



The Congregational Ranger

Newsletter of The Fellowship of Northeast Congregational Christian Churches

Volume XLVII Issue 2

Summer 2012

***In a nutshell:* the 55th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Fellowship + a Name Change**

At our 2012 Business Meeting held at South Church in Hartford, our name was officially changed from the Fellowship of Connecticut Congregational Christian Churches to the Fellowship of Northeast Congregational Christian Churches. I'm sure we will still refer to ourselves as "The Fellowship" but it is good to have a name that reflects more faithfully our membership.

This name change was able to take place because we had a quorum! In the past several years, we were unable to vote on suggested by-law changes because a quorum has not been present; but that all changed this past May. Thank you to all the churches who made a special effort to be there so Fellowship business could be done.

The meeting was not only successful because of our ability to do business but with all of you there, we had the opportunity for fellowship, which is of utmost importance. The elegant tea at South Church nourished our bodies and was a feast for the eyes. It was followed by a moving mission presentation by the team who recently returned from their mission in Haiti.

Reverend Adam Söderberg led us in worship, accompanied by the South Church Praise Team and the business meeting followed. The meeting was a long one but the cooks and hostesses who served dinner were gracious and hospitable and the food was still delicious even though we were an hour later than planned.

We thank our Retiring Moderator, Rev. Paul Ricard and welcome our new Moderator, Kay Page Greaser. Our next meeting will be October 21st at Third Congregational Church in Middletown, Connecticut. This is not a business meeting, but an opportunity for Fellowship, spiritual nourishment and education.

It will not be the same without you, so we hope to see you then.

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~ *From the Executive Secretary* ~

Welcome

One of my greatest Executive Secretary pleasures is visiting and worshipping with our member churches. Truly, I have not visited one unfriendly church or heard one less than inspirational sermon. I have been blessed by my visits to you.

As a life long church attendee and a pastor's wife, it has been a new experience for me to attend churches with the eyes of a visitor. As an "insider", church has always been comfortable because it's familiar. I know when to stand, when to sit, what pews I must avoid and the proper responses. As a visitor, not so much.

First of all, I usually will sit in the front pew because I assume these are not someone else's seat. As I look up your address, I sometimes find just the street name or a post office box. My GPS is my best friend and very good, but it needs a little more information. Like the street number.

When I arrive, I don't know what the rest of the congregation knows, that parking is around the corner at the library's parking lot. If your web site or brochures could include parking information it would make your visitors first moments a little easier. Visitors will begin to make up their minds about your church in the parking lot. People need to begin their greetings to newcomers before they even enter the doors of the church and parking must not be a challenge or mystery.

Many of you list the page number of the Doxology and other portions of the service which help those who are not familiar with responses. Are the words to the Lord's Prayer available to those who might not know it? Do you say trespasses or debts - it is truly distracting to be praying in a meaningful way and stop and stumble on that difference. The word your

church uses could be printed in parentheses beside The Lord's Prayer in the bulletin. My church says trespasses, but when I visit, I say debts - it's a shorter word and will be absorbed by all the longer trespasses. For worship purposes, we know the Lord hears all our prayers and doesn't care which word is used, but this is about making your visitors feel included, not excluded.

Does everyone in your church know where to direct a newcomer with small children seeking the nursery or Sunday school rooms? Are you aware of who is new sitting near by so you can guide them to the coffee hour and introduce them to other members? Visitors may not want to be introduced, they may want to keep a low profile until they make a decision about where they will worship, but they don't want to feel ignored either. It is important to help them navigate their way through your worship service and it is also important to help them find their way through your physical church - to the appropriate rooms whether it's a rest room or fellowship hall for coffee.

Now I might add that in all of the churches I have visited so far, I have been embraced with the warmth of your Christian Fellowship and impressed by your friendliness. I have heard such lovely music accompanied by so many talented musicians. Your pastors have spoken with wisdom and your historic and beautiful sanctuaries have spoken to my heart. I look forward to visiting more of the Fellowship churches in upcoming months and would love to hear from you if there is a time I might join you.

