

70th NACCC Annual Meeting & Conference
Held in person and by Zoom virtual conference
June 22-25, 2024
Business Session I

Minutes (DRAFT)

Business Session I of the 70th National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC) Annual Meeting convened on Saturday, June 22, at the Centennial Hotel in Spokane, Washington and online in a virtual conference.

Welcome

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter welcomed all those in person and online. “There is a time” to contemplate the wisdom of our teacher. He reflected that we were to meet in Spokane the year the pandemic made that impossible, so the theme is a celebration of second chances.

Jami and Rev. Ed Backell, chairs of the PNACCC Host Committee, officially welcomed everyone to Spokane. She invited people to join the choir for tomorrow’s worship service. They will be singing an anthem that they commissioned with funding from the NACCC Fine and Performing Arts Grant – John Richard Memorial Endowment.

Ed described a scavenger hunt that people can access on their phones that takes them on a walking tour of the parks around the hotel.

Being Church Moment

The Moderator noted that throughout the meeting we will be hearing from four churches who will relate their respective experiences of being church. Today, Rev. Johnathan Jones, of First Congregational Church of Anchorage, Alaska shared their journey.

Call to Order

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter called the meeting to order at 1:19 pm, PDT.

Constituting Prayer

Rev. Dawn Carlson offered the Constituting Prayer.

Introduction of the Head Table

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter introduced Vice Moderator Jodee Landa Lord, Secretary Kate O’Dell, and Parliamentarian Doug Loux.

Announcements

We forgot to note on the name tags if you are a newcomer, so please go to the Registration area and get a dot on the corner of your name tag.

Art spoke with those attending virtually about how they can interact with those in person.

Establishing a Quorum/Credentials Report

Rev. Joyce Acree of the AMCC reported that 65 delegates are participating in the meeting, which represents approximately 27% of the active 245 Member churches. With more than 20% of our member churches represented, as required in our Bylaws, Moderator Rev. Art Ritter declared a quorum was present, so we will proceed with the business of the Association.

Approval of the 2024 Annual Meeting Agenda

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter referenced the published agenda created by the AMCC that was made available to all registered attendees by email and posted on the NACCC website. He noted one amendment: If we have nominations from the floor at Monday's business session, we will have the elections during the business session on Tuesday.

2024 AM01 MOTION by Rev. Irv Gammon and seconded by Greg Abbott that the proposed Agenda be approved as amended. The motion was approved without discussion.

Review of the Standing Rules and Voting Instructions

The Moderator noted that the Standing Rules and Voting Instructions for meetings that will include Electronic Participation are posted on the NACCC website and available in the Annual Meeting Program booklet. He noted that the Rules as presented were approved by the Board of Directors on Friday, June 21, 2024.

2024 AM02 MOTION by Robin Quinn and seconded by Rev. Dawn Carlson to approve the Standing Rules and Voting Instructions as presented. The motion was approved without discussion.

Approval of the 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

The 2023 Minutes Certification Committee – Rev. Mark McCormick, Beth Borland, and Tonna Parsons – have reviewed the Minutes of the 69th Annual Meeting held in person and by video conference on June 24-27, 2023. They recommend approval of the Minutes as presented with one amendment to Business Session I, the addition of an address.

2024 AM03 MOTION to approve the Minutes of the 69th Annual Meeting held in person and by video conference on June 24-27, 2022 as amended. The motion does not require a second. The motion was approved without discussion.

Approval of the Minutes Certification Committee for the 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter announced that Rev. Dan Vellinga of First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa, Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith of the First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, and Rev. Patti Haaheim, Congregational Church of Soquel, California have agreed to serve on the 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes Certification Committee upon approval.

2024 AM04 MOTION by Sharon Higgins and seconded by Jennifer Hall to approve Rev. Dan Vellinga, Rev. Patti Haaheim, and Rev. Julie Sheridan-Smith as the 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes Certification Committee. The motion was approved without discussion.

Introduction of New Business

None was presented from the floor. Moderator Rev. Art Ritter noted that Secretary Kate O'Dell must receive any new business in writing by 9 am PDT on Monday, June 24, 2024.

Introduction & Vote on New Member Churches

The Leadership Council has presented the following churches for full membership in the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches: Elm Street Congregational Church of Bucksport, Maine; First Congregational Church of Brooks, Maine; Hadlyme Congregational Church of Hadlyme, Connecticut; First Congregational Church of Redlands, California.

2024 AM05 MOTION by the Leadership Council that Elm Street Congregational Church of Bucksport, Maine; First Congregational Church of Brooks, Maine; Hadlyme Congregational Church of Hadlyme, Connecticut; First Congregational Church of Redlands, California be accepted into full membership in the NACCC. The motion does not require a second. The motion was approved without discussion.

