

# NACCC NEWS

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2011

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 4



## FROM MY HEART TO YOURS

Dear Friends,

At the recent inauguration banquet of Olivet College's new President, Dr. Steven Corey, I sat at a table with the new interim superintendent of Olivet Schools and a county commissioner. The superintendent (newly-appointed) told of staff cuts in the schools. The commissioner told a gripping story about the previous night's commissioners meeting where 18 jobs were cut from the county's staff, one of those people had 23 years of service to the county. He was sad and disappointed in the conditions that made this necessary.

In the September 15th edition of USA Today, a front-page headline reads "GOAL IS TO FIX PUBLIC TRUST AND FINANCES." It was followed by an interview with the federal deficit panel leaders.

Our Association shares in some of the dynamics of all three of these situations. What we hear from our own "public" is the need to work on three goals – get closer to our churches, invest in those efforts that will engender trust and viability in the work of our wider fellowship, and reduce our Association's deficit.

The stress and heartache of achieving this last goal is something, without a doubt, staff and leaders of our Association feel. Emotions run from disappointment, to anxiety, to hope, to commitment, to the tasks at hand and an increased dependence on God to guide our path.

As I write this (September 19), Bill Rafuse in his daily prayer request on Facebook, suggested:

*Pray that the Transition Team be used of God to form a vessel God can use to make our churches effective in preaching and teaching the Gospel to the world around us, a vessel that helps us to be ministers of encouragement to each other, and may our churches and people desire the Spirit to do both.*

Jill Hudson in a recent article I have quoted to you before wrote: "The Church and life is in flux...we either brace ourselves against change or embrace the opportunities change provides. (*"When Better Is Not Enough"*).

The Congregational Way is not a museum, it is a movement. I for one am praying as Bill suggested, with great hope that God's truth has yet more light to shed upon us.

Grace and Peace,  
Rev. Dr. Thomas Richard  
Executive Secretary

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The Center for Congregational Leadership continues to develop its programs and services on behalf of our member churches. The Center followed up on its Web Savvy Ministry seminar (March 2008) with a one day Technology and Worship Seminar, held September 24<sup>th</sup> and led by Doug Gray.

Thanks to our partnership with Olivet, we have webcasting capability and were able to record the seminar and post it for people to access at their convenience. You may find it, and the recording of the March seminar at [www.centerforcongregationalleadership.org](http://www.centerforcongregationalleadership.org).

The Arvel M. and Kathleen Steece Religious Library which moved to the Center last January has been sorted and is being catalogued. Many of the volumes will be circulated. Others will be available at the Center or upon special request of researchers and scholars. We expect to have the collection fully available by Spring of 2012.

The partnership with Olivet College continues to grow and is blossoming with the support and encouragement of Olivet College's new president, Dr. Steven Corey. The college has access to three ordained NACCC clergy, Rev. Jack Brown, Rev. Mike Fales and Rev. Dr. Betsey Mauro. All three serve on the faculty in support of the religious studies program.

CFTS students from Maine, Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, Kansas and California gathered for their annual Fall Seminar, exploring multiple aspects of Congregational Worship. Preparing for Congregational ministry, they not only enhanced their knowledge but also enjoyed deeply connected fellowship with one another. Instructors for the Fall Seminar included Rev. Dr. Donn Ed, pastor of First Congregational Church of Etna in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Rev. Mimi Biedron of North Congregational Church in Farmington Hills, Michigan and Rev. Doug Gray, pastor of Second Congregational Church in Beloit, Wisconsin. Thank you to faculty and participants alike!

This past July, a History and Polity course was held in Boston (aka, the "Boston Seminar"). A requirement for our CFTS students, it is also open to others who want to know more about Congregationalism. A total of 20 people gathered, 5 of whom were students, three were faculty and 12 were clergy and laity. Many of the clergy serve NACCC member churches but come from another tradition. Congratulations to them and the churches they serve for gaining the skills and knowledge to help them be the best *Congregational* pastors they can be.