Until then, I know that visitors and members alike will attend worship and say "surely, the presence of the Lord is in this place"

Barbara Erlendson
Executive Secretary



Becket Praise Team Is Only A Teenager

By Pastor Kevin Smail

Born in 1997, the Becket Praise Team is not the typical teenager that is found in the church on Sunday. At fifteen years old when most teens are dreaming of getting their driver's license, the Becket Praise Team is dreaming up new songs and new ways to Praise the Lord! As a matter of fact, the Becket Praise Team may only have a couple of teenagers in their group, but the members are all young at heart and play music that is appealing to all age groups. Bill Mulholland, the fearless leader of the group which averages around sixteen members per concert, actually recalls his teen years and gives them credit for part of his ministry. He often tells the story of how his mother would tell him and his siblings that playing Everly Brothers music in the garage would never get them anywhere. Bill jokingly states, "Look at us now!"

The "Praise Team" as we refer to them at church, is made up of folks ranging from their teens to retirees. They come from all backgrounds as well. We have a couple of school teachers, a nurse, a bookkeeper, a paper mill machine maintainer, a retired naval officer and other various occupations. Bill himself is the Vice President of Community Education and Workforce Development at Berkshire Community College.

Even though the Praise Team members work or attend school on a regular basis, they always have time to meet every Wednesday evening for practice. They often jokingly refer to their practice time as "therapy". The practice is also a wonderful time for fellowship and keeping up with what is going on in the lives of the other members.

When some people think of a praise team, they can picture a group of four or five people with acoustic guitars and maybe a keyboard and tambourine playing modern church songs and singing. That only partly

describes the Becket Praise Team. They are actually almost a full scale orchestra with at least five guitarists, a drummer, keyboard, violin, fiddle, saxophone and clarinet, castanet, shakers, and tambourines, among various other instruments at times. Their repertoire includes much of the traditional church music as well as new church and praise songs. There are even a couple of rock and roll songs with the words modified into praise music. Each performance usually includes one Everly Brothers song, which reminds Bill and his sister Kathy Rodhouse of their beginnings. Oftentimes another Mulholland is added to the group, their brother Mitch. You just never know who will be playing at any given time until you show up.

One of the amazing things that this pastor has noticed that makes the Becket Praise Team so unique is that there is no lead vocalist. There are many! Depending on whatever song they play, the lead vocalist changes. As a newspaper article from 2004 states: "There are no egos in the Becket Praise Team."

The Parish of Becket is actually made up of two CT Fellowship member churches. It includes the First Congregational Church of Becket and the Becket Federated Church. Members from the Praise Team come from both churches. Oftentimes, they don't even know that they belong to different churches as we describe ourselves as "two churches, but one church family." When I was searching for a new pastorate a few years ago I sent my resume to Becket. After preaching here one Sunday when the Praise Team took part in the service, I knew where I belonged. Strangely enough, I was issued a call from two different churches at the same time. A good part of my decision to come to Becket was because of the ministry of the Becket Praise Team.

Please see "Teenager", next page

"Teenager, continued . .

The Becket Praise Team is not all about church music either. Each year on Memorial Day they provide patriotic music on the town green following the annual parade. They have performed at different milestone events such as the 100th anniversary of an adjoining town's school, the 100th anniversary of Jacob's Ladder Trail and other local events. The group was even asked to perform at the Colonial Theater in Pittsfield, MA which is recognized as a historical theater. The Colonial only hosts real professionals, so this was quite an accomplishment for this humble group.

Each year the Praise Team takes part in the Lenten series of Praise Music at the United Methodist Church in Dalton, MA. They always have a full house waiting for this concert. Bill will be taking the Praise Team on a new adventure this April as they have been asked to perform at the Geer Nursing Home in Canaan, CT. This is a first for them but they are open to new possibilities and opportunities to bring their message through music. No matter where they go, they are always great. Bill humbly says, "we just show up. The spirit does the rest."

Currently the Becket Praise Team is in the process of making their fourth cd. The last one and the current one have been recorded "live" in concert and one can really get to feel the spirit alive and at work in those recordings. Each cd always ends with the Praise Teams signature song, "I'll fly Away." Whenever they have a concert, you will always find somebody getting up to dance in the aisles during that closing song.

