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## FROM THE CHURCH HOUSE

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### **TRANSITION TEAM REPORT COMPLETED AND AVAILABLE**

On March 13, 2007, the Transition Team completed its work and submitted its final Report to the Church Council. The Executive Summary and Goals from the Report are included here for your convenience. Please *keep this copy*, so that you can refer to it over the next few months. The full 16-page Report, without appendices, may be reviewed on the Church's website at <http://www.firstchurchevanston.org/>, or will be mailed to you upon request. A limited number of copies of the Report with appendices are available in the Church Office and may be borrowed for review and copying.

The members of the Transition Team are Jean Cleland, Alex Doty, Barb Fonda, Kristin Julcher, Kathy Koestring, Lacey Ogbolumani, Joe Page, Jim Roghair, Kwesi Steele, and Hal Sprague, Chair. On behalf of the Team, I would like to thank the Church Council for giving us this opportunity to work hard on an important project and make a meaningful contribution to the Church's long range planning process. I would especially like to thank the congregation for its patience while the Team performed its work over more than seven months, from the beginning of August 2006 to the beginning of March 2007. We believe the time was well invested.

**This also marks the beginning of two other exciting processes. As the Pastoral Search Committee begins its work, the members of the Transition Team and the Church Council look forward to engaging with you in an ongoing dialogue on the issues raised in the Report. We welcome the participation of all members of the congregation in this discussion, to ensure that everyone has a role in the future of the Church.**

*Hal Sprague, March 20, 2007*

### **WHO ARE WE?**

**A Series about Congregationalism and the First Congregational Church of Evanston**

*In the coming months, First Chronicles will present a series of articles about our Congregational heritage in general and the life of our Evanston congregation in particular. It is hoped that these articles will offer some helpful background to our ongoing discussions during this interim period about who we are, why we're here, and what we're called to do.*

*This month features a reprint of a sermon originally delivered on August 8, 1982 by Rev. Lewis M Hopfe, Senior Pastor of First Congregational Church of Evanston from 1979 to 1988 **which can be found on pages 5 - 7.** The title of his sermon is also the title of this series: "Who Are We?" In this homily, Dr. Hopfe offers a concise history of Congregationalism along with some insight into the special challenges of the Congregational way. (See *Laura Wilson's related article below*).*

### **THE PILGRIMS' LEGACY SOME MEMORIES OF IRENE DOBERSTEIN**

By Laura Wilson, with Irene Doberstein, Nick Tucker, and David Lornson

What is a Congregationalist? According to former pastor Lewis Hopfe, "We are Christians who run churches in our own Congregational way." Our church historian, Irene Doberstein, keeps track of that legacy, and her life in the church is a wonderful example of that independent Congregational spirit.

Irene is one of our special members who joined the church over fifty years ago. Born in Chicago, she and her young family moved to Evanston and

joined First Congregational Church of Evanston in 1952. Her third son, Donald, was born soon after. The family was very active in the schools, and her husband, Robert, became chairman of District 65 school board in 1964.

The independent church is an American mainstay. Like so many Protestant churches, First Congregational is a democratic entity, with the congregation alone defining its mission and making decisions. Many members would like to keep this independence. "We have a rich history," Irene said. "I am concerned that it could be lost. After all, we were formed on the Mayflower coming to America." Much of America's legal system and "town meeting" tradition came from the "Pilgrims" who were really Congregationalists.

Irene takes responsibility for keeping this legacy in our archives. On the second floor of the Church House, she maintains records and photographs of our particular church history. Women's Circles and society weddings, ushers in pin-stripes and spats, the story of our stained glass and chapel: She makes sure they will not be forgotten.

She reminisced about Easter Sundays in the 50's. "Of course, there was the Easter Parade downtown Chicago on Michigan Avenue. At our church, all the women wore hats, white gloves, that special Easter dress, and a corsage. Some young girls also wore corsages. Young boys wore suits with ties. The sanctuary was filled to capacity that morning at each of two services. People sat in the chairs in the aisles; others went into the chapel during the later service."