Recent staffing changes at the NACCC have resulted in an increase of hours for the Center's Administrative Assistant, Marie Steele. We are blessed by Marie's competence and dedication and look forward to the strides we can make with her added efforts.

Please continue to pray for the work of our Association. We at the Center look forward to continuing to serve you in the best ways we are able. Thank you for your support and encouragement in all that we do.

For more information about the Center and educational opportunities, contact Dr. Mauro at [bmauro@naccc.org](mailto:bmauro@naccc.org) or 1-800-262-1620 x 12. Or visit our website at [www.centerforcongregationalleadership.org](http://www.centerforcongregationalleadership.org).

Blessings,

*Betsey*

## DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING

### **“IT’S THAT TIME OF YEAR ...”**

To take stock of our fellowship together as a nation of Congregationalist churches. The annual Fair Share support letter should have reached you by now. For questions or more information on Fair Share, please contact us at (800) 262-1620.

***Your prayerful consideration is most appreciated!!!***

### **Successful IAC Seminar on Congregational Investment Trust**

On September 28<sup>th</sup> the Association’s Investment Advisory Committee (IAC) offered a Webex-driven seminar of church investments, outlining the services offered to our member churches through the Congregational Investment Trust (CIT). Twelve Churches expressed interest in the seminar. Thanks to the work of Rebecca Moore, **that presentation is recorded and on our website.** [www.naccc.org](http://www.naccc.org) The presentation was done by our investment manager Sara Walker, of Associated Bank, and Rick Bauzenberger, chairperson of the IAC. The IAC is offering two different investment options to NACCC member-churches.

For more information, please call Dan Drea at the office [ddrea@naccc.org](mailto:ddrea@naccc.org) (414)-764-1620 ext 14.

## ***FROM YOUR MODERATOR . . .***

When I was in college in California in the 60s, I found myself to be an agent of change; God had called me to help people to trust and have faith in the future, even amidst turmoil, unrest, and grief. It has been important for me to lead with a strong heart and faith in everything I've done: from working with the disadvantaged, to teaching young children, to preaching and pastoring, to starting a new church, and most recently helping our NA churches find new life through Re-visioning. Now I find myself your Moderator in a time filled with change and some turmoil. We are working on the transition of our new Strategic Plan for our National Association at the same time that it has been deemed necessary to eliminate our Associate Executive Secretary position, and sadly say goodbye to Reverend John Carson. We are definitely being challenged and I believe that God has put me in this position at this time to lead you with my heart and strong faith into this next year. The changes may not be welcomed by all and many in our churches and in our leadership may feel quite shaken because of all the unknowns, but I will do all I can to encourage you to trust in the future God has planned for us, and I believe that out of the changes being made will come forth a stronger and more effective NA for the future.

I hope you will all come to the 2012 Annual Meeting and Conference in Minnesota, June 23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>. You will be warmly welcomed, you will have a time and a place to ask your questions and share your concerns, and you will have the opportunity to share in the good work being done by our Transitional Team. Most assuredly, you will find the fellowship with others from your sister churches to be vital to your own growth. I look forward to leading you into the future and helping us to embrace the changes that God has planned as we all seek to fulfill our Mission in the best way possible.

Blessings,

Rev. Patti Dando Haaheim

[revpatti@yahoo.com](mailto:revpatti@yahoo.com)

### **2012 Annual Meeting & Conference**

June 23-26

Hilton Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport Mall of America

Bloomington, MN

Call (952) 854-2100 to reserve your room

Room rates: \$109 plus tax

Or visit [www.mspairport.hilton.com](http://www.mspairport.hilton.com) and use Group Code: NAC

## TRANSITIONAL TEAM MEETING

From September 20<sup>th</sup>—22<sup>nd</sup> twelve men and women appointed (and elected) to the transitional team of the Strategic Plan (which was accepted at our Annual Meeting and Conference in Scottsdale this past June), were in Oak Creek beginning the initial discussions of implementation.

