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The
CONGREGATIONALIST
Magazine of the Congregational Way since 1849

VOL. 174 • NO. 4

*When
Visions
Unite*

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*TIME OF
Renewal*

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CHURCHES
MOVING FORWARD

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT
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From the desk of
**Our NACCC
Executive Director**

*By Reverend Dr. Ashley Cleere, Executive Director,
National Association of Congregational Christian Churches*

In Communion

Amid the diverse ways Congregationalists observe the sacrament of communion, many liturgies make a similar request: "We invite you to partake of the bread as it is served, acknowledging your individual relationship with God. Please hold the cup until all are served, expressing our shared membership in Body of Christ."

We gather around the table as unique individuals. Yet, together, we receive "the gifts of God for the people of God." The Lord's Supper is both a personal and collective act of faith.

Secular activities also reflect this interplay between individuality and collegiality. Athletes hone their skills to better their team and themselves. Musicians play diverse instruments in concert with others to accomplish symphonic excellence.

Congregationalists use the terms 'autonomy' and 'fellowship' to describe how churches relate to one another. Both characteristics, autonomy

and fellowship, shape the life of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches.

The Planning and Action Committee, formed a year ago, recently introduced three objectives to lend continuity to the diverse initiatives of the Association:

- Increase professionalism
- Foster collaboration
- Expand the visibility of NACCC

NACCC leadership team members are exploring how these aims inform their responsibilities. Some will further these open-ended purposes through copious planning. The Holy Spirit also steps in to forge unplanned connections. The Association calendar and stops on the Listening Tour reveal examples of Congregationalists fulfilling these goals.

In November, a dozen clergy enrolled in the Healthy Boundaries 101 workshops to **increase professionalism**. The Racial Justice Task Team "provides resources for the local church to discuss the challenging/difficult/painful subject of racism in a safe space." Their effort is in tandem with progress toward diversity, equity, and inclusion in other professional arenas.

The Mission and Outreach Ministry Council **fosters collaboration** through One Great Hour of Sharing appeals. In the wake of natural disasters, they work with respected and responsible organizations that comply with IRS and NACCC requirements. At a recent meeting of the Michigan Conference of Congregational Christian Churches, local churches

described partnerships with elementary schools in need of mentors and with high school National Honor Society students seeking opportunities to complete service hours.

New to the NACCC, Union Congregational Church of Amesbury, Massachusetts, updated its street sign with the NACCC logo, **expanding visibility** for their church and our Association. On an October evening, a parking lot concert with bonfires and chili drew attention around town for the First Congregational Church of Laingsburg, Michigan.

Will your church reflect these objectives as we venture into a new calendar year? We would love to hear how you pursue them deliberately or unexpectedly. Please email me at director@naccc.org. Pictures welcome!

The communion meal feeds our individual souls and binds us together

with Christ and one another through a holy mystery. Our quest for common goals in various contexts unites us in practical ways, visible expressions of our intangible membership in the Body of Christ.



New street sign at Union Congregational Church of Amesbury, Massachusetts



First Congregational Church of Laingsburg, Michigan, held a concert in its parking lot.



Ashley Cleere meets the band.



GETTING TO KNOW YOU A Listening Tour

As of July 1, 2022, the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches comprises 312 congregations and 28,715 church members. In July, Ashley Cleere, NACCC Executive Director, kicked off a listening tour with the goal of visiting every NACCC church over the next three years.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1

Pilgrim Congregational Church of Green Bay, Wisconsin

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6

First Congregational Church of Elkader, Iowa

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7

Little Brown Church in the Vale, Nashua, Iowa

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8

First Congregational Church of Berwick, Iowa

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9

First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15

Allison Congregational Church, Allison, Iowa

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16

First Congregational Church of Clear Lake, Iowa



WHEN VISIONS UNITE

With Rev. Dr. Irvén Gammon

attracted by Florence CC's history of social justice. Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips lectured in the pine grove adjacent to the church. Sojourner Truth and David Ruggles lived nearby. Today, the Sojourner Truth Memorial Park and statue in front of the building is the location of education, ceremonies and community events and a reminder of the church's heritage.

More recently, Florence CC has faced the challenges common to today's churches, including declining memberships and the subsequent erosion in financial stability. As a result, churches are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain church facilities and operations. Florence CC was committed to preserving, not only the church, but its heritage. Beit Ahavah also wanted to remain in the building, as did the other tenant, Cloverdale Cooperative Preschool.

A New Lease on Life

In 2021, the church was purchased by Bombyx Center for Arts and Equity founded by Kyle Homstead and Cassandra Holden of Laudable Productions. The current rent-to-buy agreement gave Florence CC a 99-year lease on its church space, granting them the right to use the space for services and events. Beit Ahavah, and the Cloverdale Cooperative Preschool, continue to be housed there as tenants of the church.

Laudable, themselves tenants of the Bombyx non-profit entity, produces festivals, concerts and other music and art events. Homstead and Holden named the multi-purpose facility Bombyx Center for Arts & Equity. Holden serves as the Executive Director of the Board of Directors of Bombyx. Bombyx refers to bombyx mori, the moth that provides silk, which was woven into fabric by enslaved individuals during the church's early history. The founders of the once famous silk mill of Florence and citizens of the surrounding community were abolitionists during the Civil War and wanted to produce and market silk to consumers to reduce the need for cotton in the country reducing the market for cotton picked by slaves as the time.

Homstead and Holden working with Bombyx, combined their vision and creativity to turn the Sanctuary into a



Florence Congregational Church chancel and Bombyx Center stage. Photos by Julian Parker-Burns, Laudable Productions

Kyle Homstead and Cassandra Holden



dual-purpose space. The new stage showcases a range of performers, while serving as a Chancel on Fridays and Sundays for the Jewish and Christian congregations. The church building was also spruced up with many community volunteers painting the adjacent Parish Hall community space and large music room. Separate entrances to church and arts center will maintain Florence CC's identity and afford a level of privacy. The hall hosts weddings and other special events.

The Reverend Dr. Irvén Gammon, former minister at Florence FCC, has been pleased with the way Holden and Homstead promote the relationship between Bombyx and the church:

"Cassandra makes it a point to talk to artists who will be on stage about the unique heritage and work of the congregation within the community for 162 years. She speaks of its legacy and its work in the abolition movement in the 1860s, including sending their pastor to the front lines with

care packages from the church. The proposed utopian equitable community of Florence that was developing at the time was extremely supportive of all people for who they were and where they were on their journey. I am so happy to see and experience this collaboration and partnership. It is a dream come true and reflective of my doctorate work in 2013. I truly believe the partnership will bless the community of Florence and surrounding towns for years to come. Cassandra's desire to create a space for all people to discover spiritual connectivity through music and art is truly amazing, beautiful and in sync with my belief that we need to think outside the box to serve Christ in new and innovative ways as our American culture continues to change and adapt within the chaos of life today."

The acts scheduled for Bombyx are eclectic – jazz, global music, American standards, bluegrass, gospel – and tend to reinforce the diversity cherished by the Florence CC and Beit Ahavah congregations. The stage will also welcome visual artists, speakers, exhibitions, dance performances, worship and film screenings. According to Holden, Laudable Productions represents a number of artists who are also activists in social and racial justice.

Opening night for the Bombyx Center for Arts & Equity featured Grammy-winning jazz singer Dee Dee Bridgewater and award-winning

pianist Bill Charlap. The choice of performers was an indication that Holden and Homstead planned to honor the church's history in the types of performers it booked at the center.