Current Praise Team Members are as follows: Bill Mulholland, lead guitar and vocals; Bill Vsetecka, vocals, tambourine, bongos, clacker; Kathy Rodhouse, bass guitar, vocals;

Debbie Bruneau, soprano vocals, shaker egg, chimes; Paula Fisher, vocals; Mack Fisher, guitar; Cullen Fisher, vocals; Dave Pingrin, saxophone, vocals; Debbie Connors, vocals; Sean Connors, violin, fiddle, banjo, vocals; Dave Mitchell, guitar; Anne Marie Rosberg, keyboard, vocals, song-writer, prayer warrior; Glenn Rosberg, music mixer, producer; Ginny Weiner, vocals, signer, full of energy; Melyssa Weiner, vocals, saxophone, clarinet; Jody Lampro, vocals, drummer, and our newest addition Nina DelosSantos, vocals.

Last year we lost our greatest source of inspiration, Cathy Mulholland, who is now the angel that oversees the group. Cathy had a beautiful voice and left us with our newest song which is entitled Cathy's Irish Blessing. We miss you Cathy!

If you have never had the opportunity to hear the Becket Praise Team in concert just e-mail our church office at

parishofbecket@gmail.com

and we will notify you when and where they are performing. You may also order cd's by calling the office at 413-623-5217.





Minnehaha Falls

Reflections from a First time NACCC Delegate

"Out of our hearts shall flow rivers of living water" John 7:38

By Kay Page Greaser, First Congregational Church of Barkhamsted

In keeping with the wonderful water theme during the 58th NACCC Conference held in Minnesota, known as the "Land of 10,000 Lakes," I wanted to share my reflections of this annual gathering. This is not a report of the business held at the meeting, but insight into the personal and congregational enrichment I gained during the event.

I want to start by thanking the FNCCC for donating funds to my church which in turn allowed me to attend. I know that this experience will help me be a stronger advocate for the services provided by our national association and be a more helpful member of our Fellowship and my church.

In my opinion, the best part of the conference was the people I met and exchanged ideas with, many of whom had insight into the challenges facing a small church with a small budget. The materials and information given during the workshops and literature in the resource room were also very helpful. The mission representatives opened my eyes and heart to many new and different church missions for consideration. I was particularly impressed with the number of dedicated volunteers serving the NACCC from around the country in order to prepare and pass the Strategic Plan for reorganization. If you have not read this plan, please visit <http://www.naccc.org//churches/transitionteam.aspx> review and discuss it with your own national year round delegate or Barbara Erlendson our Executive Secretary. After listening to the presentation and talking to others, I feel these will be very productive changes.

Every moment during the meeting, I felt the present of our Lord, but the following three examples gave me the most inspiration and the strongest indication that God was guiding us during this gathering.

First, the Opening Ceremony started off on a positive note. The energy in the room expressed by the Chair Rev. Casey vanderBent and Moderator Rev. Patti Haaheim, both from Southcross Community Church in MN, was exhilarating. I was especially moved at the moment when each Minnesota church participating in the conference stepped forward and poured water from a nearby body of water and explained why it was chosen to be mixed with real water flowing from a handmade fountain just beneath the head table. At the end of this ceremony, Rev. Haaheim poured in water from the Jordan River, and to me that really symbolized the coming together of a diversified group for a unified cause. The water theme was interpreted with excellence from start to finish, including the details of the centerpieces on the meal tables, the music, scriptures, prayers, and exquisite quilted fabric banner. Kudos to the entire conference planning team, their enthusiasm was contagious!

Please see "Reflections", over

"Reflections", continued

Second, the induction of the CFTS graduates. There wasn't a dry eye in the room. Each one had such a moving story and displayed such dedication and gratitude. It made me tingle knowing that we, the member churches and the NACCC, provide such a marvelous opportunity for those desiring to be Congregational ministers.

Third, during the final business meeting, we saw a video presentation from the youth who were simultaneously on a retreat at a reservation in Rapid City, SD helping to rebuild and restore homes, yards, etc. Their theme was "Badlands; Good Hands." In sync with today's electronic age, we heard via an urgent phone call from the women running the retreat that the youth needed at least \$1,500 dollars to rebuild a roof at the site. A collection was taken instantly, netting more than \$2,000! We were able to phone them back and share the good news that the group could proceed to purchase materials and fix the roof! All to the Glory of God!