The members of the team are:

JR McAliley (GA) – representing the Missionary Society

John Carson (WI) - Associate Executive Secretary

Michael Chittum (UT) - member of the Strategic Planning Team (could not attend)

Jeff Dillon (WI) – treasurer of the NACCC

Beth Faeth (MN) – member of the Strategic Planning Team and chairperson of the transitional team

Michael Fales (MI) – representing The Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies.

Seth Jones (ME) - member-at-large

Jodi Lord (NY) – representing the Division for Ministry (could not attend)

Betsey Mauro (MI) – Dean of The Center for Congregational Leadership (could not attend)

Lynn Merkel (WI) – representing Commission on Youth Ministries

Barbara Mullen (IN) – member-at-large

Jim Owens (FL) – representing Congregational Church Development

Tom Richard (WI) - Executive Secretary

Jim Waechter (NY) – member and chairperson of the Strategic Planning Team

Gary Zaiser (WI) – member-at-large

As this transition unfolds our churches will begin to get emails and mailings seeking their engagement in helping to shape the implementation of the Plan. Watch for more information on the transition on the NACCC website.

### **HERITAGE SUNDAY**

The Executive Committee has reaffirmed Thanksgiving Sunday as Heritage Sunday throughout the Association.

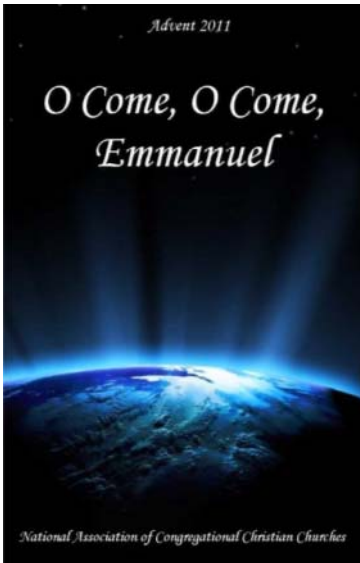
Churches will receive packets including suggested liturgy and historical notes celebrating our Congregational heritage.

## MISSIONS

Before you know it, we will be entering the Christmas Season. Our missions do a variety of celebrations during this time. Giving gifts and food to families and pastors is important to them. For a complete wish list for our missions, please check our website at [nacc.org/missions](http://nacc.org/missions).

Some of our missions are on a quarterly distribution schedule. The following missions are quarterly/semi-annually: Argentina, Bulgaria, Christ to the Villages, Word Alive, Myanmar, Maine Sea Coast Mission and Piney Woods, Seafarer’s Friend, and Morgan Scott Project. If you want to support these missions for the Christmas season, please get your donations to us by **October 15<sup>th</sup>**.

The rest of our missions are on a monthly schedule. Please send your donations to them by **Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>** so they will receive the funds in time. **Thank you for your support.**



### 2011 Advent Devotional Order Form

Price: \$2.50 per copy—includes shipping & handling  
Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 2011 Advent Devotionals to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send completed form to:

NACCC  
PO Box 288  
Oak Creek, WI 53154-0288

Or email your request to:

lmiller@nacc.org  
Telephone: 1-800-262-1620 ext. 13  
Fax: (414) 764-0319

**WANTED!**

**DEVOTIONAL WRITERS**

*Lent Theme: “Forty days of giving can make life worth living.”*

**Deadline  
December 26  
For Lent**

**Format for the Devotional**

- 1) Scripture reference (NLT will be used unless otherwise specified)
- 2) Topic sentence
- 3) Devotion, meditation, illustration
- 4) Prayer
- 5) Your name, Church name, City, State, and e-mail address.  
(give permission to print e-mail address)
- 6) A picture of you (optional)

Total word count for ALL components is 320 words, maximum.  
Longer submissions will not be used

**Daily Inspirational Readings**

Please prayerfully consider how you might convey a message of the Season to your brothers and sisters in Christ. An Antiphon is a 3-part prayer that begins with “O”, then addresses Jesus through one of his many names, and finally brings a request. “O come, O come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel.” is an Antiphon. May the Holy Spirit inspire your writing for the glory of God.