"Our church has been recognized over the years for its rich, musical program," Irene added. "We have had the four, professional soloists since before 1950." "William Martin, was the tenor section leader in the 1970's. He spent 10 years in Germany singing opera and now teaches at the university in Cullowhee.

Our historic Skinner organ with over 2000 pipes was installed in 1927. It has been carefully maintained over the years. William Hazlett was organist and choir director for 33 years. He retired in 1984 and David Lornson succeeded him.

The congregational tradition is noted for its

emphasis on education. Irene Doberstein looks to this tradition as a guide for her work at First Congregational. The archives and Irene's love for history keep this legacy very much alive.

### READY, SET, GO....SELL PIZZA!!!

Hopefully, you and your family have an order form to sell Gino's East Deep Dish Pizza! As I promised it will be fun and easy...



- sell,
- fill out the form, and
- collect the money.

Order forms should be given to Barb Lee by April 22nd. The orders will be ready for pick up after the church service on Sunday May 6th. We have come up with **three prizes** for the family or individual who sells the most pizza.

**Prize Number One:** A Night At The Movies! Private movie showing at The BIG Picture Home Theatre in Wilmette complete with drinks and hors d'oeuvres. **Prize Number Two:** Movie tickets for two with dinner and treats. **Prize Number Three:** A new deluxe JVC compact component system with a gift certificate for CD's to add to your collection.

So grab your order form and get busy! Proceeds from the sale will support the church's benevolences. Questions Call Barb Lee 847-251-0007

### WARMING CENTER WRAP-UP

Our Warming Center for the homeless has finished another year in good shape. Eric Erickson, DJ Johnson, Dorothy Nix, and Bill and Mary Lou Schwanbeck took charge every week and Vosse R. Lewis and Bob Phelps helped out as substitutes when needed. Our numbers were moderate, many of them new faces. Thanks for your help with the magazines - they were greatly appreciated! The soup left over from the Wednesday night suppers was enjoyed, too. ~ Barbara Meyer

### FROM THE MEMBERSHIP TEAM

The Membership Team invites you participate in its work in the following ways: serve on the team (there is currently one open slot); sign up to Host a coffee hour or serve as a Sunday greeter; bring us your ideas for fellowship opportunities; assist us in implementing events; work with

us to be in contact with members we haven't seen for a while; make a special effort to talk to someone you don't know at Sunday services and other church activities; let people know what a wonderful community we have and invite them to be a part of it.

We need to hear from you. Please be in touch with the church office or Beth Babbitt Borst, Membership Team Leader, at [tomandbethborst@msn.com](mailto:tomandbethborst@msn.com) or 847/864-6959 to let us know how you will participate in this very important work in the life of our church. Call with any questions.

### **SUPPERS TOGETHER**

First Congregational Church will be establishing new "Suppers Together" groups during the month of April. Please watch the bulletin over the next several weeks for a sign up sheet.

You may sign up by yourself, with your family, or with a friend. Once the membership team has received all the sheets, we will pair groups of 6-8 persons to meet quarterly for dinner or a snack and conversation. Meetings can take place in a members home, at a restaurant, at a coffee shop, in a park, or anywhere else your imagination can take you. A group leader will be picked to start the ball rolling and groups can decide for themselves how to move on from there.

The idea is to nurture each other through food, conversation, and opportunities to enjoy each other's company in an intimate setting. We hope you will participate.

If you have any questions, please be in contact with Sharyn Julcher at 847/328-1783.

### **PEACE POLE**

Written by Travis Clifton

I am excited to share with you that on May 6<sup>th</sup> we will plant a Peace Pole in the front of the Church House. For those of you who do not know what a peace pole is ~ it is a handcrafted monument that is erected the world over as an international symbol of peace. The message on the pole in different languages says 'May Peace Prevail On Earth'. Over 200,000 peace



poles are planted in more than 180 countries around the world. In Evanston - if you drive down the street there is one in front of the Episcopal church on Hinman. There are also a few others close by.

