Disney's *Little Mermaid*, all performed at Music Theatre Wichita. In addition to her other roles she teaches theatre and religion classes for Bethel College in North Newton. Karen lives in Newton with her husband Tim, their youngest daughter, and a number of horses, dogs, cats, chickens, and ducks. Drawn to the "thin places" between the performing arts and the sacred she makes connections between theatre and theology in her ministry. www.karenrobu.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Staggered Terms, as indicated)

Robert Weers, Congregational Church of Soquel, California [Four-Year Term 2023-2027]

Bob is a member of the Congregational Church of Soquel, CA. Loyal serving as an usher for 35 years, Bob has provided leadership in the congregation as chairman of the Board of Trustees, Board of Deacons, Staff Relations Committee, and Nominations Committee as well as serving as Clerk and Member-at-Large. He has given legal support to the church, including helping to draft the church's restated constitution. Bob is a lawyer, a graduate of the University of California Berkeley Law School. His legal career has been devoted to public service beginning with helping to develop a new country's legal system as a Peace Corps Volunteer lawyer in the Palau Islands (now the Republic of Palau) to forming Silicon Valley's public transit authority as its first General Counsel. He has served in numerous community leadership positions, including Little League President and high school Wrestling Commissioner, and

is currently the Secretary/Treasurer of a small neighborhood water company. He is a member of the NACCC Personnel and Administration Committee, serving for the past 10 years. Bob is married with three adult children and one sweet granddaughter.

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

Curt Schmidt, Congregational Church of Bound Brook, Bound Brook, New Jersey [term to end 2026]

Rev. Thomas Van Tassell, First Congregational Church, Saugatuck, Michigan [term to end 2025]

Rev. Dr. Beth Bingham, Congregational Church of the Chimes, Sherman Oaks, California [term to end 2024]

GROWTH MINISTRY COUNCIL

New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2023-2026]

Rev. Irven Gammon, Florence Congregational Church, Florence, Massachusetts

Rev. Dr. Irven A. Gammon was ordained November 9th of 2003 at the Rockland Church where he served as the Associate Pastor. He was later called to the Florence Congregational Church in Northampton MA in 2005 where he served for 15 years. He acquired an Assoc Degree in Applied Science (1980), a Bachelor of Liberal Arts: Christian Traditions (2003), a Master of Divinity (2003), and a Doctor of Ministry (2013). His thesis title was *Nourishing the Mind, Body, and Spirit: Drawing Upon the Living Water of Christ*. He remains a member of the Florence Congregational Church where he serves as a Trustee. Irven has been a strong advocate and supporter of the Florence Church/ Bombyx Center for the Arts partnership that began in 2020. (See article in the December 2021 Congregational magazine). He served on the Executive Board of Cancer Connection in Northampton for 10 years leading the group for 2 years as President. Irven currently serves full-time as the Executive Director of the Fellowship of Northeast Congregational Christian Churches. He assists the 32 churches with education, strategic planning, visioning, forming search committees, and conflict resolution; and he attempts to nurture those struggling to remain solvent. He works to encourage pastors in distress and assists with search inquiries. He continues to enjoy preaching at the local churches in his care. Irven has been happily married to Brenda Gammon since 1983 and enjoys visits with 2 children, 3 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren. He enjoys hiking, biking, research, and theological dialogue with colleagues and willing friends.

New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2023-2026]

Sharon Brown, Meadowbrook Congregational Church, Novi, Michigan

Sharon Brown grew up in the Congregational Church; her journey started at Royal Oak FCC (MI) where she was a member until 1989 when she transferred to Meadowbrook Congregational in Novi (MI). While at Royal Oak, she started working with the youth group (PF), after her return from a 2-year stint in the Peace Corps. She continued to work with the youth group when she transferred to Meadowbrook, adding teaching Sunday school to her resume. She married Kelly and they have 2 adult boys. She has served on the Board of Christian Education, Board of Music, Social Services, and Nominations. She took a break from the youth group while her boys were in PF and jumped in again with both feet when the youngest was in high school. This included becoming a camp counselor at Michigan's Summer Camp (this ended with her on the camp committee and eventually running camp for 5 years) and again becoming involved with PF, both at Meadowbrook and at the state level becoming a member of the Youth Commission. She attended NAPF from 2010 until the pandemic. Right now, she is focused on reviving Michigan PF.

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

Pastor Michael K. Freeman, Hampshire Colony Congregational Church, Princeton, Illinois [term to end 2025]

Rev. Dr. William R. "Ron" Toliver Th.D., Crystal Congregational Church, Crystal, Michigan [term to end 2025]

Rev. Ezekiel Rodriguez, First Family Community Church, National City, California [term to end 2024]

MISSION AND OUTREACH MINISTRY COUNCIL

New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2023-2026]

Joanne Simpson, First Church of Christ Congregational, Lynn, Massachusetts

Joanne is from Peabody, Massachusetts, and attends the First Church of Christ in Lynn (MA), Congregational. She was first introduced to the NACCC when she attended her first HOPE meeting in 1979. She then went on to attend 33 youth meetings in varying capacities. She served on the NACCC Church Services Commission, and after that term, she decided her passion was with the youth. She attended NAPF as a counselor for several years. She served on the Youth Commission (1996-2000), was HOPE Co-Director (2002-2005), and was on the NAPF HOPE Leadership team (2009-2016). It was at that point she became a regular attendee of the Annual Meeting. Joanne served on the Annual Meeting and Conference Committee as the NAPF HOPE representative. She has also been a member of local Host Committees for the NACCC Annual Meetings. At her home church, Joanne served as youth leader in the 1990's until 2008. She has served on Deacons, Memorials Committee, Christian Ed Committee, Sunday School teacher, VBS and Treasurer of Benevolence. Joanne worked for almost 35 years in the Hematology Oncology Department at the Lahey Clinic. She loves to spend time with her family, theater, bowling, and traveling to Wisconsin for quilting retreats.

