

NORTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AUGUST 2023 NEWSLETTER

**“The Greatest of These Is Love”
- 1 Corinthians 13:13**



From the Minister...

I was completely surprised at the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches' Annual Meeting and Conference in June to be presented with the Harry R. Butman award, given annually to a clergyperson who has served 10 years or longer and demonstrated an “outstanding commitment to the principles of Congregationalism.” Thank you to everyone at North Church (particularly Executive Council) for sending in the nomination. It was very humbling and, in some ways, surprising to stand and hear my accomplishments read out. You can read the citation in this issue of the newsletter.

After that great high and a lovely family vacation, I'm back at work on Fall planning as well as some of the tasks associated with my retirement at the end of the year. Even though I'm writing this on a blazing hot day, it's already time to think about Stewardship and about the ways we as a congregation can express our theme: “God is with us wherever we go” from Joshua 1:9. If you are called upon to serve on a task team, please join us as we plot our course for the days and years ahead!

Lastly, thanks to the Search Committee folks who are hard at work looking for the next Senior Minister of North Church. Please keep them and the church's discernment overall in your prayers. We are currently setting up interviews for a Social Media Coordinator, a part-time position to pull together a strategy for our several social platforms. I'll be delighted to hand the social media over to a “pro” – it's been a fun learning experience for me but time to take it to the next level.

I wish all of you days of enjoyment in this last full month of summer and look forward to seeing you all as we move into our program year this fall!

Faithfully,

Rev. Mary E. Biedron

Moderator's Notes...



August is here already which means Rally Day (September 10th) will soon be here also. We are all looking forward to our choir returning along with our new programs. Continue to take NCC with you as you travel with Sunday worship, Tuesdays with the Bible and the Wednesday Inspiration – all available online on the NCC Facebook page.

I have the honor of announcing that our own **Reverend Doctor Mary (Mimi) Biedron** has received the Harry R. Butman Award for Excellence in Ministry. Harry R. Butman was a congregational minister and ardent proponent of Congregationalism. The award was presented to her during the National Association meeting in June. This award is given to a minister who has at least ten years of service in an NACCC Church, and who is personally committed to Congregationalism. Following is a condensed version of the nominating letter composed by **Susie Hawkins** and **Sandy Greer**. Thank you Susie and Sandy for the wonderful words. I encourage everyone to read the full letter. Please let me know and I will send a copy to you Space doesn't permit the entire 4-page letter. We will also post the letter on our website.

Nomination of Rev. Dr. Mary Biedron for the Harry R. Butman Award

Dear Members of the NACCC Vitality Ministry Council,

The North Congregational Church Executive Council, on behalf of the entire North Church Congregation, is delighted to nominate the Reverend Doctor Mary (Mimi) Biedron for the Harry R. Butman Award for Excellence in Ministry. Reverend Biedron will be retiring as our Senior Minister at the end of this calendar year, and this award seems a most appropriate acknowledgement of the terrific work she has done to forward Congregationalism for our church and its members, friends, and communities over her 25-year tenure with North Church.

From the very beginning, Mimi was an active and highly engaged member of the church leadership, supporting the Reverend Doctor Mark Jensen, our Senior Minister, and modernizing our Christian Education programs as we settled into our new church and community in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

Mimi has blessed our church with numerous strengths that promote and reinforce the importance of Congregational faith – both hers and ours. She prepares our worship services months in advance, adjusting them during the week before as guided by liturgy and the current needs of our members, our communities, and our broader world. Mimi has an amazing ability to make her weekly messages relevant and poignant, using the scriptures and Bible stories to reinforce the importance of faith in God and Jesus. She guides our congregation as we learn from the Bible, adding her own interpretations and various translations to help us apply our knowledge to modern day life, as well as encouraging all of us to understand those meanings within ourselves. We can't think of a better way to promote Congregationalism and remind all of us why this faith is such a good fit in our personal lives. She routinely receives compliments on

her sermons and services, another testament to her ability to guide us both individually and collectively in our faith journeys.



Mimi is a strong proponent of national and local involvement and interaction with other Congregational churches in the NA, and she has been active in the NACCC and our state-wide and local conferences for over 25 years. She regularly organizes and hosts formal and informal meetings with her Congregational colleagues, and she is a highly respected lecturer, teacher, and leader who demonstrates and promotes Congregationalism. Most recently, she accepted the role of NACCC Historian and is serving in her final year.