"When Dee Dee stepped on stage, she looked through the church and out through the front doors at the statue of Sojourner Truth- once enslaved -- who was deeply involved in the abolition movement and the underground railroad that passed through Florence," Gammon recalled.

Dee Dee, with glassy eyes, almost teary I think," said Gammon, "spoke of the church's engagement in the community and country towards a more equitable society for all, and the commitment and love of the congregation. Although normally on large stages across the country, she noted that it was an honor and privilege to be on the stage of such amazing people. The audience was moved deeply by her words."

Gammon's experience with the owners has convinced him that Bombyx Center for Arts and Equity is poised to work with and support all people on a journey of discovery and abundant life. For her part, Cassandra Holden is energized by how the multi-use character of Bombyx Center touches so many people in the community in different ways. Though Laudable Productions still works with other venues, Bombyx represents a dream come true – the type of music and arts center she had always envisioned.

Continued>

Clay Ross of Ranky Tank

Florence Congregational Church was shaped by a storied past. In 1842, local activists, farmers, teachers, and businessmen founded the Northampton Association of Education and Industry on the principles of abolitionism, temperance, pacifism, gender equality and religious tolerance. The group established a utopian community along a grove of pine trees in the location now known as Florence, Massachusetts.

Though the community disbanded after four years, it sold its 100 acres of land (including a silk mill that provided jobs to former enslaved workers) to abolitionist churchmen and local industrialists. On the site of the former utopian community, Moses Breck, an assistant on the Underground Railroad, built Florence Congregational Church. The new congregation included members from nine denominations.

Led by Northampton Deacon and Underground Railroad agent John Payson Williston members insisted that anti-slavery language be included in the church bylaws. Women of the congregation had full voting rights.

Beit Ahavah Reformed Synagogue began sharing the space the church space about 20 years ago. The synagogue was

WHEN VISIONS UNITE

Continued

"We're really inspired by what an organization like this can bring to the fabric of the community, using the arts as a vehicle to reawaken the history here of local activism," said Holden.

Dr. Gammon, now serving as Executive Director of The Fellowship of Northeast Congregational Christian Churches, is a former builder of Maine prior to his admission to seminary in 1998. He served the Rockland Congregational Church as first an

Intern while in seminary and then as the Associate Pastor prior to his call to the Florence Congregational Church in 2005. Along with his pastoral duties and preaching, he was very involved in the maintenance and use of the church building by community groups. He continues to hold his church membership with Florence and has a special interest in future renovations to and development of the building. He notes,

"I hope that this partnership can become a model and inspiration to other churches in the Fellowship and NA churches across the county. While it may not work for every church, it might offer hope to the many struggling churches and move them to 'think outside the traditional box'"

The Rev. Averill Elizabeth Blackburn, Florence CC's most recent pastor (who

left the pulpit late August of 2022), says she's thrilled by the new collaboration with Laudable Productions, which allows the the church stay in its historic home while also relieving much of its recent financial burden.

More to Come

Future plans for Bombyx Center for Arts & Equity include building a new main entrance – a glass atrium to the arts center which will further define the arts center as apart from the church, synagogue, and preschool. **In addition to the private funding sources generated by Holden and Homstead, the Bombyx Center qualifies for arts grants that will help enhance and preserve the historic church building as well as the center.**

More information about the Bombyx Center for Arts & Equity can be found at bombyx.live.

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- Engage compassion and enhance relationships with members and the community.

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Along THE WAY

MENIFEE REACHES OUT TO GOGO GRANDMOTHERS

About 10 years ago I heard about Gogo Grandmothers from a friend. Her church was sponsoring a Malawi village. My husband, Bill Rhoads, and I signed up to sponsor one Gogo each month (\$30) with her church. Gogo is the word for grandmother in Malawi. The couple who started this ministry saw the need for spiritual, emotional and physical assistance because many Gogos were raising their grandchildren because so many parents had been lost to HIV/AIDS.

I introduced our Menifee Congregational Church congregation to the Gogos project, and for four or five years we have sponsored four Gogos a month in a remote northern Malawi village at the recommendation of the director. I'm attaching a link to the history of the project. Dick Day, who with his wife Charlotte founded the program, has died and is buried in Malawi. His wife just recently returned to the U.S. permanently because she's now in her 90s. But there are very active groups seeing that the work they started continues. You'll see various programs that are making a huge impact on the lives of these poor people. Just our small donations help with maize and fertilizer that sustain these people throughout the year. Gogograndmothers is part of SAFE (Sub-Saharan Africa Family Enrichment).

<https://gogograndmothers.com/history>
<https://gogograndmothers.com/>
<https://gogograndmothers.com/annual-report-top>

Submitted by Rose Rhoads
Congregational Church of Menifee, California

HOOPING IT UP IN ODESSA

First Congregational Church of Lake Odessa, Michigan, had a great day "hooping" it up. Two days after the installation of the finest of basketball hoops in the church parking lot, the congregation met outside to dedicate the hoops for a community outreach for youth. The state-of-the-art hoops were recently installed with funding given to the church for youth ministries. Several new basketballs have also been purchased.

Among those who were shooting baskets, were our oldest member, Jane Shoemaker, and her family; Gary Mattson, church Moderator; Nancy Mattson, Treasurer; Deacon Colleen Dehler; Trustee Gunnar Johnson, and me, Pastor Danielson. Several other friends were on board to try out their skills, as well. Surprise hoopsters included Linda, who played basketball in high school, and made a basket and Pam Swiler, who stood up from her wheelchair to take more than one shot at the hoop.

Several members and friends of the church met outside following a celebration of a long-time friend, Sandy Johnson, who joined the church family. It was an amazing day!

But believing God is in the center of this outreach, we witnessed an even more amazing happening when Josh Liggins, an international basketball player who lives across the street, offered to be basketball coach and mentor for neighborhood kids of all ages. He is as excited as we are. Already, kids are coming to play in our usually empty parking lot.

Our introduction to Josh was providential. He was watching his little boy ride his bike in the parking lot. When I happened to mention that new basketball hoops were to be installed within a couple of days, Josh was eager to be involved. He helped outline the best place and how long and wide each half court should be. He was also the first to shoot several 3 pointers. God most certainly works in mysterious ways. And did I mention he is a youth leader, and his dad is a Grand Rapids pastor?

Never underestimate the mighty power of our God and the vision He has for us all.

Respectfully submitted, Pastor Marilyn Danielson,
First Congregational Church Lake Odessa, Michigan



TIME OF Renewal

By Rev. Dr. Shawn Stapleton



Rev. Dr. Shawn Stapleton and Jamison Geiger,
Co-Chair, Coordinating Council

There is amazing work going on at United Church of Beloit (UCB), a Congregational church and NACCC member in southeastern Wisconsin, on the border with Illinois. The experience may be helpful to other churches considering the need to discern their congregation's future.

After a year-long strategic planning process identified strengths and challenges for (UCB), Pastor Steve Erkel called me and asked if we might partner to help discern how God is calling them forward.

The congregation formed after First Presbyterian Church of Beloit (PCUSA) and Second Congregational Church of Beloit (NACCC) merged a decade ago. That merger gave the newly blended fellowship tremendous momentum that has served them well the past 10 years, but it has now waned. A once-robust choir has lost

key members, worship attendance has dropped, and some formerly vibrant ministries have become fond memories as the pool of servant leaders grows smaller and smaller. Still, the long tradition of serving the surrounding community continues today through strong and active partnerships with community agencies, a powerful specialized ministry to special-needs adults, an annual school supplies drive that is vital to the students of the Beloit School District, and in other ways.

