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## CM COMMENTS



## “My Peace I Give You”

by Conference Minister Ron Hamilton

I've heard it said...

*To live above with the saints we love,  
Oh, that will be glory.*

*But, to live below with the saints we know,  
That's a different story.*

A vital value of the CCCC is “A Culture of Peacemaking and Reconciliation.” We know that we live in a broken world. We believe that the church should fully experience the peace of Christ and demonstrate wholeness and unity in our world. A broken and divided church hinders the work of Jesus. A church that lives out the peace of Christ demonstrates the transforming work of Jesus to a world that is far from God.

We live in the promise of peace as devoted followers of Jesus.

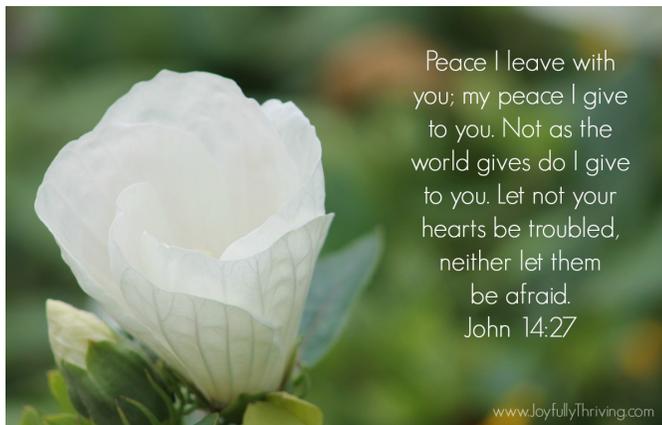
*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)*

This refers to the Shalom of God which means “completeness, soundness, welfare and peace.” Jesus is “the Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). Salvation brings us “peace with God” (Romans 5:1). “Peace” is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) and an evidence that God is at work in our lives.

Peace with God creates internal well-being that spills into our relationships with others so that we become peacemakers. (*NIV Study Bible*)

The CCCC ministry of Conference Care has raised up many who have been trained in Peacemakers ministry and are ready to assist our member pastors and churches who are experiencing conflict and division. It has been encouraging to see the way that our membership has responded to this ministry and worked diligently to seek peace and unity. The Holy Spirit is at work among us to bring peace.

However, our desire to develop a Culture of Peacemaking and Reconciliation goes beyond conflict resolution. We are passionate about living in obedience to Jesus in this generation and are prayerful that our membership demonstrates His transforming work in our lives. Peacemaking is more than something that we “do.” Peacemaking and reconciliation requires that we “are” in Christ. I prayerfully trust that we will receive the peace that Jesus promised and enjoy the fullness and wholeness that comes from a relationship with Him. ♦



Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.  
John 14:27

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## NE REGIONAL NEWS



## Conflict as Opportunity

by Terry Shanahan,  
NE Regional Minister

A couple of years ago, I had the privilege to be at the retirement dinner for Dr. Haddon Robinson, distinguished professor of preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Toward the end of that memorable celebration Dr. Robinson was asked how we might pray for him in his retirement. Paraphrasing, he said, "Pray that I don't become a cynical old man. I have been involved in church all my life, at nine years old I was preaching to my cat. But it still baffles me how people in churches treat one another in the name of our Lord. Why is there so much quarreling in our churches?" He ended by saying that what would keep him from becoming cynical is that he has read the "Book" and he knows the ending.

Dr. Robinson's question is answered for us in James 4:1-3

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

**Conflict  
is  
inevitable,  
combat  
is  
optional.**

Max Lucado



Wanting what WE want, quarreling and fighting continues in churches. Some churches have a long history of discord. It seems part of their DNA, if you will. I am thankful that our Conference has adopted as one of our guiding values A Culture of Peacemaking and Reconciliation. There can't be too much emphasis placed on living in peace, and we must practice it in our daily lives.

Through John Kimball's initiative and Lenn Zeller's continued follow-through we now have dozens of folks in the CCCC trained in peacemaking principles. Several churches have sponsored Peacemaker Seminars or weekend retreats. Others have engaged in a preaching series on the subject. Still others have incorporated Peacemaking into their Bible study curriculum.

The Conference's emphasis on peacemaking and reconciliation has borne much fruit, and has filled a great need. Often working alongside my wife Kari-lotta in this reconciliation work, I have had the privilege of seeing huge rifts resolved and Christ being glorified in the process. Not every reconciliation situation winds up being resolved. But I have observed that every situation does allow for the Gospel to be proclaimed, supporting Ken Sande's teaching that conflict is a great opportunity to present Christ and allow Him to work in any given situation. We are all called to be people of peacemaking and reconciliation, which is the living out of the Gospel itself.