**Submission Instructions:**

**Via Email:**

Lori Wiley— [pastorucpnh@gmail.com](mailto:pastorucpnh@gmail.com) - Fax 603-472-2799  
Leo Christian— [congopastor@gmail.com](mailto:congopastor@gmail.com)

**Via Post Office**

Lori Wiley  
599 New Boston Rd.  
Bedford NH 03110

**Subject Line:** Advent (or Lent) Devotional. A reply will be sent when your submission has been received.

**Communication  
Services Committee**

National Association  
of Congregational  
Christian Churches



Please make copies of this flyer and post them in your church. Give a copy to each of your writers!

Use the form on the next page for your submission

*Devotional Entry*

TITLE:

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: (book, chapter, verse(s), translation)

TOPIC SENTENCE/TITLE: What is the essence of your entry? What is the Big Idea? What words should the reader carry in mind and heart throughout the day? Does your Big Idea relate to the theme of the Lenton Season? Does your Big Idea relate to the theme for this year? ( Lent 2012: Forty days of giving make life worth living)

MESSAGE: Devotion, meditation, illustration, quote

Prayer: Write a short prayer related to the Topic sentence.

Name of writer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of church: \_\_\_\_\_ City and State of Church: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ May your e-mail address be included? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address of writer: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you text? \_\_\_ Best times to call: \_\_\_\_\_ Time zone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Send a picture: \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

Total word count for ALL components is 320 words, maximum. The Chicago Manual of Style will be used by the copyeditor who reserves the right to correct grammar and spelling.

Send your entry to Lori Wiley ([pastorucpnh@gmail.com](mailto:pastorucpnh@gmail.com), 599 New Boston Road Bedford NH 03110, phone and **fax**: 603-472-2799 or Leo Christian ([congopastor@gmail.com](mailto:congopastor@gmail.com), 508-863-0031 PO Box 98 Rochester, MA. 02770). If you do not receive a Reply via e-mail, call to ensure that your entry was received.

## News From the Field

**FCC, Wauwatosa**, continues its Movies at First, with *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and *Over The Edge*, as part of their faith and film discussions...**FCC, Fall River**, Marty Hall is new minister at the Church; a wonderful message in the Sept issue by Cantor Richard Wolberg – go on [www.fccfallriver.org](http://www.fccfallriver.org) and take a look...**FCC, Mansfield**'s, Vision Team has surveyed the congregation and are about to hold a series of small group gatherings to explore, strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats the church faces as it plans for the future; the youth who attended the NAPP in June hosted a thank you luncheon to all those who supported their attendance...**FCC, Beloit**, in his column, "It Seems To Me" the minister, Kendall Nordstrom, shared a quote from The Lewis Center on stewardship regarding the emphasis on mission rather than maintenance – "it is the difference between a "pay the bills church," and "live the vision church."...**FCC, Akron**, the September artist of the month was May Halliday whose paintings have been shown in a number of galleries in the area. The church held a reception in her honor in their fellowship hall; a worship service of healing and trust (including anointing of oil) is being held in October...**Warden Cong'l**, a note in their recent newsletter from the treasurer, "Cash is down but general fund is up. Offerings are up and the budget is in line;" church participated in Warden Community Days with families decorating and populating a float...**FCC, Millinocket**, several baptisms during the summer. Unfortunately, seven deaths occurred in the summer as

well; still in search process for their settled minister...**FCC, St John's**, recent newsletter gave members tools for "igniting FCC" i.e. inviting people to participate in church worship and ministries; their Fall retreat theme is "The Dynamic of Living Close To God;" they are raising funds to air-condition their church...**Florence Cong'l**, like most churches, a busy Fall is planned; in October they celebrate their 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; church participates in Shelter Sunday, a community-wide drive to provide food and shelter for those in need...**Bethany, Chicago**, initiating safety measures for their children/youth activities; a tongue-in-cheek piece in their recent newsletter about why people should be in the choir; one of the more humorous of the list? "from your advantageous seat you can smile at, gawk at, ignore or otherwise enjoy the rest of the people in the congregation:"...**Grace, Columbiana**, A very thoughtful message from their minister, Rob Joy, in the recent issue of Grace Notes newsletter. Although too long to reprint here, go to [www.gracechurchcolumbiana.com](http://www.gracechurchcolumbiana.com). The message is entitled, "The Modern Search For Meaning." Exceptional...**Duluth Cong'l**, they participate in an organization called CHUM, an interfaith consortium which seeks to provide basic necessities, foster stable lives, and organize for a just and compassionate community. The churches in this organization baked 973 rhubarb pies and made over \$12,000 in sales! The total income of their recent festival? \$33,904.00!.