MISSION AND OUTREACH MINISTRY COUNCIL~continued

New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2023-2026]

Rev. Richard Miller-Todd, Berwick Congregational Church, Berwick, Iowa

[Filled an unexpired term, term to end 2023]

Rev. Richard Miller-Todd served as minister of Berwick Congregational Church (Berwick, Iowa) from 1997 – 2018. He has served on the NACCC Nominating Committee and as a Moderator of the Iowa-Nebraska Association. For the past two years, he has served on the Mission and Outreach Ministry Council. He has been the chair for 18 months. He has visited several global and domestic missions. He is currently completing the last two years of an unexpired three-year term.

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

Rev. Bob Higgins, St. John Church of Idalia, Idalia, Colorado [term to end 2025]

Amana Talala Mbise, Anchorage, Alaska [term to end 2025]

Gerald (Jerry) Zwaga, Community Congregational Christian Church, Citrus Springs, Florida [term to end 2024]

VITALITY MINISTRY COUNCIL

New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2023-2026]

Rev. Mark Tanner, Skowhegan Federated Church, Skowhegan, Maine

Mark Tanner has been the pastor of the Skowhegan Federated Church since February 1995. Mark came to Skowhegan following a two-year campus ministry experience at Piedmont College in Georgia. Mark enjoyed serving the young people as well as being present in the life of faculty on campus. Mark has enjoyed 28 years of ministry in Skowhegan. The church serves a wide area in what is called Somerset County. The church is engaged in a broad base of ministries beginning with poverty and heating. Mark believes in making sure food is available to those in need. At Thanksgiving, the church puts together over 275 boxes for distribution to people in the area. Along with food distribution, the church supplies heating oil for families in need in Somerset County. This is all done through donations made possible by church members and people in the community. All of these experiences shared by the church allow God's light to be shared in the community. Mark has served on the United Way board, Somerset Hospice, and as Chaplain to the Fire and Police Departments. Mark also enjoys announcing for the high school football games and coaching baseball for 7th and 8th-grade boys in the Spring. Mark has enjoyed serving the church with his wife Deb who has her own project called "Sweet Dreams". It is a program for families who are in need at Christmas. Her program gives each child a hat, mittens, two toys, a book, and pajamas. This program serves 500 children each Christmas. Mark is also blessed with 5 grown children and 4 grandchildren. Mark looks forward to his involvement in the NACCC.

New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2023-2026]

Rev. Dr. Robin Carden, Suttons Bay Congregational Church, Suttons Bay, Michigan

The Rev. Dr. Robin Carden has served Suttons Bay Congregational Church on the Leelanau Peninsula of Northern Michigan since 2005. Previous to that she was a new start pastor and served churches in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Robin serves on the Church and Pastoral Relations Committee of the Michigan Conference. Robin is the volunteer leader of Tiny Tappers, a 4-H tap dancing club for 5-7-year-olds.

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

Cynthia Hardy, Congregational Church of the Valley, Chandler, Arizona [term to end 2025]

Rev. Robb Tarr, Gahanna Community Congregational Church, Gahanna, Ohio [term to end 2025]

Rev. Ian Macdonald (M.Div.), Congregational Church of Soquel, Soquel, California [term to end 2024]

NOMINATING COMMITTEE Nominated by Board of Directors

New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2023-2026]

Justin Nierer, Sandstone Congregational Church, Jackson, Michigan

Rev. Justin Nierer is the pastor of Sandstone Congregational Church in Jackson MI. He just finished his second and final term on the Vitality Ministry Council having been the chair for the past three years. He was also on the executive director search committee and the Center for Congregational Leadership task team. He and his wife Seneca have just celebrated 15 years of marriage and they have one son, Wesley who is turning 11. He looks forward to being part of the nominating committee!

New Nominee [Three-Year Term 2023-2026]

Joelle Sommers, Heritage Congregational Church, Madison, Wisconsin

Joelle Sommers has been actively involved in the NACCC since she was 13 years old. Previously, she has served on the Missionary Society, the Mission and Outreach Ministry Council, and the Executive Committee. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, and is a member of Heritage Congregational Christian Church.

Continuing Members of the Nominating Committee [no vote necessary]

Claude Johnson, First Congregational Church of Greenville, Michigan [term to end 2024]

Rev. Emily Raasch, First Congregational Church of Anaheim, California [term to end 2024]

Jami Backell, Warden Community Church, Warden, Washington [term to end 2025]

Rev. J.R. McAliley, Center Congregational Church of Atlanta, Georgia [term to end 2025]