By planting a peace pole we are showing that as a community of faith we are literally putting a stake in the ground for what we all believe – about living peace out in our daily lives. As Colossians 3:15 says: *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*

...and we are thankful. Thankful that we have this wonderful church and each other.

If you would like to know more about the history of the project and the other locations, you can go to [www.worldpeace.org](http://www.worldpeace.org).

May 6<sup>th</sup> should be a wonderful day. On that day in service we will honor our graduates –and in the closing of the service they will lead the procession over to the church house where we will have a dedication ceremony. We will say a prayer – read the message in different languages and those who would like can drop their own messages of 'how I will be a peacemaker' into the hole.

As this a symbol for us and the community we will be inviting others in the community to join us. If you have a friend that would like to come please do include them. Also if you would like to be part of working on this project please let Travis Clifton, Lacey Ogbolumani or Betty Phillips know.

### **OUTREACH TEAM NEWS**

The Outreach Team is launching two new opportunities for Church Members to be involved with the outreach activities of the Church.

1. The Faith and Public Issues is going electronic! We will be asking for members to sign up to participate in this 'virtual' committee where they will be informed of important issues about which we need to advocate by writing letters, making phone calls or sending emails to our elected officials. As we initiate this program, we would like input on the issues that most concern church members. To accomplish this, there is a survey posted on the Church website under [Teams](#) that we strongly urge members to fill out.

[www.firstchurchevanston.org](http://www.firstchurchevanston.org) We will be communicating our progress on the website as well.

2. Several families have asked for some Hands-on-Mission projects to do with their whole family. The first project is scheduled for Saturday March 31<sup>st</sup> -1: pm to 3:00 pm at the YWCA @ Church & Ridge. We will work outside cleaning up the grounds, raking leaves, removing trash and perhaps a little pruning. Refreshments will be provided. Bring rakes and work gloves. Call the Church Office if you or your family can join us, even for only an hour. Next project will be similar, but at the Church House. In June we'll participate in a 2.5 walk for hunger. Watch for more details.

### **NEARER MY GOD TO THEE**

When the Senior Club met in March the topic had to do with Lent. It turned out that giving up something for the season was not on anyone's agenda nor had it ever been. When we were young it was only Catholics who did such a thing. So, the six of us talked about our early experiences at Sunday School, our members who are sick at the time, helping others in all seasons and the state of the church. The company was good and the cake Margaret made was even better, so it was a pleasant meeting.

Next month - same time, same place, more fun.

### **BUILDING AND GROUNDS**

Lorenzo Fincher and Carole Schumacher are currently reviewing building systems and issues for both the Sanctuary and Church House. All furnaces are currently well maintained and working well. Maintenance contracts have been engaged. A cost analysis is underway concerning the replacement of the oldest steam boiler with a new, energy-efficient hot water heat boiler. Experiments are also underway to reduce water usage in the toilets.

Our new custodian, Anthony Boatwright, is working hard - cleaning out areas of the church, following through with renter clean-up, painting the communion table in the Sanctuary, etc. He is working well and learning from Lorenzo about our buildings and needs. Plans are now being made for a transition of responsibilities after Lorenzo graduates and leaves our church.

Church house rentals are also being reviewed. Fees and terms are being clarified and systematized. We are also examining the many issues related to our rental policies to determine the most effective fees and guidelines we should implement.

As a part of our effort to improve our buildings' appearance, Betty Phillips and a friend will be removing a dead tree from the Church House garden and shaping up that area during the spring. Ivy will be removed from the walls so that our beautiful stained glass windows will be more visible.