Oh yes, I have to mention a few other highlights. The Necrology, a moving tribute to those who passed away in the past year after serving the association. The "Faces of our Heritage," creative congregational drama by a mother/daughter team and the Jam Session with Elliot and Friends were both fun ways to unwind at the end of the day while still providing a learning experience. I especially enjoyed the picnic at Minnehaha Falls, because that park was a favorite childhood hangout for me, my sister and our friends since I grew up nearby. See the picture of the real falls which was the inspiration for the conference graphics.

As Moderator of the Fellowship of Northeast Christian Congregational Churches (FNCCC), I found the Moderator's Luncheon to be extremely beneficial. The exchange of ideas and depth of resources available for our regional groups from the national office is amazing.

I hope my story encourages more FNCCC members, especially non-clergy, to attend future national conferences.

An email received from a Singing Hills camper —

I MISS CAMP SO MUCH! and I think that next summer camp should be more than a week. I said a boom chicka boom.

Devan

Summer is now upon us. Here are some tips to help deal with the hot, humid, but dry summer forecasted this year.

- Wear light colored clothing.
- Apply and reapply sunscreen when out in the sun for long periods of time, especially from 10am–3pm.
- Use your AC. Fans only move the air around and can actually act like a convection oven, increasing the temperature in your home. Plan to seek AC/cool places during heat waves, especially during the peak heat times of the day.
- Eat light meals.-.save the roast pork for the fall.
- Drink plenty of water: 8–8ounce glasses a day. Increase this amount if you exercise or have to work outdoors in the sun.
- **NEVER** leave children, elderly or pets in a car. It only takes a few minutes to have the temperature in the car reach life threatening levels.

Warnings: If you develop cramps in your legs, arms or stomach, stop what you are doing and seek a cool shaded area and drink fluids—no caffeine or alcohol. If you become dizzy, have an increase heart rate or feel cold and clammy—call **911**.

Another problem this summer is the increase in tick bites. This is in part due to our recent mild winter. Here are some pointers:

- Wear light color clothing that makes it easier to spot ticks. Do frequent checks on yourself, family and pets.
- Ticks like dark areas, hair lines and other areas that don't see much light of day.
- There is a new way to safely remove ticks: put liquid Dawn on a cotton ball and dab the tick repeatedly. The tick is then supposed to come off on the cotton ball. I tried this without luck with another liquid soap, but then I was told to use Dawn.

If you do get bitten, watch the area for the “bull’s eye” rash, fever, muscle pains, headache, stiff neck, feeling tired or swelling of large joints. If you have any questions, call your doctor. Early intervention of antibiotics is very successful in treating possible Lyme Disease.

Peace to you this summer,

The Parish Nurse, Florence Congregational Church

**PASTORS
AND
PULPITS**



We celebrate the installation of Reverend David Poole as pastor at Wachogue Church in Springfield, MA on June 3, 2012

Reverend Poole was born and raised in Springfield, just a mile or so from the church. He earned his Bachelors degree from Springfield College, and his MDiv from Boston University School of Theology. Ordained in the UCC in 1997, he served churches in Ohio, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Currently, he works full time as a Hospice Chaplain in the Mystic, Connecticut area. He and his wife Robin live in Salem, Connecticut. They have five children.

David looks forward to joining the NE Fellowship activities, and always has his golf clubs in the car – just in case.

Change in the Church ~~ Resist or Embrace?

At the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches this past June, I attended a workshop facilitated by Dr. Don Olson titled "Managing Change and Building Consensus". We know change is the only constant, but it can cause divisiveness in any church.

Dr. Olson mentioned two types of change: technical and adaptive. An example of a technical change is "the boiler is broken, we need a new boiler". It's not anything anyone is particularly thrilled about, but there is no attitude change involved.

The attitude changes are the more difficult ones. These are adaptive changes. This change involves not just changing the attitude of a few but of a majority. It will be no surprise to you that this change is the one that can be a stumbling block for many churches.

It's never going to be easy but understanding a few principles about your church may help.

Understand:

- Congregations as emotional systems
- The sacredness of place
- The value system of your church
- The leadership of your church

It is also important to know:

- If your by laws are up to date
- Do you know what they say
- Is there a line of authority
- Do they reflect current thinking

There are many books available on topics of changes in the church (see the Alban Institute for a large selection) and Dr. Olson also recommends church retreats where the church's history as well as desired future may be discussed.