The Strategic Planning team that had done such difficult work for the previous year was re-commissioned to now facilitate a time Renewal at UCB and began interviewing church members over the summer. On Sunday, September 25, 2022, the Sunday morning worship at UCB continued as members and friends enjoyed a meal together and sang hymns of promise and vision in Fellowship Hall. They

then shared the findings from their first round of interviews, asking questions like, "When were we at our best?" and, "Can you share a favorite memory or experience at our church?"

Amid the recollections and reminiscences, they said that, among all the other blessings they are feeling from God through this process, they rediscovered that deep sense of the church as their home.

UCB will now begin asking pivotal questions about the congregation as it exists today, followed by a season of envisioning what God may be planning for their future. They will continue telling their stories, growing closer, and learning from one another, all while God continues to reveal the next season of their amazing ministry together. Please hold the saints of UCB in your prayers in the coming months!

Members sing hymns of promise and vision.



Established in 1849, *The Congregationalist* has been a notable presence, providing resources for local churches, promoting just causes, defining and shaping the Congregational Way.



The Congregationalist has been published continuously since 1958 by the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches.

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News, Needs and Prayer Missions

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Missions and Outreach Ministry Council
PO Box 288, Oak Creek, WI 53154

*For a complete listing of NACCC Mission Projects or to donate,
please visit our website: www.nacc.org and click on Missions and Outreach.*

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN THE NATIONAL PARKS (ACMNP), COLORADO

From Amy Kennedy: Your prayers are requested: We have a few open positions for our National Office team (Program Assistant, Communications Coordinator, and Seasonal Recruiter) and we are prayerfully reviewing applications as we look for the right fits. We are making plans towards our November fall gathering, which coincides with one of our in-person board meetings, in Shenandoah National Park. We are praying for great attendance, discussions, and plans as we step into another season of ministry. Lastly, our winter team members have headed to the national parks. If an individual, or church, is interested in sponsoring a team member or team, they can reach out to us! We can connect them to either remain in direct prayer support or to even send a package of encouragement (notes, treats, fun games, relational ministry items, etc.) We will have teams in Everglades, Big Bend, Grand Teton, and Zion this year!



Would you like to work here?

ASOCIACION CIVIL CRISTIANA CONGREGACIONAL, ARGENTINA

From Rev. Dr. Harding Stricker: As the Congregational Mission in the Northeast of Argentina we feel honoured to count you as mission partners in prayers and support! Over the years we have developed different areas of service: Mission Clinic, soup kitchen, community gardening, sponsorships, and Christian education. Even though the present looks dim with a financial crisis still looming all over, the situation has improved somewhat since the last change of the Minister of Economy. Our main prayer concerns for our country are for a peaceful evolution without social unrest and for recovery of the economy without a major devaluation. As for our mission, our

main prayer concern is for God's continuing blessings without which we can do nothing; the same we pray for our mission partners.

We wish to reestablish lost connections because of the pandemic. A number of these connections have been previously managed by regular mail which is slow and at times does not reach the destination. We can be best reached at harding.stricker@gmail.com or www.acc-ja.com. We appreciate every single donation you are willing to make and thank you for it. You are helping us to carry on a witness to the love of God in practical ways. Thank you and God bless!



Tiny patient

CHRIST TO THE VILLAGES, NIGERIA

From Matthew Oladele: We bring hope and a future to the children by providing good education, godly teaching with Christ's love, and good moral ethics. Often, we are faced with complex daily needs and choices. The needs are great and unending, which could sometimes be overwhelming. However, we are grateful to God for the grace to overcome challenges. We are also grateful to all our friends, supporters, NACCC and MOMC, for your encouragements, financial support, and prayers. God bless you all. Thank you.

Please pray for:

Divine protection from all danger and political instability
God's wisdom for the leadership of this ministry
God's blessings on the work of Christ to the villages
Provision to meet the needs of the mission
Nigeria as we are approaching election

Ways you can support Christ to the Villages by weekly, monthly, or quarterly support



Children lined up for lessons

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF MYANMAR, MYANMAR

From Rev. Sa Do: On August 2th, the Grace Children's Ministry families celebrated the opening ceremony of the new building. Ongoing needs are for child sponsorship which includes costs for education, and basic needs for mission workers. Due to the long political crisis, war has caused greater poverty, homelessness, and diseases, especially in the most remote regions such as Chin, Kachin, and Karen States.



Grace House Project

ECHO INTERNATIONAL, FLORIDA

From Abram Bicksler, PH.D.

ECHO President/CEO: Thank you for your thoughts and prayers following Hurricane Ian. We cleared debris, re-opened pathways, staked up downed trees, repaired damaged buildings, and prepared to re-open the campus safely. As of October, much of our electricity is back on, but some key buildings were still without power. City water had returned, yet, we needed to boil water before drinking and cooking. Still, we are grateful for small luxuries. Several roofs are in bad shape and our pavilion (where many of you have eaten lunch during our conferences or volunteer lunches) is pretty beaten up.

Some of you have asked how you can help. We need financial support to get us back up and running and make necessary repairs to our farm and buildings. We can also use physical help through work crews and volunteers. The hurricane and its aftermath have also led us to realize that there are some longer-term resilience measures that we need to put in place to help us weather future storms. The campus has recently had some structural upgrades, but we would benefit from a newer and stronger skid steer loader, propane generator sets for key buildings, and another gasoline-type gator for hauling loads.

We also recognize that we are in

much better shape than many of those in our surrounding communities and we are excited to serve this afternoon as an ECHO staff family by helping our neighbors with their cleanup. Today we donated 555 lbs. of produce that will be distributed to needy families in Collier County through our partners Cultivate Abundance and Mision Peniel.



Hurricane Ian cleanup and outreach

News, Needs and Prayer Missions

request from our

Continued

FISHERS OF MEN, MEXICO

From Julie Claassen: Short-term volunteers play a vital role in the ministry of Fishers of Men, both at Refuge Ranch and with the Evangelistic Medical Mission Crusades! This past summer was no different! Whether it be teaching English or baking pizza, playing board games, or doing landscaping and construction work, whatever the task at hand, volunteers at Refuge Ranch make the biggest impact through their relationships with the kids! While the work carried out makes a huge difference for the ministry, the love, laughter and reflecting Christ's character leave an eternal imprint on the young and impressionable hearts of each child. On crusade,

volunteers carry out responsibilities from registration to cleaning dental instruments to helping unload, setup, tear down, load and then do it all again as the team moves to a new location. Such "mundane" tasks take on new meaning, depth and purpose when done out of love and with joy so that the Good News of Jesus Christ, as well as the power of His compassionate healing touch, may be experienced by so many of the "least of these". We thank the Lord for the volunteers that He provided for the ministry this summer and look forward to the day that God calls YOU to be His hands, feet, and heart in Mexico through Fishers of Men!.



Choe and Lilly at the pyramids on an outing with some of the kids

HAPPY LIFE CHILDREN'S HOME, KENYA

From the Happy Life Directors: We at Happy Life Mission have continued to experience God's miracles as we celebrate 20 years of rescuing abandoned children in Kenya. One remarkable thing this year is the return of adoptions. Due to occasional changes in government policies in the last three years, plus the COVID 19 situation, adoptions had really gone down or halted altogether. So having nine children adopted in three months and with 10 more already in the process has warmed our hearts with excitement and hope. While we feel sad to see our babies leave us, there is always such a fulfillment to see our vision of 'providing a home and hope for adoption' realized. One other success story is that 10 of our toddlers joined school last week. This is always such an exciting milestone for these children, most of them having been rescued as infants. Some come to us underweight, malnourished or sickly. Our caregivers and all the staff do

a lot of work to ensure that these babies grow big and stay healthy. So, seeing them in their school uniform is a big win for everyone!