In general, things are shaping up nicely thanks to the efforts of many parties. Report submitted by, Carole Schumacher

### **SUNDAY AFTERNOON BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP**

On Sunday afternoon, April 15<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 pm the Book Discussion Group will meet in the Brown parlor to discuss: *TERRORIST* by John Updike. Glennis Lundberg will lead the discussion. John Updike's novels have won many awards including the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. This book is about Ahmad Ashaway, an 18-year-old, who is in the thrall of Shaikh Rashik who runs a store front mosque and preaches divine retribution for "devil." Everyone is welcome join this informal discussion.

### **MINISTRY COUNCIL INITIATES QUARTERLY CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

At its March meeting, the Ministry Council voted to institute quarterly Congregational Meetings during which the Congregation will have an opportunity to share its ideas, concerns, and questions with the Council and others. These meetings will also provide the Council and church ministries with an opportunity to share news and information about their activities with the Congregation.

This idea grew out of recent discussions sponsored by the Transition Team in which members expressed a desire to be more actively involved in the visioning, planning and policymaking of the church. Some pointed out that this kind of open "town meeting" format is very much in keeping

with our Congregational tradition of democracy, egalitarianism and shared responsibility.

While congregational votes will not always be required at these meetings, the Council plans to follow our standard practice of providing at least 10 days notice in advance of each meeting. As currently envisioned, the Annual Meeting in January will serve as the meeting for the winter quarter. The spring session this year will be the April 29<sup>th</sup> budget meeting. Other meetings will be scheduled for July and October. More details to follow! See a member of the Ministry Council if you have any questions or comments.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

### APRIL

1	Tommy Rorke
3	Corene McCollum
6	Eric Erickson
8	Beth Chill
8	Otto Tinzmann
12	Ian Perkins
12	Sam Sprague
13	Merritt Crocker
13	Fawn Ring
22	Adelaide Crocker
23	Sarah Todd
27	Thomas E.S. Miller

## “CAN OUR GRANDKIDS TRUST US?” EVANSTON AND GLOBAL WARMING

Please join the Network for Evanston's Future for our annual Earth Month forum on Sunday, April 29<sup>th</sup> (2:00 – 5:00 PM). This year's event is an action-oriented discussion of what Evanston can do to counter global warming.

The keynote speaker is Dave Cieslewicz, Mayor of Madison, Wisconsin. Madison's municipal government has not only taken innovative steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but has actively partnered with its citizenry in this effort. Following last year's appearance, Evanston's City Manager Julia Carroll will also speak, presenting her first annual report on Evanston's progress toward sustainability.

The afternoon's discussions will be capped off by the presentation of the Network's first annual sustainability award honoring the Jewish

Reconstructionist Congregation for building a LEED-certified synagogue.

Everyone is invited to this free community forum. Sunday, April 29, 2007 (2:00 – 5:00 PM), at Beth Emet the Free Synagogue (1224 Dempster, Evanston). For information, contact Steve Perkins 773/269-4055.

## WHO ARE WE? (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

1 Timothy 3: 1-13

During recent months I have joined a group of Evanston clergy who are acting as chaplains to the Police Department. We have undergone a period of training so that we will be able to minister to the needs of the police and to citizens who are in trouble with the police. One of the items of our training was an evening's ride-along with an officer. Each of us was assigned to ride in a patrol car during an evening so that we could understand what police work was really like. On my first ride-along I discovered what we all should know; that police work is really very boring. During our first hour we gave a few parking tickets and help to move a stalled car out of a busy lane.

Then things began to get a little livelier. While my officer was out of the car issuing some tickets he got a call on his radio. He came rushing back to the car to tell me that it was time for me to go to work. A man had attempted suicide at the Evanston Y and they wanted me back there at once. As we prepare to run down Ridge Avenue at 50 mph my officer began to have second thoughts about me. He said: "What kind of a minister did you say you were?" I told him I was a Congregationalist. He replied: "What's that?" As we went rushing into the YMCA the police commander met us at the door. He too asked, "Reverend, what kind of a minister are you?" When I told him he said: "What's that?"