We cannot improve on David's song of ascent:

*How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!*

*It is like precious oil poured on the head,  
running down on the beard,  
running down on Aaron's beard,  
down on the collar of his robe.*

*It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling  
on Mount Zion.*

*For there the Lord bestows his blessing,  
even life forevermore.*

(Psalm 133). ♦

## CHURCH DEVELOPMENT



## A Culture of Peace

by John Kimball,  
*Director of Church Development*

In the CCCC, we want each of our local churches to develop and live out “a culture of peacemaking and reconciliation.” This peace is not just the absence of conflict. In fact, if a church is living out the gospel ministry correctly, she will always experience conflict because new people are being continuously reached, and they come into the fold with their “stuff.” The key is that the church knows what to do with that “stuff,” and the conflicts are resolved as they arise. The continuous conflict we face as a congregation is really just new conflict after new conflict bubbling up and being resolved in sequence. This is part of the mission of Christ’s church and is nothing to fear.

The actual problem churches face today is not the presence of conflict, but the presence of ongoing, unresolved conflict. The layering effect of unresolved conflict over a period of years (in some cases, generations) will eventually destroy any local congregation. It certainly destroys her Christian witness to her community. Congregations divide — with some folks giving up or giving in “just to keep the peace” while others vie for control so that they can “maintain the peace.” Both are deception. Neither is peace because there is no gospel reconciliation. And neither of these honors King Jesus.

So what does a congregation that is truly at peace look like? The following is a non-exhaustive list, but it does provide seven key traits such churches typically have in common:

1. Everyone (beginning with children) is consistently taught how to use biblical peacemaking in their own relationships and is expected to do so.
2. Personal peacemaking is demonstrated in the lives of all leaders, including the pastor.

3. People’s agendas are never allowed to take precedence over relationships.
4. Confession of wrongdoing is a normal part of life for people in the church family.
5. Forgiveness is fully understood and granted whenever it’s needed.
6. Accountability is both expected and requested within the church family.
7. The people of the congregation are known for their humility out in the community.

The community I now serve as a local pastor is filled with people who have walked away from the church. Some have been hurt. Others have been frustrated or angered. Many hate how the gospel has taken a back seat to “evangelical politics.” But one of the most common reasons people have left the Church is because of unresolved conflict. And what’s important to realize is that not all of these folks were actually parties to the conflicts they observed! Many just simply got sick of the fighting they saw in church after church.

So important is this culture of peace that the CCCC Church Development Team begins with biblical peacemaking training in every congregation before the church can enter the *LifeFlow* process with us. Every church can do better.

As you review the above list of traits, how does your own congregation measure up? For churches that are truly interested in becoming more like that list, the CCCC can come alongside and help. Would you like more information? Contact the CCCC Office at (651) 739-1474 today. ♦

***The quality of our lives depends not on whether we have conflicts, but how we respond to them.***

Ton Crum

## CHURCH MULTIPLICATION



## Loving Our Close-by Neighbors

by **Rob O'Neal**,  
*Director of Church Multiplication*

Jesus gave his followers a shocking command when he told us to love our neighbors as ourselves. While he was really only repeating a very old command, he gave it a new level of force. On at least one occasion, Jesus was challenged on this idea by an expert in the law. He asked in Luke 10:20, "And who is my neighbor?" In response Jesus told the story we refer to as the parable of the Good Samaritan and turned the idea of neighbors upside down. While we think of our neighbors as the people who live near us, Jesus was defining them as people who are different and require some effort to love.

It's not easy to love our neighbors. We must go out of our way, cross dividing lines, and do uncomfortable things like serving food to homeless people or teaching English to immigrants. Loving those kinds of neighbors takes effort.

That effort pales in comparison to the work it takes to love people closer to us, like the people we live with and bump into daily. Jesus knew that. So in John 13:34–35 he told us to love one another. He was talking about the people in our church or small group and on those teams where we serve. He even said that the quality of our love would demonstrate that we are his disciples. In other words, loving each other well makes God look good, and failing to love other followers of Jesus makes God look powerless and irrelevant. Jesus had a crucial insight.

It isn't easy to love the people closest to us. We are around them consistently and over time which gives us plenty of chances to build quality memories and to do selfless things. It also gives us plenty of time to pile up hurts and bruise one another.

Experience demonstrates that loving one another over time is not easy. In churches we hurt each other. We fight over decisions, engage in power struggles, use careless words, and wound one another. Unfortunately, the hurts we dole out as we do life together seem to be part of being a family of faith.

What we do with those hurts, however, can demonstrate the power of God. As a Conference, we believe in peacemaking and reconciliation. In other words, we believe that when we hurt one another, it is a Gospel imperative that we heal those hurts and make the relationships right. Rather than continuing to hurt, and in place of walking away, we make peace and reconcile.