Installation of New Member Churches

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter performed the installation ceremony with members or representatives from the churches who were present, affirming their desire to join the NACCC.

Introduction of the new Interim Executive Director

Vice Moderator Jodee Lord read a letter provided by Rev. Dr. Barry Szymanski, who has accepted the position of Interim Executive Director. He was not able to attend in person but has joined virtually.

Approval of the Search Committee for the NACCC Executive Director

Vice Moderator Jodee Lord read the names of those who have accepted appointments to the Search Committee and thanked them for their service.

The Business Meeting recessed at 1:53 pm PDT. Moderator Rev. Art Ritter called everyone back at 3:00 pm PDT for the first Plenary Session.

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Business Session II

Minutes (DRAFT)

Business Session II of the 70th National Association of Congregational Christian Churches Annual Meeting convened on Monday, June 24, 2024, at the Centennial Hotel in Spokane, Washington, and online in a virtual conference.

Welcome and Announcements

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and commenting on the success of the Annual Meeting and Conference.

A Time for Being Church

Debra Moore, First Congregational Church of Maltby, WA, presented. They focus their ministry on the forgotten ones, helping them feel a bit better about themselves by facilitating their receiving dental care.

Introduction of Staff and Strategic Alliances

Vice Moderator Jodee Lord had a few announcements.

Then she introduced the NACCC staff and thanked them for their tireless work to provide services and support for the Association and especially at the Annual Meeting. Present at the meeting were Laura Wright, Andrea McCall, Gerry Krupp, Julie Robie, and Kristin Ward.

NACCC is honored to participate in organizations and institutions with which we have a mutually-beneficial relationship.

- Mike Fales read a welcome from the University of Olivet President. They are transitioning from Olivet College to the University of Olivet. He gave an overview of the year's highlights. He also described some of the achievements of their many mission programs.

Mike is also Moderator of the International Congregational Fellowship; he gave a report on their past activities and invited everyone to the meeting May 22-26, 2025, in Thessaloniki, Greece.

- Perry Hooper from Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB) introduced everyone to who they are and what they do. They cooperate with the NACCC around providing benefits. Perry talked about what they offer and invited those interested to visit with him or go online.
- Some of our other external partners
 - Kyle Roberts, Congregational Library
 - Eden Theological Seminary
 - Andover Newton Seminary
 - Dubuque Seminary

Call to Order

Moderator, Rev. Art Ritter called the business session to order at 9:34 am, PDT.

Secretary Kate O'Dell reported that she had received no new business by 9 am this morning.

Reports, Elections, Budget Approval

- *Nominating Committee Report*

Rev. Emily Raasch gave the report of the Nominating Committee: Joelle Somers, Heritage Congregational Church, Madison, WI; Jami Backell, Warden Community Church, Warden, Washington; Rev. J.R. McAliley, Center Congregational Church of Atlanta; Rev. Justin Nierer, Sandstone Congregational Church of Jackson, Michigan; Claude Johnson, First Congregational Church, Greenville, Michigan. She then read the slate of nominees for each position and introduced those who were in the room. The slate was made available to all registered attendees by email, included in the Annual Meeting packet, and posted on the NACCC website. Secretary Kate O'Dell reported that no additional names had been submitted by the required deadline.

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter called for nominations from the floor. Hearing no further nominations, he declared the nominations closed and called for the vote.

Election of the NACCC Leadership

2024/2025 AM06 MOTION that the entire slate be elected as presented. The motion does not require a second. The motion was approved without discussion.

Election of Nominating Committee Members

The Moderator called for nominations to fill three positions on the Nominating Committee. The following names were placed in nomination by the Board of Directors: Rev. Dr. Patrick Hunt, Heritage Congregational Church of Berea, Ohio; Rev. Doug Grey, First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City, Utah; Rev. Kay Miller-Todd, Berwick, Iowa. The Moderator asked if there were any further nominations from the floor. Hearing no further nominations, he declared the nominations closed and called for the vote.

2024/2025 AM07 MOTION by the Board of Directors to approve Rev. Dr. Patrick Hunt, Heritage Congregational Church of Berea, Ohio; Rev. Doug Grey, First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City, Utah; Rev. Kay Miller-Todd, Berwick, Iowa to fill the open positions on the Nominating Committee. The motion does not require a second. The motion was approved without discussion.

Ratification of Leadership Council Actions

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter presented the list of Actions by the Leadership Council from June 2023 through June 2024 that require ratification (2024/2025 LC 01 through 19). These are posted on the NACCC website.