The two officers had asked some very good questions. They may have been a bit abrupt. They may have come at a difficult time. But they were good questions nonetheless. We are all aware that outside our own little circle, most people don't know who Congregationalists are. Indeed, within our little circle we know little enough. Most of us who are members of this church today came to it from non-congregational backgrounds. We would

be hard-pressed to define Congregationalism to a friend.

There are a few answers that we could give which would be easy answers. We could say that we Congregationalists are the descendents out of the New England Puritans. That would be the truth but it would not help very much. The average person thinks of Puritans in terms of the Mayflower and in terms of Salem witch burning and in terms of the three-hour sermons of Jonathan Edwards and company. The average person thinks that the Puritans were stern, dour Calvinists who dressed in black and who put people in stocks for laughing. Modern studies into the literature of the Puritans shows most of that to be a bum rap. Nevertheless that is what the average person thinks when the word Puritan is raised and we only confuse the issue when we say that we are related to them.

Then who are we? What do we really mean when we say that we are Congregationalists? Actually the word "Congregationalist" has more to do with the way in which we governed our churches than anything else. When one says that he is a Congregationalist he is saying that he is a member of a church which is basically independent of other churches. It is a church which owns its own properties. In a sense that is not a very helpful definition. I do not believe that it is necessarily a biblical pattern of church governance. Try as we like, we cannot really determine how the Bible commanded churches to be governed.

It speaks of officers like bishops and elders, but it does not really speak of governance. I have heard Congregational leaders try to define the Congregational way from the Bible. Their arguments are always a bit hollow and forced. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find a church organized like ours. Nowhere do we read of members within the churches voting on certain matters. We hear of members casting lots and that may be voting in a sense, but it may not be also. Neither can I find the exact pattern of church and Government in the New Testament which is active today among Catholics, Episcopalians or Methodists. Each group has adopted a system which seems to work and has developed that system.

Nor does our definition of Congregationalist say anything about theology. If a person says that he is a Unitarian you might have some idea about his theology but if one says that he is Congregationalist you have no idea at all about his beliefs. Generally the United Church of Christ, into which most Congregationalists went, is considered to be one of the most liberal of all American denominations. By that we understand that at least some Congregationalist can be expected to believe in a liberal creed and support liberal causes. On the other hand there are some Congregational churches which could be the most conservative in America. I used to visit the Park Street Congregational Church in Boston. It was so conservative and traditional that it was called "Brimstone Corner". A conservative person may prefer to govern his Church in a Congregational manner and a liberal person may choose the same.

Nor does our definition really limit congregationalists to a certain denomination. There are Congregationalists spelled with a capital "C" and there are Congregationalists spelled with a small "c". Members of the First Congregational Church of Evanston spell it with a capital. But in a very real sense any religious group which allows the members of its congregation to decide upon the major policies and officers of that Church is Congregational. Baptists are congregationally governed as are many other American denominations. Even Jewish synagogues are congregationally governed.

Where did this notion begin, that Christians should run their own churches without the interference of bishops or other denominational leaders? Some would claim that this was the true New Testament pattern and has been found in one form or another since early times. I can find little evidence for that.

Our particular roots stem from sixteenth century England. Under the reign of Henry VIII England broke away from the control of Rome and founded the Church of England. Henry was followed by his son Edward and then his daughter Mary Tudor who ruled for five years from 1553 to 1558. Under her reign Mary attempted to return to England to the Catholic Church. The persecution of Protestant leaders by Mary caused many of them to flee to the

continent where they came under the influence of John Calvin in Switzerland.

Upon their return to England during the reign of Elizabeth these Protestants wanted to reform the Church more completely. Generally they broke into two groups. One was the so-called Puritans who want to stay in the Church of England and purify it. The others were the Separatists who wanted to the true church completely separated from the state church in England.

