

## 2. CONGREGATIONALISM IN ACTION

### SECTION 2.1: HERITAGE

#### Hallmarks of Congregationalism

Congregational Churches are sometimes known as the “Church of the Pilgrims” after the small congregations of the early 1600’s. The people of these congregations moved from England, some by way of Holland, and then to the new world in pursuit of religious freedom. From them, we inherited a wonderful spiritual heritage - one that is uniquely suited to our contemporary world.

This is a tradition that has deep convictions based upon the Word of God as each person interprets that Word according to the dictates of conscience, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. According to Congregational luminary Harry Butman, this naturally attracts men and women of genuine conviction, of adventurous faith, and of gracious regard for each other’s sincerity to the Congregational Christian fellowship.

Since every Congregationalist possesses full liberty of conscience in interpreting the Gospel, we are a diverse group of people united under Christ. We believe there is strength in diversity and by it there are unending opportunities to learn from each other and to grow in faith.

- Christ alone is the head of the church.
- All church members are spiritually equal and called to the work of ministry.
- Every local church is autonomous and complete.
- Each local church is called into wider associations of fellowship.
- Believers are bound one to another in voluntary covenant.
- Every Christian possesses full liberty of conscience in interpreting the Gospel.
- The Bible is fully sufficient as our guide in matters of faith and practice and will inspire individuals and direct the church with fresh light and truth for every generation.

For a more complete understanding of these hallmarks, go to [www.centerforcongregationalleadership.org](http://www.centerforcongregationalleadership.org) and read “**The Art and Practice of Congregationalism.**”

#### History Polity Classes (online)

Through the NACCC’s Center for Congregational Leadership, your church members may learn more about the Congregational Way through the online Congregational History and Polity course. Designed in two levels, level one is appropriate for general membership, membership classes and confirmation classes. After completing level one, those who wish to know more can

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proceed to the in-depth level two, especially appropriate for pastors who are serving member churches but who have come to the Congregational Way from other traditions.

## **Heritage Sunday**

Every year in November, churches have the opportunity to celebrate our Congregational Heritage by designating one Sunday as Heritage Sunday. By lifting up our heritage in the month that also celebrates Thanksgiving, we remind people that we are deeply rooted in the faithfulness of our Pilgrim and Puritan forebears and that our celebration of Thanksgiving is also rooted in their deep and abiding faith and practice.

## **Heritage Materials**

To help you in your celebration, a variety of Heritage materials for worship can be found on line at the NACCC ([www.naccc.org](http://www.naccc.org)) and Center for Congregational Leadership ([www.centerforcongregationalleadership.org](http://www.centerforcongregationalleadership.org)) websites.

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## 2. CONGREGATIONALISM IN ACTION

### SECTION 2.2: *THE CONGREGATIONALIST* MAGAZINE

#### Online and Hard Copy

*The Congregationalist* Magazine, of the Congregational Way, is published 4 times per year in March, June, September, and December. This glossy, full-color magazine is mailed to subscribers' homes and may also be seen online at [www.Congregationalist.org](http://www.Congregationalist.org)

This award-winning magazine engages a variety of lively and interesting topics and issues of interest to Congregationalists. Its pages are open to all relevant and articulate contributions.

#### Editorial Policy

Articles and editorials in *The Congregationalist* are by the authority of the editor and do not necessarily reflect policies and opinions of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches or its members. The NACCC reserves freedom of expression to its editors as well as freedom of opinion to its readers. An advisory editorial board helps steer policy and ensure editorial independence. Former Editor Larry Sommers calls the magazine the "kitchen table" where Congregationalists share ideas and exchange viewpoints.

#### Free Subscriptions

Subscriptions to the magazine are free of charge and make an especially appropriate welcome gift to your new Church members.

- One subscription is provided free of charge to each individual requestor who is a member of a church in fellowship with the NACCC.
- One complimentary "Newcomer Copy" will be sent to any person, one time only, upon request by a church in fellowship with the NACCC.
- One subscription to *The Congregationalist* is provided free of charge to each church in fellowship with the NACCC.
- One subscription is sent to each accredited theological seminary on the magazine's mailing list.

Simply contact Lucia Rodriguez [lrodriguez@naccc.org](mailto:lrodriguez@naccc.org) to begin receiving the magazine. Encourage your members to sign up for their own copies as well.

## Gift Subscriptions & Additional Copies

Do you know someone who is not a member of a Congregational Church but who might enjoy the magazine? You can purchase a gift subscription for only \$15 per year.

Churches that want more than the single free copy mailed to the church may purchase a bundle of six copies for \$75 sent to one address. Single copies may be purchased from the NACCC office for \$3.75 plus \$3.20 to cover shipping and handling.

## Advertising

Searching for a pastor? Churches seeking pastors receive a free notice of their pulpit vacancy in *The Congregationalist* automatically upon submitting their Church Information Form to the NACCC. Many raise their visibility by purchasing a small display ad. We will help you design a professional-looking ad at no extra design charge; or you can submit your own camera-ready professional ad.

Other advertising opportunities are available. For more information contact Carrie Dahm [cdahm@nacc.org](mailto:cdahm@nacc.org) or 1-800-262-1620 x1612.

## Supporting *The Congregationalist*

You can support the mission of *The Congregationalist* and help keep the magazine in print with a gift of any size.

### Editor's Round Table

Donors become members of the Editor's Round Table with a gift of \$100 or more.