We are ever so grateful to all our partners and friends who support us in prayer and with their donations. You are really part of our success stories!



Toddler's first day of school



Devastation and destruction

LOVE WORTH SHARING, HAITI

From Rev. Jim Owens: Haiti is on the verge of collapse. This fall Ezechiel, our Haitian Director, reported there is no gasoline, propane, or water. The country had been on total lockdown for over 10 days, and nothing was moving except by foot. We need your prayers and financial support as inflation in Haiti is now at 27%. Pray that we can still purchase food in country. The ministry continues even in these difficult times; the children, teachers and cooks still make their way to the facilities.

MISSION SCHOOL OF HOPE, CAMEROON

From Rev. Charles Sagay: DIGNITY FOR EVERY GIRL was birthed as a response to some of the bitter situations our girls are facing in their communities that strips them of their honor, dignity, positive self-esteem, and the joy of being a female. We hear many girls say "I hate the fact that I was born a girl"

Bijogoh ran away from school because they had seen her nakedness and laughed at her since she had no underwear. There are hundreds of girls like her in poor and desperate communities like our Baka community. Many girls go about without underwear and sometimes they are victims of sexual violence, infections, shame, and embarrassment.

Dignity for every girl is fixing that situation and getting our girls back to school. Marie Teresse is quite excited

with her new underwear, and she said she would be going to school in September; and, when asked why, she giggled and said "I have never owned underwear and I was scared to go to school because I didn't want anyone to shame me. But with these four beautiful underwear, I am confident no one will shame me and I will not be ridiculed in front of others."

We were able to distribute two pairs to some girls and four pairs to others for 110 girls. We know two pairs of underwear per girl is not enough, but it is manageable and there are hundreds of girls we plan to reach out to.

We are grateful to God for all our partners for their determination and amazing support to restore girls' dignity, get them back to school and keep them in school.



Marie Teressee with her first underwear

MORGAN SCOTT PROJECT, TENNESSEE

From Crystal Tompkins: The Morgan Scott Project is blessed with wonderful volunteers, donors, and most of all prayer warriors. We have hosted seven work groups to date and are very thankful to have the opportunity to do so once again. The various mission teams have completed around 10 wheelchair ramps, a community project which was painting at the schools, a blessing box for a local church, some pressuring washing and painting at the office, and filled many backpacks with school supplies. The Friday food line is going strong, and we continue to be blessed with food to serve them. We were able to give out six scholarships to graduating students continuing their education. The thrift store seems to be growing in popularity. We are thankful for all the donations that keep it going. God is Good.



Building a wheelchair ramp

Creative Community CONNECTIONS

By Rev. Dr. Chris Surber

"Semper Reformanda" must not only be at the heart of Christian orthodoxy. It must be at the center of Christian outreach! The reformers discerned an inherent flaw in that kind of doctrinal rigidity that refuses to see new light from Scripture and present tense leading of the Holy Spirit.

While the simple message of the Gospel of Jesus remains the locus of Christian life, teaching, and doctrine, our manner and methods of worship and evangelism are ever in need of creative solutions to connect with the ever changing dynamics of society around us. The Mission of God (Missio Dei) is an active extension of the hand of the Living God.

Missions isn't a subcategory of church life. God's Church doesn't have a mission committee. God's mission has a Church.

The classical doctrine on the missio Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another 'movement': The Father, Son and the Holy Spirit sending the church into the world... In the new image mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God... To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.¹

Living as a missionary in Haiti changed my cultural perspective. I no longer feel bound and obligated to my

own cultural norms when it comes to evangelism, outreach, and church life. I no longer see any part of my life in ministry and local church leadership as maintenance of cultural norms. My role as shepherd and our collective role as sheep of the fold of God is to engage in the *missio Dei* where we are with what we have in every way we can.

That ol' Congregational divine, Washington Gladden, in his book *The Christian Pastor and the Working Church*, put it this way, "There is a little higher conception of the work of the minister than that which regards him as a hired man whose duet is wholly owed to the people who pay him his wage. He is, to begin with, the minister of Christ; he must regard himself as sent to all those to whom Christ would be ministering if he were dwelling in that community."²

In other words, minister and flock are called to participate in the mission of God by any and every means at our disposal. What gifts, talents, ideas are lying dormant in our local churches? What embers are waiting for the breath of God to breathe on them so that they may once again burst aflame?

By way of a humble offering of example, my sons and I are engaging



Ninjas! (l-r) Ephram, Sebastian, Chris, and Hansel Surber.



Chris and karate class

in a new outreach ministry in Naples, Florida. I have been involved in various martial arts for most of my life. From amateur boxing as a teen to various martial arts during a decade in the military, to Karate and Jui Jitsu with my sons, I love the discipline, training, fun, and community of martial arts.

I've taught a kind of karate discipleship program at two previous churches and now I'm implementing the same program at First Congregational Church of Naples and as an outreach as part of an afterschool program at a community center in one of the much less affluent neighborhoods in Naples. At the church it is an overt discipleship program. At this or other locations in the community it is "soft evangelism," providing a positive witness of the Church through fun activity and character development with biblical principles providing the foundation.

Karate is the bait, Jesus is the hook, and the world is my pond! "Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.'" (Mark 1:17 ESV) This is just one of many ways we're reaching out into the community in South West Florida. Through community involvement I've observed that martial arts are very popular with families in my community. I have a skill

The Reverend Dr. Chris Surber is pastor of First Congregational Church of Naples, Florida, and Executive Director of Supply and Multiply (Haiti). Contact Chris at pilgrimpastor77@gmail.com

and a passion for them, so, with my sons at my side, we're reaching out!

What gifts do you, your pastor, or your congregation have hiding out in the pews or pulpit that might be used as bait to go fishing in your community? What creative connection can you build to reach the world for Christ, starting at your front gate? I'm praying for a revival in imagination in fishing techniques and tactics in our churches. Let's reach out with the old Gospel message in creative ways in these modern days.

I think God is inviting us to go fishing in new ponds in different ways for His glory! Let me know what your church is doing so we can share strategies to reach our communities in inventive ways.

¹The World Council of Churches' Mission Statement "Together Towards Life": Mission, Evangelism and Missio Dei, Source: European Journal of Theology, 27 no 1 2018, p 78-88.

²Washington Gladden, "The Christian Pastor and the Working Church," (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1898) 254.



The Reverend Harry W. Clark (1927-2022)

The Reverend Harry W. Clark died at home on October 5, 2022, at age 94. Ordained

in 1955, Harry served as minister at four churches, after which he served 10 years as Associate Executive Secretary for the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC) from 1984-1994. Rev. Clark was involved in several leadership positions at NACCC –Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies (1974-1977), 25th Anniversary Committee (1978-1979), Commission on Youth (1962-1965). He graduated from Indiana University, where he met his wife Eleanora (Nora) and was ordained in 1955. He earned advanced degrees from Colgate Rochester Seminary and Wayne State University's theatre program, along with honorary doctorates from Olivet College and Piedmont College. He is survived by wife, Eleanora, daughters Terry Clark Bauman, Laury Clark, and Amy Clark, son-in-law Rick Bauman, granddaughter-in-law Theresa Bauman, and great granddaughter Kivi Bauman. Services were held at Ozaukee Congregational Church, Grafton, Wisconsin. Donations may be made in Rev. Clark's name to Ozaukee CC's music and benevolence programs.