Peacemaking and reconciliation are critical to the life of the Church itself. Congregations frequently implode and close in the wake of dysfunctional conflict. Churches suffer under the weight of their own reputations for years. It's natural. What we are advocating is something supernatural, and the Conference stands ready to help. ♦

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND READERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome your contributions! If you have comments on what you read here, please e-mail them to

*kenandjoy@bell-south.net.*

If you have other comments or articles you wish to contribute, including "Something to Think About," please send them to the same e-mail address.

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## CONFERENCE CARE



## Breaking Down Walls of Conflict

by **Lenn Zeller**,  
*Director of Conference Care*

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)*

Our 6th Guiding Value in the CCCC is "A Culture of Peacemaking and Reconciliation." Nowhere is this expressed more clearly than in 2 Corinthians 5. There Paul talks about how we have been reconciled to God in Christ. Because of our rebellion and sin, we were at one time aliens, foreigners, enemies of God and out of fellowship with Him. But Jesus came to reconcile us to God through His finished work on the cross. All of our sins have been paid for and God no longer holds them against us, because we have trusted Christ as our Savior. Praise God for this Good News! The reason Jesus came to earth was to offer peace with God to those who were once His enemies. By grace, through faith, this is realized.

And once we have been reconciled to God, He sends us as His ambassadors into the world to declare this Gospel of hope, peace and reunion to the world. To this day, Christ and His church are involved in the ministry of reconciliation, bringing people back together again, and back to God. That is who we are — ministers of reconciliation. It's not always easy. Not everyone will respond positively to this Gospel. But we are motivated by the love of God in Christ, and the commission that He has given to us, and we persevere.

Peacemaking is a central element of who we are as Christians. We are called to proclaim the Gospel of peace with God through Christ. And we are exhorted to live in peace with one another as a result of and a testimony to that salvation we have been so kindly given. To the extent that we are willing to forgive one another, lovingly work out our differences and live in unity within the church, we are showing forth the love that God has graciously given to us.

There were two unmarried sisters who had such a bitter fight that they stopped speaking to each other. Unable or unwilling to leave their small home, they continued to use the same rooms and sleep in the same bedroom. A chalk line divided the sleeping area into two halves. The chalk divided other rooms as well so that each sister could come and go and get her own meals without trespassing on their sister's space. For years, they coexisted in grinding silence. Neither was willing to take the first step to reconciliation.

Then one night, a sister got up to go to the bathroom and fell, breaking her hip. The other sister, awakened by the fall and the scream of pain, jumped out of bed, crossed the chalk line and came to her sister's side. She gently held her foe of the past few years in her arms until the paramedics came and carried her to the hospital.

Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall told this story and added these words at the end: "The legal system can force open doors, and sometimes knock down walls, but it cannot build bridges." That is the job of Christ and the Church. ♦

## CHANGES &amp; OPPORTUNITIES

## PASTORAL OPPORTUNITIES

Bethune, CO	Hope Congregational Church*
Flagler, CO	First Congregational of Flagler-Arriba*
Greeley, CO	St Paul's Congregational Church* ( <i>Part-time Associate Pastor</i> )
Hudson, IA	Community Church of Hudson*
Sulphur Springs, IN	Sulphur Springs Christian* ( <i>Family Life Minister</i> )
Beverly, MA	Pilgrim Church* ( <i>Part-time</i> )
Haverhill, MA	West Congregational Church* ( <i>Senior Pastor</i> )
Heath, MA	Union Evangelical Church of Heath ( <i>Part-time</i> )
Kingston, MA	Mayflower Congregational*
North Dighton, MA	West Dighton Christian Church*
Tauton, MA	Union Congregational Church*
Pittston, ME	First Congregational Church of Pittston*
Highland, MI	Highland Congregational Church*
Cook, MN	Ashawa Chapel* ( <i>Part-time</i> )
Eure, NC	Eure Christian Church (Independent)
Lakeview, NY	Lakeview Community Church*
Middletown, NY	First Congregational Church* ( <i>Part-time</i> )
Lima, OH	First Evangelical & Reformed Church*
Marietta, OH	Putnam Congregational Church*
Beaver Springs, PA	Christ Church (EFCA)
Suffolk, VA	Cyprus Chapel Christian Church*
Jericho Center, VA	Jericho Congregational Church*
Cheney, WA	Cheney Community Church (Independent) ( <i>Part-time</i> )

\* = Conference member  
+ = In process

## WORLD OUTREACH



## Reaching the World with the WECF

Our CCCC world outreach does not always involve sending people overseas. It also involves supporting and working with evangelical Congregationalists around the world. In 1983 at the

CCCC's 35th Annual Gathering, in St. Paul, Minnesota, it was agreed that the ties between evangelical Congregationalists from around the world needed to be strengthened and that there needed to be a means by which effective communication and joint ministries could be exercised. Several visitors from Congregational fellowships in other countries were present at that meeting. At subsequent Annual Gatherings, progress was made toward forming such a fellowship and writing a constitution for it.