We know that change is inevitable and that it's best to change before we have to, but it will always be resisted. Perhaps that's another constant.

Barbara

OFFICERS & COMMITTEES

Fiscal Year 2012-2013

Listed below are the officers and committee members of the Fellowship and Ecclesiastical Society for the current fiscal year. If anyone wishes to contact the committees directly, please call or email the office in Hartford for contact information.

Moderator:

Kay Page Greaser

Assistant Moderator:

Rev. Norm Erendson

2nd Asst. Moderator:

Rev. Karl Ostberg

Retiring Moderator:

Rev. Paul Ricard

Executive Secretary:

Barbara Erendson

Recording Secretary:

Rev. Wayne Jacobson

Asst. Rec. Secretary:

Maureen McCall

Fellowship Treasurer:

Rev. Dr. Steven Blackburn

Asst. Fell. Treasurer:

Rev. Adam Söderberg

Eccl. Society Treasurer:

Douglas Loux

Asst. Eccl. Society Treasurer:

Rev. Irven Gammon

Budget & Investments Committee:

Rev. Dr. Steven Blackburn, Marjorie Carmody, Rev. Norm Erendson, Rev. Irv Gammon, Douglas Loux, Rev. Adam Söderberg, Rev. Dr. Ken Wildrick.

Church Assistance & Development Committee:

Russell Blakeslee, Rev. Lee Edwards, Maureen McCall, Cookie Stojak, Rev. Stan White.

Church Services Committee:

Rev. Norm Erendson, Anne McAwley-Leduc, Rev. David McGee, Rev. Lin McGee, Rev. Kevin Smail, Corrine Sternberg.

Nominating Committee:

Rev. Bobbie Chapman, Leslie Cosgrove, Rev. Norman Erendson, Rev. Karl Ostberg, Karen Reich.

Pastoral Relations:

Rev. Norm Erendson, Rev. Paul Ricard, Wendell Ritchie

Personnel:

Rev. Dr. Steve Blackburn, Russell Blakeslee, Rev. Norm Erendson, Kay Page Greaser, Rev. Paul Ricard

Youth & Fellowship:

Marjorie Carmody, Jann Carmody-Tanner, Rev. Bobbie Chapman, Karen Edwards, Rev. Lee Edwards, Barbara Erendson, Rev. Norm Erendson, Rev. Irven Gammon, Douglas Loux, Rev. David McGee, Rev. Karl Ostberg, Barbara Perry, Karen Reich.

President, Congregational Women:

Karen Reich

The **Executive Committee** meeting schedule for the remainder of 2012/2013 is:

Sept. 13, 2012 Nov. 8, 2012
Jan. 10, 2013 March 14, 2013
April 11, 2013

The meetings are held at
South Congregational Church
277 Main St ,
Hartford, CT at 4:00 pm

The meetings are open to all Fellowship members and we encourage all who are able to attend, whether a voting member of the committee or not.

*The Fellowship of Connecticut Congregational Christian Churches, now known as the Fellowship of **Northeast** Congregational Christian Churches was formally organized in 1958 when, at its first annual meeting, the Constitution and By-Laws were adopted. The purpose of the Fellowship, as summarized by its first Moderator, Dr. Henry David Gray, is to "serve the churches and act as the agent of the churches in their cooperative work and witness of Christ."*

The membership of The Northeast Fellowship has grown to 42 churches from not only Connecticut, but also Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey. Our members are old (1670) and new (2001), formal and informal, traditionalists and progressives.

Support of our member churches takes many forms, including financial assistance, pastoral placement services, youth activities, visioning seminars and bi-annual gatherings to conduct the Fellowship's business and to share news and information between member churches. The Fellowship-owned "Congregational Fellowship House" on Fishers Island, NY provides a unique location for church retreats and meetings and is open to all members.

The Congregational Ranger, the newsletter of the Northeast Fellowship, is published to foster communication among Fellowship churches, members, and friends. All members are invited to submit articles for publication. Please mail or call church-related news, happenings, events to:

The Northeast Fellowship
277 Main St, Hartford, CT 06106
860-527-7001

-OR- email to: connfell@sbcglobal.net

The *Ranger* may also be viewed on the Fellowship's website at
www.ctfellowship.com

REMEMBER~~

***Pray for our Fellowship, our churches, our
pastors and people***