

**Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies**  
**FY2023**

As my role as Dean of the Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies comes to a close at the end of this month, I reflect on a very full and rewarding eight years of serving the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches in support of those who respond to the call to minister among our faith communities.

For the first time in three years, a Boston Seminar in Congregational History and Polity took place in the summer of 2022, with three seminary students and several others attending. Students have all submitted research papers on topics both historical and relevant. Participants had meaningful visits to Plymouth, Massachusetts, as well as historic religious sites in downtown Boston and time in the Congregational Library and Archives.

In the fall of 2022, the CFTS Committee interviewed, admitted, and welcomed Benjamin Fisher as a new student. Ben is attending Luther Theological Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota. At the same time, at the 2023 Annual Meeting and Conference, a graduation ceremony will be held to bless Jacob Richards, who recently received his Master of Divinity degree from Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, and has been called as Senior Minister of the First Congregational Church of Portland, Michigan.

Two students attended the Annual Meeting and Conference in Wichita, Kansas, June 25-28, 2022, and one took part in the Midwest Ministers' Convocation in Adrian, Michigan, April 17-20, 2023. Further, two students have finished one year of supervised ministry in NACCC member church settings.

Several years ago, I was invited to be a part of the re-designing the NACCC Lay Ministry Training Program. It was recognized that a quality lay ministry course of study provides leadership options beyond seminary-educated, full-time clergy. Now completing its second year, fourteen individuals have completed classes, taught by diverse faculty with backgrounds in their respective subjects and sharing the experience in a cohort of students. It has been a privilege to be able to see this develop and become a reality.

The CFTS Committee was diminished as the Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Bingham and the Rev. Phyllis Merritt stepped down from their positions. We are delighted to have Dr. Patrick Horn of the Pilgrim Congregational Church of Pomona, California, join the Committee, which is also comprised of the Rev. Jacob Poindexter, Chairperson, and the Revs. Mike Fales, Doug Gray, William Lange, and Justin Nierer. Scholarships and support by individuals and members churches throughout the NACCC, enables students to have the opportunities that CFTS provides, and we are grateful for all of this.

Yours in hope for the future of the Congregational Way and its educated clergy,

Rev. Dr. Charles A. Packer, Dean  
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