The Reverend Gisela Gerdes (1934-2022)

Born in Germany, The Reverend Gisela Gerdes attended seminary, received

her certification as a teacher of religious education and taught in Berlin. She married Egon Gerdes in 1958 and became a missionary in the Congo in 1962. In 1963, the family moved to Nashville, where she taught Christian education at the elementary school. They then moved to Evanston, where Rev. Gerdes served several churches as youth leader and director of Christian Education. She was ordained in 1989, moving to Los Angeles/Glendale to serve

as associate minister. She served on the NACCC's Christian Education Commission (1990-1994) and Missionary Society (199-1999). She is survived by daughter Ute, son Eckhard, three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Services were held.



The Reverend Glenn A. Lawson (1947-2022)

The Reverend Glenn A. Lawson died September 12, 2022, in Evansville, Indiana. He was

the outgoing Moderator of the Alabama-Georgia Association in 2004 and presided over Rev. J.R. McAliley's Installation at Center Congregational Church, Atlanta, has his last official act. He was on the NACCC's Church Services Commission (2007-2009) and Division for Ministry (2000-2004). Lawson served as a minister for over 30 years, pastoring churches in Florida, Georgia, Wisconsin, and Indiana. Casting no judgement, people of every walk of life came to hear his preaching in Florida, Georgia, Wisconsin and Indiana. He is survived by daughters Cecilia Bunker (Tad) and Christiana Jones, stepdaughter Becky Curry, several grandchildren and a great grandchild.



Donna D. Rafuse (1952-2022)

Donna D. Rafuse, wife of Rev. Bill Rafuse, died September 21, 2022, at home in Rapid River,

Michigan. Rafuse was a devoted and faithful pastor's wife. The couple served and ministered in Windsor, Massachusetts; Bozrah, Connecticut; and Lebanon, Connecticut. Their final church home was the Rapid River Congregational Church in Michigan for 26 years. In addition to her loving husband, Bill, Rafuse is survived by sons Paul (Caitlin) Rafuse and James (Bobbie Jo) Rafuse, daughters Michelle (Steve Constantino) LaMarque, Martha (John Hutchison) Blomstrom, brother Michael Davis, ten grandchildren, and one great grandchild. Services were held.

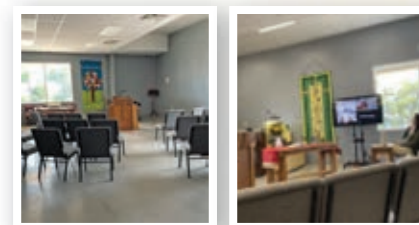


CHURCHES MOVING FORWARD

By Rev. Dr. Charles Packer



Heritage Congregational's new "storefront" church.



of financial or human resources, or questions about the long-term future are leading a growing number of churches to contemplate transitioning from a model of dependency upon buildings and grounds.

Heritage Congregational Christian Church . . . IT'S NOT ABOUT THE SPACE

by Susan P Carter, Past Moderator -
Heritage Congregational Church

As I write this article about our transition my thoughts keep returning to a recent trip to Greece where we traveled in a rented, stick shift van with bald tires. It was a rocky, curvy, hilly, scary experience and yet, along the way, we were witness to many beautiful sites. Transitioning is nothing new to our congregation. In 54 years, our journey has taken us from a Presbyterian Church to a Jewish Temple, to a movie theatre, to purchase of our first meeting house, to a local school, to building our second meeting house, to zoom and finally to our current retail meeting space. So how did we end up here?

In 1983 a Long-Range Planning Committee was formed with the task of looking to the future. They were particularly interested in whether to move to a new building. The lot size of our current meeting space limited most options for expanding. As a result, the committee eventually decided that the best option would be building in a new, developing neighborhood. And we did just that! Build It and They Will Come - Here We Grow. That was our dream, here is our reality.

On Sunday, December 23, 1990,

we came together to worship in our beautiful new meeting house. What should have been a time of joy and thanksgiving turned to disaster. Members and friends arrived for our first service only to find we were without a minister. We were told he had resigned and was under investigation by the district attorney. This dramatically changed our congregation. Our recovery was slow, and we lost many members. Trust issues caused conflicts with future pastors. Of course, with a smaller, aging congregation, it was difficult to keep up with expenses. It didn't take long to realize our building had construction issues. Most of this centered around snow, ice, and water. We were unable to afford the maintenance of such a large facility. Our meeting house became an albatross to mission and ministry.

When our minister of 18 years retired, we knew it was decision time. We couldn't move forward in search of a settled pastor until we made some hard decisions about our future. A special meeting of the congregation was called and, though painful, it was unanimous that we put our building on the market. Surprisingly the sale was quicker than expected. After several weeks of cleaning out, a pod was placed on the property, and we filled it with items that had been selected for storage. And then Covid hit! Zoom became our best friend and gave us time to search for a new meeting house. It was clear that rental space would be our best option for the immediate future. It wasn't long before we found space in the Heritage Square Strip Mall.

It was fitting – Heritage Congregational Church at Heritage Square.

We have settled into our new space, and although we are saddened that a few of our loved members have chosen a different path, we feel liberated from owning and maintaining our building. There is JOY on Sunday mornings as we gather to worship. We have continued our zoom service with the addition of an OWL (360- degree video conferencing camera). This allows us to see those online as well as the online participants to view us. We are blessed to have a wonderful interim pastor while we search for a settled pastor to shepherd our flock. A person we pray is uniquely equipped to help us re-start our mission and ministry here in Madison.

We all serve and follow God in one fashion or another. It is not about the space – it is about relationships.

Pine Hill Congregational Church... CHANGES WERE ON THE HORIZON

By Rev. Dr. Charles Packer, Senior Minister

When a long-time childcare business that rented significant space in Pine Hill's building for over 30 years decided to sell their property next door and cease their summer camp and day care programs, the Pine Hill Congregational Church in West Bloomfield, Michigan,

knew that changes would have to be made. Should we actively seek out a new tenant? How might we use our space differently to enhance our ministries? What would we need to do as we looked to the coming years and decades to remain an active, vital, vibrant witness in West Bloomfield?

The idea of selling the building and grounds was not at the forefront of Pine Hill's deliberation at that point. However, when offers began to come in to purchase Pine Hill's building and grounds, we were compelled to consider at least some of these in light of our pondering about new directions for the long-term health and well-being of the church.

Church leadership gave serious thought to one offer in particular and deemed it prudent to take it to the congregation. In mid-October 2020, information was presented during a congregational meeting about the offer and some scenarios that could play out were we to stay or leave the present property. Members of the congregation were given two weeks to pray and think about this offer before a vote would be taken. In the meantime, an electronic survey was generated to get an idea of the congregation's perspectives on the matter of relocation. Those who completed the survey were asked three things:

1. Are you in favor of selling the property?
2. What, out of six options, would you be most inclined to support? These options included remaining on the property and not selling, potentially using existing financial resources to maintain it until there was nothing remaining; building a new facility; renting new space; dissolving as a congregation; merging with another Congregational church; or being a virtual church.
3. If you see relocation as the most appealing choice, how far would you drive from the current location to attend worship and participate in the

life of the church? They could select from 5-10 miles, 10-15 miles, or more than 15 miles.

The church was pleased with the response. By far, the preferred (2/3 of all respondents) course of action would be to sell the building and rent another space. One hundred (100) percent were in favor of selling the building and grounds. Most preferred to drive between the range of 5-15 miles, so an upper limit of 10 miles or less was thought to be safest in looking for places for Pine Hill.