- Supporting Members (\$100 or more)
- Elias Smith Connexion (\$250 or more), the
- Edward Beecher Society (\$500 or more), or the
- Henry Martyn Dexter Society (\$1000 or more).

Editor's Round Table members receive the editor's personal thanks, an annual written report, and an in-person oral report, with questions and answers, during the Annual Meeting and Conference.

### Joseph B. Polhemus Fund

While gifts through the Editor's Round Table support the current operations of the magazine, sustaining gifts may be made to the Joseph B. Polhemus Fund, named for a beloved former editor of the magazine. The building of this endowment will ensure the continued financial strength of *The Congregationalist* in the years to come.

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*The Congregationalist* Magazine

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## 2. CONGREGATIONALISM IN ACTION

### SECTION 2.3: ANNUAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE

#### What It Is

As indicated in Section 1.5, the Annual Meeting and Conference is an important expression of Congregationalism where churches send a delegate to help conduct the business of the assembled churches. The member churches *are* the National Association and it is at the Annual Meeting that churches come together to make decisions important to their common interests. While the delegates conduct the business, there is plenty for others to do. Many people attend who are not official delegates to partake in the fellowship and educational opportunities at the conference.

The Annual Meeting and Conference begins on a Saturday in late June and continues through the evening of the following Tuesday. Various churches and associations around the country host the event.

#### Why Attend

There are many reasons to attend the Annual Meeting and Conference. Enduring friendships are made there as well as useful connections with Congregational churches around the country. Seminars and workshops provide continuing education of interest to churches and church leadership. Multiple receptions and excursions provide fellowship opportunities and a chance to see different parts of the United States as the meeting is held in various locations. Additionally, the vital business of the NACCC is transacted in support of our common aims, goals, and ministries. The Annual Meeting is essential to our collective fellowship and identity as an association of autonomous churches.

#### Who May Attend

- **Delegates**
  - Anyone may attend the Annual Meeting and Conference but it is especially important for churches to be represented by a delegate. The delegate is the person designated to represent the church in the business proceedings of the meeting. An official delegate registration card is filed with the NACCC ahead of the meeting in order to qualify the delegate to conduct business on the floor of the meeting.

- A church that cannot send a member from its church may ask another church's delegate to represent their vote at the meeting. **One delegate may represent up to three churches.** Inquire within your local association as to who may be attending and willing to represent you.
- **Alternates**
  - Many churches also designate and register an alternate delegate. This person is qualified to conduct business from the floor of the meeting in the absence of the delegate. They also serve as a collaboration partner to the delegate when making decisions about how to cast a vote.
- **Others**
  - Of course, other attendees are always welcome. There is always plenty to see and do.

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### **SECTION 2.4: ANNUAL YOUTH GATHERING**

#### **NAPF (National Association of Pilgrim Fellowship) and HOPE (Heritage of Pilgrim Endeavor)**

Held annually (and sometimes in conjunction with the Annual Meeting and Conference), high school (NAPF) and college age (HOPE) youth meet for fellowship, spiritual growth and inspiration, and for mission work. The bonds of friendship that form endure for many years over many miles. Many participating youth go on to ministry in a variety of ways.

You do not need to have a youth group in your church to send someone to NAPF or HOPE. You need only encourage youth you know would benefit from such an experience to attend. (See Section 4.2 for more information on the Youth Fund for scholarships.)

#### **NAPF (National Association of Pilgrim Fellowship)**

NAPF is for youth who are entering 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. NAPF allows teens to meet and bond with other Christians from throughout the country and to share their faith in a fun-filled atmosphere. Small groups are led by dedicated adult counselors, many of whom volunteer and use vacation time to attend. In conjunction with tremendous worship music, worship times may be led by members of the Commission on Youth Ministries or other adult leaders as well as by local church youth groups who have been asked to prepare and lead morning and evening devotionals. Opportunities to express faith through acts of service are always a highlight of the conference. Any time a group of young people is gathered, there is always plenty of fun!

#### **HOPE (Heritage of Pilgrim Endeavor)**

HOPE offers young adults post high school through age 26 a great opportunity to further grow in faith with peers in an environment similar to NAPF. While still including worship, speakers, small group time, and mission work, HOPE promotes closer connection with peers and deeper discussion about faith through peer-led small groups. The experiences and perspectives that each person brings to their small group are valued and can enrich discussions about faith in remarkable ways. In addition, HOPE provides more opportunities for leadership involvement through prayer team, small group leader, or CYM (Commission on Youth Ministries) representative positions. HOPE creates a genuine, meaningful, and fun atmosphere to grow in faith while creating new friendships!

Both programs have one thing in common – a place, time and friends, with which to share their faith. The leadership team, counselors and participants come back year after year.

If a yearly conference were all the youth programs consisted of, it would be wonderful enough. However, it is only part of the youth program. The camaraderie and closeness are established by individuals for a lifetime. They cannot wait for only once a year to contact each other. They stay connected through three Facebook pages (NAPF – National Association of Pilgrim Fellowship, H.O.P.E, and NAPF/HOPE Alumni), emails, Skype and individual communication.

## **You Can Help**

Many youth around the country spend time raising funds to attend NAPF and H.O.P.E., but not all youth can afford to attend. You can make a contribution to the youth assistance fund through the NACCC. You will have the satisfaction of helping to bring our youth closer to Christ through this exciting gathering of Congregational Christian youth. (See Section 4.2 for more information on the Youth Fund for scholarships.)

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