The model group which we hear so much of were the Separatists who met at Scrooby manor in England under the leadership of John Robinson in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. When King James began to persecute these people they fled to Holland in 1609. They grew dissatisfied with Dutch life and traveled to New England in 1620 aboard the Mayflower. By 1640 the settlers were joined by nearly 20,000 others, who were mainly Puritans, in Massachusetts. It was the blending of these two groups and the American experience which produced Congregationalism.

These Separatists believed three things about the church which set them apart from the Church of England. They believed that the true church should be composed of the followers of Christ only. In those days in most European countries the Church and the State were one. Officers of the church were appointed by the kings and queens. Therefore all citizens of a certain country were members of the Church.

The Separatists were people who believed that only those people who were true followers of Christ should be in the Church. They also believed that Christ, rather than the kings should rule the churches. Christ should speak through the members and therefore they alone should direct the church. Finally they believed that the privilege and duty of ruling the church should belong to every member equally. The ministers and others would have only one vote just like every other member. There was to be a true priesthood of believers.

All of this sounds pretty good to us. It sounds very American. It is difficult for us to realize just how radical it was in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. It sounds American because when these principles were put into effect in New England they

became the basis for much American law and practice which exists to this day.

Yet being a Congregationalist is far from easy. To be a Congregationalist means that one must have an unusual commitment to education. Education has been the byword of Congregationalists from the beginning. One of the reforms which the Puritans wanted was an educated clergy. Since the clergy were appointed by the state they tended to be good politicians rather than theologians. The Separatists established Harvard College in New England early in order to have a supply of educated clergy.

But the commitment to education goes beyond educating the clergy. If we believe that every Christian is a priest in his own right then we must believe that every Christian must receive an education in order to make him a good priest. If the only absolute authority in a Congregational Church is the individual Christian, then that person must know his Bible and Church history and theology.

In becoming a Congregationalist one has to make a heavier commitment in terms of money and time. A Congregational church stands alone. If it gets into financial trouble there is no denomination behind it to come to the rescue. The only way a Congregational church will ever survive is when its members take seriously the obligation to support it financially. If you want to coast along with no financial challenges join some large denominational church.

Congregationalists also are challenged in terms of their time and service. If we are priests, if we are all equal, if we are all equal in voting strength, the only way we will survive is if we all serve the church. We work through committees and committee work is long and hard and boring. It would be easier to turn all this work over to a panel of experts but that is not the Congregational way. For us to succeed means that each of you must be willing to serve, advise, help, paint, etc. There is no easy way out.

Who are we? We are Christians who run our churches in the Congregational way. We have a long and heroic history. And we are unusually committed to our churches in terms of education, money and service. Amen.

## CHANCEL CHOIR MUSIC FOR APRIL

### April 1st, Palm Sunday

Music from Part II of Handel's "Messiah"

### April 8th, Easter

Festival Music for brass, choir, and organ including Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus"

### April 15th

"This Joyful Eastertide" Harris

"I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" (Messiah)  
Handel

### April 22nd Children and Youth Sunday

Music by the Children's Choir

### April 29th

"My Shepherd Will Supply My Need" Wilberg



## SPECIAL MUSIC FOR EASTER!

This year, our service will feature Cathedral music for brass, choir, and organ including:

**Paul Halley's** "Wondrous Love"

(Cathedral of St. John the Divine),

**David Sangor's** "O Sons and Daughters"

(Westminster Cathedral), and

**Louis Vierne's** "Carillon de Westminster"

(Notre Dame Cathedral).

The Easter postlude will be the famous organ Toccata by Widor arranged by David Lornson to include brass, choir, and cymbals.

**You won't want to miss this service!**

**Please support** our Easter service in two ways:

- 1) invite your neighbors and friends to our 10:00 am service on Easter morning, April 8th and,
- 2) help underwrite the \$800 cost of our brass quartet with your check to First Congregational Church indicating "Easter Brass".

**Thanks for your help and support!**

**First Congregational Church of  
Evanston  
1417 Hinman Avenue  
Evanston, Illinois 60201**

Have a blessed

Easter...



April 8