The "Moving Forward" process began, and four smaller committees were formed under the umbrella of the Moving Forward Committee. One was charged with "Finding a Facility" for Pine Hill to rent. Another was tasked with doing inventory of the entire church building to determine "What to Keep" once a move was accomplished. These two committees began their work in February 2021 and with a deadline of May 1, 2021, to finish their work. Both completed their efforts before deadline, in under three months' time. Two other committees, "Logistics" and "Disbursements," handled the practical aspects of getting the items that needed to be moved into the new location and sold, donated, or discarded, respectively.

The "Finding a Facility Committee" researched over 60 locations in the West Bloomfield area. Members of that group visited at least 40 sites personally. Most were store fronts charging high rental rates and wanting tenants to move in within a short period of time. Pine Hill knew that a move would not take place until October 2021 at the very earliest. A church parsonage was investigated, but it was quite a distance from the former church building. With a large Jewish community in West Bloomfield, three nearby synagogues were contacted. Almost nearing the May 1 deadline, one of those three responded positively and offered to rent their space to Pine Hill. The Finding a

Continued>

CHURCHES MOVING FORWARD

Continued

Facility Committee looked at the space, were immediately taken with it, and a decision was made by another vote of the congregation to move into the spiritual home of Temple Shir Shalom, a Reform Jewish community of over 900 families. An office area was negotiated into the rental agreement, and, when everything was moved in January 2022, it all fit! As the chairperson of our Logistics Committee had informed (warned?) us, we were moving what we had in 2,500 square feet into 250 square feet. We had pared down enough that everything essential made it into that space! It should be noted that there are many items stored in the homes of gracious church members willing to hold them until such a time that the church might be in a place with room for them.

Pine Hill is learning about Jewish holidays, figuring out how to be in a much larger sanctuary, and how to do



Above...Pine Hill in Temple Shir Shalom (the new space)
Left...Pine Hills' former church building

creative outreach (like taking worship services to area parks in the summer) when no sign can be placed in front of the building where the community worships. Pine Hill is engaged in outreach projects with Temple members to feed the hungry in downtown Detroit. There are adjustments to not being in one's own building. Yet, there is also the freedom to be focused on mission instead of maintenance of any significance. Having gone through COVID concurrently with figuring out how to relocate has given the congregation a sense of flexibility and resilience that enables what might look like obstacles to turn into new opportunities. The leaders of the congregation have risen to the challenges of doing church in a new way and support one another whenever a need is expressed.

It is an almost weekly occurrence, if not more frequently, that someone asks, "What are you going to do next?" Pine Hill's pastor and members know to answer, "We are taking the time to listen to God, and we are not going to rush God trying to figure out the next step of the journey."

During the seasons of Advent and Christmas, there is a lesson that God is able to enter the world and touch lives in diverse places and through a variety of means. There are no limits to what God can do and where God can be seen, known, heard, and felt. These churches—and many other churches, within and outside the NACCC—are living the incarnation of God in real and unique ways. The future is being discerned with openness, daring, hope, and trust.

Support for Others

A virtual group has been formed to offer support and shared wisdom for congregations considering or that are in various stages of relocating from their church buildings. Meeting approximately quarterly by Zoom and led by the Rev. Dr. Charles Packer, and Thomas Rockwell, a Fellow in the Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies, the next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 29, 2022, at 7:00 pm Eastern Time. If you are interested, please email drccapacker@gmail.com to request a link.



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INTERESTED? CONTACT:
Cameron Workman, Search Committee Chairman, cameronworkman@mac.com or (716) 570-4714.

When the Power of Love Overcomes the Love of Power

By Bill Rhoads



Bill Rhoads, legally blind, is a retired US Army veteran and has been a singer/songwriter all his life. Bill is a member of the Congregational Church of Menifee, California.

When the power of love overcomes the love of power
There will be peace on earth
When man understand that we're all in God's plans
Then God will grant us peace on this earth.

And the voices shall ring from the mountains
Where once thundered fire of dread
And the children will play in the meadows below
Where the winding streams no longer run red
When the power of love
Overcomes the love of power.

And the farmers shall plant in the springtime
Sunday morning clear church bells will toll
Lovers shall walk hand in hand in the park
Flowers will bloom full – as will every soul
When the power of love
Overcomes the love of power.

Then all men shall see love in their neighbor
"The Light" commands darkness depart
Then man understands the true language of God
And harmony will flow through every heart
When the power of love
Overcomes the love of power.

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JOIN THE CONVERSATION



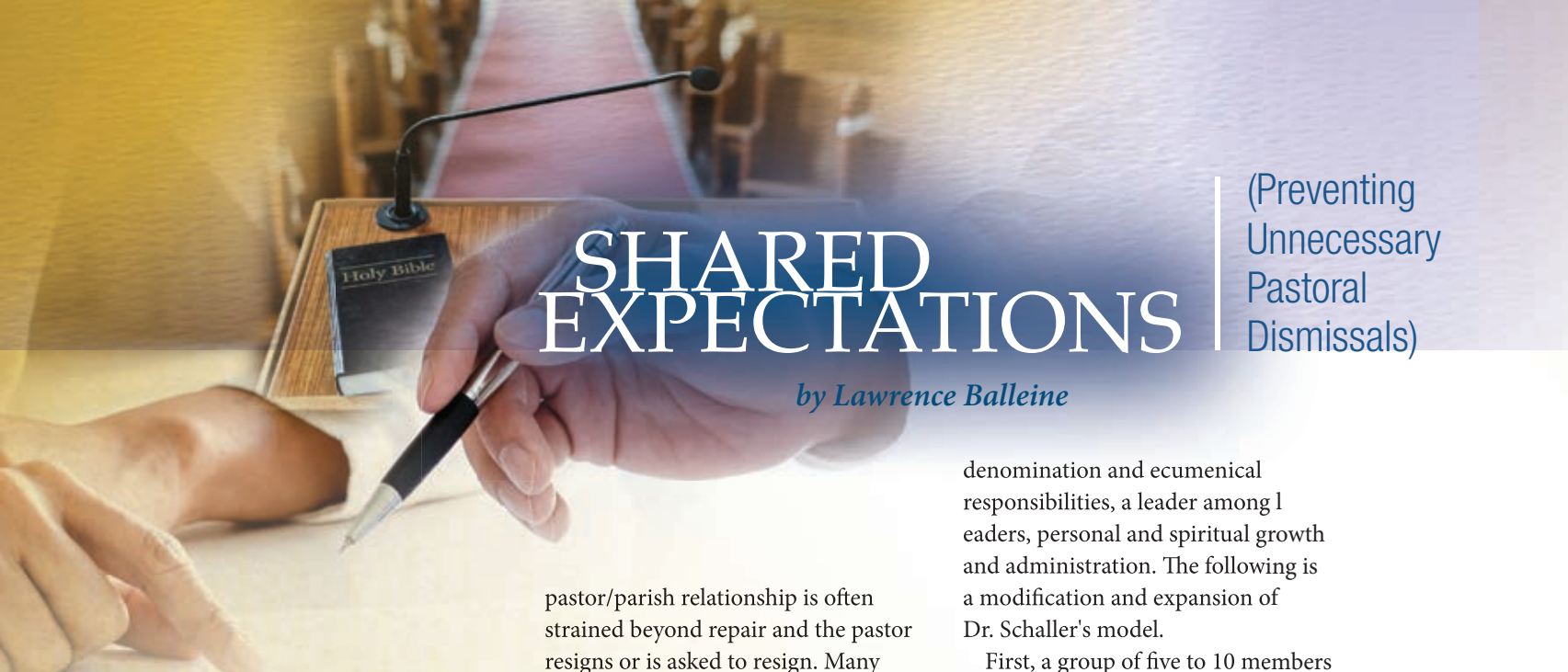
The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches recently launched a dedicated discussion forum exclusively for individuals of member churches.