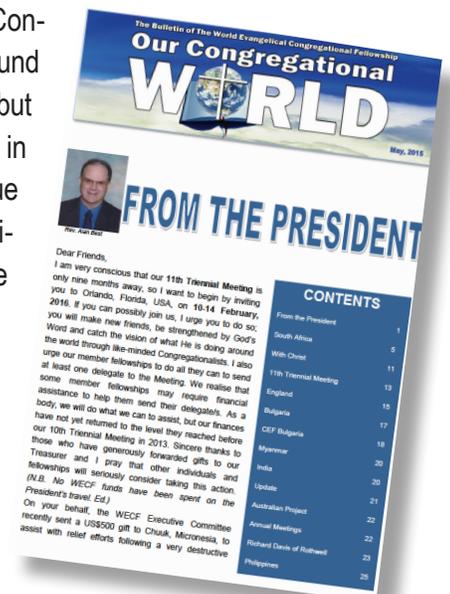
The World Evangelical Congregational Fellowship (WECF) was formed in 1986, and has been functioning ever since. The original documents suggested international cooperation and support in six major areas: missions, evangelism and church growth, publications, personal exchange, theology and society. To read a history of the WECF, go to: <http://173.230.146.51/~wecfcon1/history/>.

The WECF meets triennially in different countries around the world. The next such conference, the 11th Triennial Meeting, will be held right here in the USA. It will be held

**FEBRUARY 10–14, 2016**

**AT THE HAMPTON INN AND SUITES ORLANDO AIRPORT,  
ORLANDO, FLORIDA.**

Let us be in prayer for our evangelical Congregational brothers and sisters around the globe, not only in their ministries, but also in the plans for the convention in February. To read the most recent issue of *Our Congregational World*, the official publication of the WECF, visit the web address listed above. ♦



## HEALTH NEWS



## Summer Fun!

by **Betty Mitchell RN BSN**, Parish Nurse, Emmanuel Bethel Church, Royal Oak, MI

Summer is a time for young and old to relax and enjoy the great outdoors. It also means it is a time to take precautions to prevent injuries or exposure to health risks.

If you have grandchildren in your home during the summer, be certain medications are properly secured. They could mistake some medications for candy or want to try what is within their reach. When going to a playground, look around to be sure the equipment and the area under the play equipment are safe and well maintained. The equipment should be age-appropriate for the child to prevent falls from occurring.

Water sports and activities are popular during the summer. Be mindful of wearing appropriate life jackets, and be sure they are available for everyone in the boat. Learning how to swim is a life lesson for all ages. Adult supervision is needed whenever kids are in or near the water. Accidents happen in an instant. When having fun in the water, it is important for everyone to drink enough water throughout the day to stay properly hydrated.

Both the very young and the elderly are particularly susceptible to the effects of the sun. Plan outdoor activities for morning hours or later in the day to avoid the heat of midday. Protect the skin from the sun's rays with at least 15 SPF sunscreen and reapply throughout the day. Wearing loose, lightweight, light colored clothing will also protect the skin from harmful sun rays. Hats and sunglasses are a must to protect the head and eyes from the sun.

As you plan your camping or other outdoor fun, remember to stay safe from food poisoning by washing your hands before and after handling food. Thoroughly clean surfaces and utensils used in food preparation. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs separate. After cooking food for the proper time to reach the correct temperature, be sure to refrigerate leftovers right after the meal.

If you are out at dusk or in areas with mosquitoes be sure to use insect repellent to protect from bites and possible mosquito-borne illnesses.

Enjoy your summer and stay safe.

*...for lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone.  
The flowers appear on the earth,  
the time of singing has come  
and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.  
Song of Solomon 2:11-12 ♦*





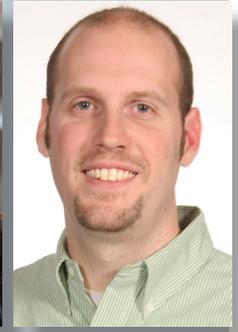
Neil Hudson



Gordon Hugenberger



Carol Kaminski



Ryan Howell

*“Fully Invested”*

**67<sup>th</sup> CCCC ANNUAL GATHERING — JULY 20-23, 2015 in Rochester, NY**

**ONLINE REGISTRATION IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE,  
BUT YOU CAN STILL JOIN US!**

*Please come to the Hyatt Regency in Rochester, NY (125 East Main Street) on July 20th and register as a walk-in.  
The registration desk opens at 2 pm*



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