In 2015, Mimi received her Doctor of Ministry from the Methodist Theological School in Ohio. Her pursuit had the full support of our congregation and our Executive Council. Her dissertation explored the historical practice and contemporary possibilities for discernment in Congregational churches. Her research incorporated several hours-long sessions with groups of 40-50 of our church members and friends at a time..... This year, Mimi is sharing her dissertation learnings about discernment with students, clergy, and laypeople through the NACCC and its state and regional associations, and we are certain that all these learners will benefit as we have.

North Church is a proud supporter of those in need – whether local or half a world away – and Mimi is a strong advocate for these activities through our Missions Ministry Board. We have a long tradition of donating both financial and human resources to those who are experiencing either temporary or ongoing hardships.....

When the pandemic hit in March of 2020, and it became evident that we would not be worshiping together in person for an extended period, Mimi sprang into action to create ways to worship together while keeping physically distant. She started with an iPhone and camera stand to record and post her messages and sermons on our website, Facebook, and YouTube. She added pre-recorded organ and piano music, scripture readings by our members, solos by choir members, and virtual choir performances. This allowed us to experience full worship services, even when we were not able to gather together physically.....

Reverend Biedron is a gifted orator and storyteller, which supports all of us in our faith journeys. Every week she delivers at least two messages: a Wednesday Inspiration message (virtual) and the traditional Sunday morning worship sermon (in-person). Both are recorded live for real-time viewing and for posting on social media the next day. Mimi also created a virtual Lenten series each of the past three years, virtual Sunday School during the pandemic shutdowns, and reinstated the monthly book group discussion (now offered as a hybrid option as well).

As mentioned above, Mimi has announced her intention to retire at the end of 2023. As we are ramping up our Search Committee, surveying our congregation, and confirming or revising our job requirements, we are learning once again how difficult it can be to find the right “fit” in a Senior Minister. Without question, our search for Mimi’s replacement will be guided by the outstanding Congregational teaching, leadership, and friendship that Mimi has given us for over

25 years. We have been blessed to have her as our spiritual guide for so long, and she will be missed!

I look forward to seeing everyone soon – enjoy the rest of your summertime and take time to offer a prayer of Thanksgiving every day.



Tim Sirovy, Moderator

AUGUST MEETINGS

Diaconate Ministry Board – Tuesday, August 8, 7 p.m.

Fellowship Ministry Board - Tuesday, August 8, at 7 p.m.

Missions Ministry Board – Sunday, August 13, at 11:45 a.m.

Worship / Education Ministry Board – Sunday, August 20, at 11:30 a.m. (Hybrid)

Assets & Resources Ministry Board – Monday, August 21, at 7 p.m.

Executive Council – Monday, August 28, at 6:30 p.m.

NORTH CHURCH ARTICLES AND ACTIVITIES

WORSHIP MINISTRY BOARD

CHANCEL CHOIR RETURNING FOR THE 2023-24 SEASON

The Chancel Choir returns to worship on **Rally Sunday, September 10th**. If you would like information regarding the choir, or would like to join, please call the church office at (248) 848-1750, and we'll be happy to let Laurie know.

MISSIONS MINISTRY BOARD

MISSION BENEVOLENCES *for the month of August*

Habitat for Humanity (National Office), Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Michigan Conference of Congregational Christian Churches, Southeast Michigan Association of Congregational Churches, Samaritan Counseling

FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY BOARD



MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB

A group of North Church men meet every other Tuesday for breakfast at Moe's on Ten, at 9:00 a.m. They will be meeting this month on **Tuesday, August 8th and 22nd**. If you have any questions or would like to join them, please contact **Tom Modick** at moto126@aol.com.

BOOK GROUP

Wednesday, August 16th, 1 pm in person or on zoom (contact Rev. Biedron for zoom info if you plan to join us online!

Our book is Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and hailed as "the great Appalachian novel." Loosely based on Dickens' David Copperfield, this novel focuses on the fortunes of a redheaded boy whom nobody wants, but who finds his way nonetheless.

We've read several novels and memoirs set in the rural South, and our discussion of the themes of poverty, opportunity, and resilience should be a good one! It's a "big" book – come even if you haven't finished it – and bring your thoughts, questions, quarrels and affirmations to our conversation!

SAVE THE DATE!

Rally Day is on September 10th and is coming up quickly! We are excited to celebrate the return of the choir and the new church year with a picnic lunch. The Fellowship Board will provide Subway sandwiches and chips after worship. We welcome anyone to bring a dish and/ or dessert to share if they are so inclined.

Looking forward to seeing you there!