This resource enables users to interact on current topics in congregational life. Areas of interest have been established to heighten connectivity.

The Member Forum is a place to share ideas, ask questions, gain knowledge, make suggestions, provide guidance, or simply to connect.



www.naccc.org/member-forum



SHARED EXPECTATIONS

(Preventing
Unnecessary
Pastoral
Dismissals)

by Lawrence Balleine

Expectations... we all have them. When we purchase a new vehicle, we expect it to perform reliably. We teach our children proper etiquette and expect them to act accordingly. We have expectations of our favorite athletic teams as they embark on new seasons of competition. We also have expectations of the people we hire or call to serve us. Just as we expect our mail carrier to deliver our mail on time or our teachers to treat our children fairly, we have expectations of our pastors.

These expectations are often unique for each person in the pew. Thus, a 300-member congregation may have 300 sets of expectations. And since every congregation is composed of people with different personalities, life histories and needs, it should not be surprising that expectations may vary from congregation to congregation.

It's unrealistic for a pastor to meet all these sets of expectations. Some try, but most fail.

Dissension between a congregation and its pastor often occurs when expectations are not clarified and communicated. Expectations that have not been articulated often go unmet. And, by the time the pastor discovers these expectations, the

pastor/parish relationship is often strained beyond repair and the pastor resigns or is asked to resign. Many of these premature departures are preventable by engaging in a process that clarifies and shares a set of reasonable expectations.

The following are instructions for a three-part exercise meant to facilitate a sharing of expectations. The exercise is undertaken, not by the entire congregation, but a representative subgroup.

The purpose is to help a congregation identify its priorities and to ascertain whether the pastor is on the same page. The exercise also identifies whether the members of the representative group have similar expectations. Ultimately, the exercise can be a means of establishing a reasonable set of shared expectations that are owned by both the congregation and its pastor.

The genesis for this exercise is a tool offered by the late Lyle Schaller in his book, *The Pastor and the People*, first published by Abingdon Press in 1973. In Chapter 3, "Pastoral Priorities," Schaller offers an exercise to be completed by a search committee regarding the priorities on the time and energy of a prospective pastor. In Schaller's tool, each committee member and the pastoral candidate prioritize 12 ministerial roles, including: the leader, visiting, counseling, leading worship and preaching, community leader, enabler, teaching, evangelism,

denomination and ecumenical responsibilities, a leader among leaders, personal and spiritual growth and administration. The following is a modification and expansion of Dr. Schaller's model.

First, a group of five to 10 members representative of the congregation are chosen. This group and the pastor commit to completing the exercise.

Prior to the exercise, identical sets of 10 cards are prepared for the representative lay persons and the pastor. On each card is printed a role or responsibility of pastoral ministry and a brief definition of that role. Each participant holds a set of the 10 cards:

Card 1 Worship: preparing for and leading worship.

Card 2 Teaching: preparing for and teaching various classes -- Bible studies, confirmation, special Lenten studies, etc.

Card 3 Administration: responding to mail and e-mails, writing newsletter items, letters of recommendation, and supervision of staff

Card 4 Visitation: home and hospital visitation, including home communion visits

Card 5 Counseling: marital, family and individual counseling, grief counseling, and counseling in preparation for marriages and baptisms

Card 6 Evangelism: actively inviting others to be followers of Jesus Christ and assimilating them into the life of the church; equipping "evangelism teams" to do the same

Card 7 Professional Development: participating in continuing education events, pastors' retreats, pastors' support groups

Card 8 Biblical Justice Issues: actively opposing racism, sexism, ageism, human trafficking, etc. and involvement in efforts to eliminate them

Card 9 Denominational Activities: work with association, conference, and national church committees and meetings.

Card 10 Community and Ecumenical Ministry: participation in local pastors' groups, attending community events and supporting the work of interdenominational groups.

Each equipped with the 10 cards, the participants (including the pastor) to complete three steps:

Step 1: Individually prioritize the 10 roles by placing them in the order of their perceived importance to the congregation by assigning a number from one through 10 on each of the cards. (A different number between one from 1 to 10, with one being most important. No number should be used more than once.

(Note: Remind the participants that there are no correct or incorrect responses. The purpose is to obtain a clearer picture of the priorities representative of the congregation.)

Step 2: Give each role a percentage value indicating its relative importance among the 10 and record it on the card. Each participant determines a percentage value indicating the relative importance of each of the ten roles and records it on the respective card. The higher the priority, the higher the percentage number assigned, and vice versa. The total of the percentage of a member's 10 cards should add up to 100 percent.

Step 3: Finally, members should identify their expectations for how many hours per week the pastor will spend on each role. Record the hours on each card.

If, for example, three people and the pastor complete the exercise, the result of Steps 1, 2 and 3 may appear as follows: (Note: Although a minimum of five and maximum of ten participants, in addition to the pastor's, are recommended for the completion of the exercise, to right (Figure a) is an illustration of the results if three lay persons and the pastor were to complete the exercise.)

When all have completed Steps 1, 2 and 3, tabulate the results in the following manner:

Eliminating the pastor's cards, average the priority numbers on the group's cards. In the above example, the average priority for Worship is 1.33 and Biblical Justice Issues is 9.33. (Remember that 1 is the highest priority while 10 is the lowest.)

Next, tabulate the average "priority by percentage" for each of the ministerial roles. Using our example cards, Worship is 21% and Biblical Justice Activities is 2%. Priority and priority by percentage should closely align. It checks the accuracy of Step 1.

Make the group aware of the results following Step 1 and Step 2, respectively. Then conduct a brief discussion regarding the collective results. In the best-case scenario, the discussion will conclude that Steps 1 and 2 present a fairly accurate assessment of the importance to the congregation of the 10 pastoral roles.

The pastor then discloses his or her responses regarding Steps 1 and 2. Hopefully, the pastor's priorities are similar to the composite results of the lay participants. This is especially true if the participants

Figure a.

EXPECTATION	% VALUE	PRIORITY
Participant A		
Worship	25	12
Administration	20	10
Counseling	15	5
Teaching	12	6
Visitation	10	8
Evangelism	8	4
Denominational Activities	4	2
Professional Development	3	2
Community & Ecumenical Min.	2	2
Biblical Justice Issues	1	2
	100%	53 hrs.
Participant B		
Worship	20	12
Administration	18	6
Counseling	15	6
Teaching	14	6
Visitation	13	2
Evangelism	7	4
Denominational Activities	6	2
Professional Development	3	2
Community & Ecumenical Min.	2	2
Biblical Justice Issues	2	2
	100%	52 hrs.
Participant C		
Worship	20	15
Administration	16	9
Counseling	14	10
Teaching	12	4
Visitation	11	2
Evangelism	10	6
Denominational Activities	7	2
Professional Development	5	2
Community & Ecumenical Min.	3	2
Biblical Justice Issues	2	2
	100%	54 hrs.
Pastor		
Worship	20	12
Administration	18	8
Counseling	15	4
Teaching	12	6
Visitation	10	8
Evangelism	9	2
Denominational Activities	7	2
Professional Development	4	4
Community & Ecumenical Min	3	2
Biblical Justice Issues	2	2
	100%	50 hrs.