### Administrative Assistant Needed

- This 25-hour per week, part-time position assists the Director of Development & Marketing in achieving donor-related financial and marketing goals of the Congregational Foundation and the NACCC.
- Qualifications: Bachelor's Degree in liberal arts field preferred; 2-3 years experience in non-profit environment; working knowledge of MS Office 2003 or higher; donor database experience; good written and verbal communications skills; member of a Christian faith and affinity for the mission of the NACCC.
- Position is immediately available.
- **To Apply:** submit cover letter with salary history, resume and 3 references to the attention of Christina Zitka at: [czitka@naccc.org](mailto:czitka@naccc.org) or by mail to NACCC, PO Box 288, Oak Creek, WI 53154.

### 2012 Dates

- 2012 Minister's Convocation  
April 16-19, Mundelein, IL
- 2012 Annual Meeting &  
Conference, June 23-26,  
Bloomington, MN



**RECENT EXECUTIVE & FRATERNAL VISITS***Rev. Dr. Tom Richard*

University Church, Wichita, KS  
 Plymouth Congregational Church, Wichita, KS  
 Olivet College Presidential Inauguration  
 First Congregational Church, Wauwatosa, WI  
 Fox River Church, Pewaukee, WI  
 First Congregational Church, Burlington, IA  
 Berwick Congregational Church, Berwick, IA  
 Church of the Chimes, Sherman Oaks, CA  
 Oneonta Congregational Church, S. Pasadena, CA  
 First Congregational Church, Otsego, MI  
 Piedmont College, Presidential Inauguration  
 First Congregational Church, Kenosha, WI  
 Executive Committee Meeting, Oak Creek, WI

*Rev. John Carson*

Morgan Scott Project, Deer Lodge, TN  
 First Congregational Church, Crossville, TN  
 CFTS Fall seminar, Olivet College, Olivet, MI  
 Congregational Church of Bound Brook, NJ  
 First Congregational Church, Wayne, MI  
 Pilgrim Congregational Church, Bloomfield Hills, MI

*Rev. Dr. Betsey Mauro visited:*

Kenduskeag Union Church, Kenduskeag, ME  
 Pilgrim Community Church, Warren, ME  
 Rockland Congregational Church, Rockland, ME  
 Second Congregational Church, Warren, ME  
 First Congregational Church, Nantucket, MA  
 First Congregational Church, Merrill, MI  
 Rockwood Congregational Church, Rockwood, MI  
 Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims, Brooklyn, NY

*Upcoming Visits*

*Rev. Bobbie Chapman* will represent the NACCC at the ordination of Cynthia Petrie in Campton, NH on October 23rd.

*Lee Fournier*, Moderator of CalWest Assoc. will represent the NACCC at the installation of Rev. Allan Morrow, at Desert Congregational Church, Twentynine Palms, CA on Oct. 29th.

*Rev. Betsey Mauro* will represent the NACCC at the ordination of Michael Haefner in Greenville, MI on October 30th.

*Rev. John Carson* has visits scheduled in Connecticut and Maine during the month of October.

**CONNECTICUT FELLOWSHIP**

The Connecticut Fellowship of Congregational Churches encompasses more states than Connecticut. We are delighted to include Rhode Island and parts of Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey as well.

Our Fellowship is able to assist our 43 fellowship churches financially through various grants, loans and scholarships.