Continued>



SHARED EXPECTATIONS

(Continued)

have agreed that their collective results present a fairly accurate picture of the congregation. The pastor's results need not match exactly those of the group. However, large discrepancies between the pastor's responses and the group's averages should be discussed.)

Next, average the number of hours the participants feel that the pastor should spend weekly in each of the roles. Add the hours for all the ministerial roles to determine the number of hours weekly the pastor should be engaged in the ten roles. The following represents the example:

	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Average	Pastor
Worship	12	12	15	13	12
Teaching	6	10	9	8.33	6
Visitation	8	6	10	8	8
Administration	10	6	6	7.33	8
Counseling	5	4	4	4.33	4
Evangelism	4	6	2	4	2
Denominational Activities	2	2	2	2	2
Comm. and Ecumenical Ministry	2	2	2	2	4
Professional Development	2	2	2	2	2
Biblical Justice Activities	2	2	2	2	2
TOTAL	3 hrs.	52 hrs.	54 hrs.	53 hrs.	50 hrs.

After the lay participants briefly discuss the hours per week for each pastoral role and the total hours for the week, the pastor's results are disclosed. Again, the pastor's results regarding hours need not completely match those of the committee. But large discrepancies between the group's averages and the pastor's responses should be noted and discussed.

How can this exercise be used?

This exercise may be used by a search/call committee while interviewing pastoral candidates. It can be used by a church council, board of deacons, a pastor-parish relations committee, or some other representative leadership group in the church shortly after the pastor has been called and installed.



Lawrence H. Balleine is a 1975 CFTS graduate who has served as Congregational and UCC pastor for forty-three years. Most of his ministry has been with small town/rural congregations.

Since conditions and needs of a congregation are constantly in flux, expectations do not remain constant. Thus, it is advisable to repeat this exercise every three to four years.

Again, the group doing the exercise should represent a good cross section of the membership and be sanctioned by the church's governing body, such as the church council. Ideally, no less than five or more than 10 lay members and the pastor should engage in the exercise.

This "expectations" exercise has shown to be a more helpful tool than many congregation surveys by determining whether the pastor and congregation are in relative agreement regarding the pastor's priorities. A copy of the tabulated results should be presented to the church council. And, if deemed appropriate by the council, the results may be shared with the entire congregation.

The exercise can also be used with a pastor who has served the congregation for a year or more by asking participants to place a number (from 1 to 10) by each of the ministerial roles to indicate the current pastor's strengths.

This is a simple exercise that can be completed within two hours. Yet it is an invaluable tool that may prevent unnecessary pastoral dismissals that often result in strife and division within congregations.



Larry F. Sommers, upper left, is interviewed by author Doug Moe at the Aug. 24 launch party for his historical novel, *Price of Passage*.

A Story of Immigrants

Larry F. Sommers, former editor of *The Congregationalist*, recently published his first novel, *Price of Passage*. It debuted with a launch and signing party on August 24.

"It was marvelous!" Larry said. "Everybody should have the experience of launching a book. They make you the center of attention. You get to talk about yourself and the things you care about." Forty close friends attended the party, where Larry was interviewed by award-winning author and journalist Doug Moe.

Price of Passage is a historical novel about two Norwegian immigrants, Anders and Maria, who befriend Daniel, a fugitive slave, before the American Civil War. "It's filled with

conflict, yearning, and struggle," Larry said, "but there's also humor, prairie stuff, and old Norsk folklore. If you like historical fiction, you'll love *Price of Passage*. If you have never read historical fiction, it's a great introduction to the genre."

The book is available as a paperback or e-book in bookstores, on Amazon, or straight from the publisher at 20 percent off list by clicking <https://www.dxvaros.com/books/PRICE-OF-PASSAGE>.

"*Price of Passage* was 77 years in the making," Larry said, "but I'm speeding up. My next title should be along any decade now."



Are You Ready to Shepherd Heritage Into the Future?

Heritage Congregational Christian Church has a 50-plus year legacy in Madison, Wisconsin. Framed by beautiful lakes and home to the University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin State Government, Madison prides itself as a green city filled with many parks, an arboretum and miles of walking and biking paths.

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We invite you to check out our profile at: nacc.org.
And visit our website at www.Heritagemadison.org.



Direct applications and questions to our office:
heritageoffice@heritagemadison.org.

Recent Calls

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First Congregational Church
Wayne, MI
July 10, 2022

Ordination

Rev. Wendell Demmison,
Associate Minister
First Congregational Church
Machiasport, ME 04655
July 24, 2022

Rev. William D. Mulholland,
Senior Minister
First Congregational Church
Becket, MA
October 9, 2022

Patricia E. Smith,
Co-Pastor
Berwick Congregational Church
Berwick, IA
October 9, 2022



We are currently searching for the right person to move us forward and grow our church. St. Jacobi Congregational Church is located in the beautiful Kettle Moraine in a suburban community just north of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We have a strong foundation of hard-working and diverse members, united by faith in the Gospel of Christ. We are seeking a part-time Senior Pastor to lead our close-knit and welcoming church family.

Learn About Us:

Access our Church Information Form at nacc.org

For Additional Information:

Email our Search Committee Chairman Bob Laubenheimer at sjccsearch@yahoo.com

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In Search Senior Minister

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Third Congregational Church, Middletown, CT
Tinley Park Community Church, Tinley Park, IL
First Congregational Church, Spencer, IA
First Congregational Church, Emporia, KS
First Church in Pembroke, Pembroke, MA
Dixfield Congregational Church, Dixfield, ME
Congregational Church of East Sumner, Sumner, ME
Arbor Grove Congregational Church, Jackson, MI
First Congregational Church, Portland, MI
First Congregational Church, Royal Oak, MI
First Congregational Church, McCook, NE
First Congregational Church of East Bloomfield, Bloomfield, NY
First Congregational Church, Little Valley, NY
Cambria Congregational Church, Lockport, NY
Oakwood Heights Community Church, Staten Island, NY
Wading River Congregational Church, Wading River, NY
Gomer Congregational Church, Gomer, OH
Heritage Congregational Church, Madison, WI
St. Jacobi Congregational Church, Richfield, WI

Interim Minister

Stuart Congregational Church, Stuart, FL
Arbor Grove Congregational Church, Jackson, MI

Licensed Minister

Second Church of Plymouth, Plymouth, MA
Enterprise Congregational Church, Enterprise, OR
First Congregational Church, Salt Lake City, UT

Non-NACCC Church – Licensed Minister

Rye Congregational Church, Rye NH

Non-NACCC Church – Associate Minister

Plymouth Congregational Church, Miami, FL

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CALENDAR 2022

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To join: <https://www.naccc.org/naccc-prayer-circle>

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The CONGREGATIONALIST

Magazine of the Congregational Way since 1849

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the local church in its community and to
the world, all in the name of Christ*

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Copy deadline for each issue is noted in the previous issue's "Calendar" section.

Letters to the Editor are welcome. All letters may be edited for clarity and length. We regret we cannot publish or respond to all letters.

The NACCC reserves the right to refuse any advertisement.

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The CONGREGATIONALIST

Magazine of the Congregational Way since 1849

PLYMOUTH'S PILGRIMS Their Church, Their World, and Ours



Written by Linda Smith Rhoads

In honor of the 400th Anniversary of the Pilgrims' Landing in Plymouth in 1620, and the 400th anniversary of the first Thanksgiving in 1621, our four-part historical introduction and discussion guide, "Plymouth's Pilgrims: Their Church, Their World, and Ours" is available!

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- A youth and adult version of our guide
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