We have grants available to smaller churches to purchase a computer, to assist with heat bills and to supplement a pastor's salary in the effort to bring a part time minister to full time. We have loans available for building projects and facility improvements. We have scholarship grants available for the continuing education of our pastors as well as a grant for sabbaticals. There are also funds available through loans to pastors for purchasing a home or car.

One of my primary functions and joys as Executive Secretary of the Fellowship is to bring this information to our membership by visiting and worshipping with one of our churches each month.

We offer this financial support to enable churches to preach the Good News and to encourage pastors to come to our region and to be able to stay.

We have been blessed and we strive to be a blessing to others.

*Barbara Erlendson**barbaraerlendon@gmail.com***Choir Robes Available**

The Oakwood Heights Community Church, Staten Island, NY has 13 choir robes in medium blue they would like to donate to a church that can use them. Your Cost? Just pay for shipping.

Contact them at 718-351-3667

[churchinfo@myohcc.org](mailto:churchinfo@myohcc.org)

## ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

### OCTOBER

Michael Matheny	Oct. 1, 1978
James Clifton	Oct. 1, 1984
David Hulings	Oct. 1, 1989
Art Thibeault	Oct. 1, 1989
Robert Morris	Oct. 1, 1995
Lee Attema	Oct. 1, 1996
Lee Ann Gagne	Oct. 2, 2004
Robert Howell	Oct. 5, 2000
Donald Mullen	Oct. 6, 1969
Cynthia Shepherd	Oct. 6, 1979
Dewey Gierke	Oct. 6, 1991
Joseph Cooke	Oct. 7, 1955
Diane Wise	Oct. 7, 2001
Edwin Remaly	Oct. 8, 1961
Lori Wiley	Oct. 8, 2000
Jay Groat	Oct. 11, 1987
Robert Moynihan	Oct. 11, 2003
Glenn Stone	Oct. 12, 1980
Jonathan Roach	Oct. 12, 2008
Richard Koch	Oct. 13, 1985
Richard Hotchkin	Oct. 13, 1991
Ruth Lyons	Oct. 14, 1984
Jay Terbush	Oct. 14, 1984
Harvey Pierce	Oct. 15, 1952
Douglas Gray	Oct. 15, 1994
Joshua Davis	Oct. 15, 2006
Joel Curtiss	Oct. 16, 1988
Paul Westerville	Oct. 16, 2008
David D'Arcy	Oct. 17, 1971
Scott Barton	Oct. 17, 1976
Robert Barletta	Oct. 18, 1998
Duane Kellogg	Oct. 19, 1975
Sally Nolen	Oct. 19, 1986
Michael Mitchell	Oct. 19, 2003
Barry Lucas	Oct. 20, 2002
Cathy Houston	Oct. 22, 2000
Michael Robertson	Oct. 22, 2000
Kathryn Smith	Oct. 22, 2002
Sanford Freud	Oct. 23, 1983
Kathryn Rust	Oct. 24, 1999
Gary Smothers	Oct. 25, 1959
Wesley Woodman	Oct. 26, 1974
John Swanson	Oct. 26, 1985
Mark Jarvie	Oct. 26, 2003
Isaiah Cho	Oct. 27, 1969
Ralph DiBiasio-Snyder	Oct. 27, 1974

Bruce VanDer Kolk	Oct. 27, 1996
Eugene Whitney	Oct. 28, 1968
Robert Fleischmann	Oct. 28, 1973
Charles Whipple	Oct. 28, 1973
Cayle Beagle	Oct. 28, 2001
Richard Kurrasch	Oct. 31, 1971
Carol DiBiasio-Snyder	Oct. 31, 1981
Jerrold Jones	Oct. 31, 1993
Fred Thimmel	Oct. 31, 2009

### NOVEMBER

Gary Pierce	Nov. 1, 1964
Ted Selgo	Nov. 1, 1969
Alan Ferguson	Nov. 1, 1978
Robert Livingston	Nov. 1, 1980
David Walz	Nov. 1, 1997
George Johnson	Nov. 1, 2001
Ashley Cleere	Nov. 2, 1991
Susan Hunnicutt	Nov. 3, 1991
Adam Soderberg	Nov. 3, 2002
Norman Erlendson	Nov. 4, 1990
Ivy Beckwith	Nov. 4, 2000
Emily Robertson	Nov. 5, 2006
Wendy Van Tassell	Nov. 6, 1994
Leon Hermes	Nov. 7, 1965
Robert Moston	Nov. 7, 1997
Jamie Green	Nov. 7, 2009
William Lange	Nov. 8, 1975
Harlan Nuss	Nov. 9, 2002
Thomas Boehne	Nov. 9, 2003
Irven Gammon	Nov. 9, 2003
Stephen Tucker	Nov. 11, 1971
Noel Vanek	Nov. 11, 1979
James Kurtz	Nov. 14, 1952
Rick Hartley	Nov. 14, 1993
John Lancz	Nov. 15, 1967
John Doud	Nov. 15, 1978
Christopher Stephens	Nov. 19, 2005
Ardyth K. Johnson	Nov. 20, 1983
John Deuble	Nov. 20, 1994
Richard Lindvall	Nov. 21, 1976
Claude Dunn	Nov. 21, 1998
Angus MacDonald	Nov. 22, 1945
Karl Kraemer	Nov. 22, 1999
David Hirtle	Nov. 24, 1976
Eric Lison	Nov. 24, 1985
Carolyn Bradley	Nov. 25, 1984
John Koehler	Nov. 30, 1975



## A MOMENT IN HISTORY

### *The World's Most Famous Sermon*

Rev. Arlin Larson, NACCC Historian

Did you know that the world's most famous sermon was written by a Congregationalist? But how many of us would return the next week after being blasted with words like these?

*"Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth: yea, doubtless, with many that are now in this congregation, who it may be are at ease, than he is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell. . . . [N]atural men are held in the hand of God, over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment; the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out: and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them."*

*And this for the children's sermon:*

*"And you, children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, who is now angry with you every day and every night?"*

Yet in 1741, when "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" was first preached, it was met with enthusiasm and quickly spread throughout the English-speaking world. Its author, Jonathon Edwards (1703-1758), the Billy Graham of his day, provided the intellectual underpinnings for the "First Great Awakening", a wave of revivals that swept America, England, and Scotland. He inspired other key figures, such as John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Gilbert Tennet. He led the "New Light" Congregationalists, who championed a more heartfelt religion, against the traditionalist "Old Lights", who were doubtful of "enthusiasm." As an intellectual he was rivaled only by Benjamin Franklin and wrote appreciatively yet critically of the ideas of Sir Isaac Newton, John Locke, Francis Hutcheson. All the while, he served as pastor of one of New England's largest churches, then superintendent of an Indian mission, and finally president of Princeton College.

By its very topic - an angry, really angry God - "Sinners" is off-putting to modern ears. In the eighteenth century, however, people expected sermons to treat such things as the terrors of hell, the wrath of God, and the wickedness of the human heart. What distinguished Edward's sermon was not what he said but how he said it - saving words piled on and hammered in with one powerful metaphor after another.

So please do not quickly dismiss Edwards because of this sermon (it is often the first and only thing people ever read!). The same author could write tenderly: "Don't, however, consume too much of your time and strength in poring and puzzling thoughts about old experiences. . . . Rather, apply yourself with all your might to an earnest pursuit after renewed experiences, new light, and new, lively acts of faith and love." Even "sinners" was intended as a word of grace - a loving God was holding back richly deserved punishment, offering hope of repentance and renewal.

And while burning with anger is not our first thought of God, doesn't it seem that after creating the world out of love, God must be saddened by all the harm we do to ourselves and each other? I think that was what Edwards was really trying to get at.

References: Jonathon Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"  
 Jonathon Edwards, "Advice to a Young Convert"  
 George Marsden, *Jonathon Edwards: a Life*, Yale University, 2003

**SEND ME YOUR NEWS**

Submissions for the Dec/Jan edition are due by Nov. 15, 2011.

Marie Steele, Editor

[msteele@nacc.org](mailto:msteele@nacc.org)

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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF  
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES**

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