2024/2025 AM08 MOTION by the Leadership Council that the Association delegates ratify the actions of the Leadership Council from June 2023 through June 2024 which require ratification (Leadership Council motions 2023/2024 LC 01 through LC 19). The motion does not require a second. The motion was adopted without discussion.

Ratification of Board of Directors Actions

Vice Moderator Jodee Lord presented the list of Actions by the Board of Directors from June 2023 through June 2024 that require ratification. (2024/2025 CO01 through CO45). These are posted on the NACCC website.

2024/2025 AM09 MOTION by the Board of Directors that the delegates ratify the actions of the Board of Directors from June 2023 through June 2024 that require ratification (Board of Directors motions CO01 through CO45). The motion does not require a second. The motion was adopted without discussion.

Financial Report

Treasurer Patrick Stewart presented the 2023/2024 financials, answered questions, and discussed some of the actions by the Finance Committee. He then reviewed the proposed 2024-2025 Budgets of the Shared Ministries Fund, the Center for Congregational Leadership, and the Ministry Councils as recommended by Board of Directors action (2023/2024 CO28). He noted that the slides would be available on request.

One concern was that the report was not included in attendees' packets and a link to the Financial Report on the website is not active. Moderator Rev. Art Ritter noted he will make sure this gets fixed as soon as possible.

2024/2025 AM10 MOTION by the Board of Directors to approve the 2024-2025 Budgets of the Shared Ministries Fund, The Center for Congregational Leadership, and the Ministry Councils as recommended by Board of Directors Action. The motion does not require a second. The motion was discussed and approved.

Mission Partner Presentation

Mission and Outreach Ministry Council (MOMC) Chair Rev. Rich Miller-Todd introduced the representatives of mission partners who spoke and showed a brief video of their mission.

- Amy Kennedy – Christian Ministry in the National Parks
- Julie Claassen – Fishers of Men Industries, including Evangelistic Medical Mission Crusades and Refuge Ranch, Cuecucuatitla, Edo. de México
- Laura Ramirez – Panamerican Institute, Tijuana, México
- Tim Uthmann - Pilgrim Center for Reconciliation
- Peter Ndungu– Happy Life Mission, Kenya

Business Session II paused at 11:07 am, PDT.

Business Session II of the 70th National Association of Congregational Christian Churches Annual Meeting reconvened at 1:30 pm, PDT on Monday, June 24, 2024, at the Centennial Hotel in Spokane, Washington and online in a virtual conference.

Announcements – Vice Moderator Jodee Lord

A Time for Being Church

Rick Martin, of Warden Community Church noted they used to be the German Congregational Church of Warden. Their setting is in the Columbia Basin, which can be very harsh. They have a vibrant relationship with the migrant community, and they share the work of managing the local food bank with some other churches.

Mission Partner Presentation

Rev. Rich Miller-Todd introduced more of the NACCC Mission Partners who spoke about their organizations and showed videos illustrating their work.

- Rev. Jim Owens - Love Worth Sharing, Haiti
- Crystal Tompkins – Morgan Scott Projects, rural East Tennessee
- The presentation from Hosanna Industries was a video.
- Pastor Charles Sagay - Mission School of Hope, Camaroon, Africa
- Convoy of Hope

Rev. Miller-Todd also spoke about the One Great Hour of Sharing, and how important this program can be, e.g., providing support for Spencer, Iowa that has been completely devastated by flooding.

Congregational Foundation Presentation

President Laura Hamby introduced the members of the Foundation and others to talk about various aspects of the Foundation's support for the NACCC. She encouraged everyone to participate in growing the endowments.

Business Session II adjourned at 2:58 pm, PDT.

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Business Session III

Minutes (DRAFT)

Business Session III of the 70th National Association of Congregational Christian Churches Annual Meeting convened on Tuesday, June 25, 2024, at the Centennial Hotel in Spokane, Washington and online in a virtual conference.

Call to Order

Moderator, Rev. Art Ritter called the meeting to order at 9:06 am, PDT.

A Time for Being Church Moment

Nancy Ward, First Congregational Church of Tacoma, WA. She explained that even though they no longer had a large enough congregation to support a building, they knew that they wanted to continue as a church. With the funds from selling their building, they founded the online Capstone University of Tacoma that offers Masters and Doctorate classes in many subjects, in most states, and in some countries. She also talked about her role in continuing one vital role of a church – preserving life records. She described a situation of a man needing a record of his baptism. As happens so often when a church ceases to exist, the records had been almost lost. She was able to find his record.

Reports and Awards

Mission and Outreach Ministry Council

Chair Rev. Rich Miller-Todd noted we are able to award the Charles Rush Award for the first time in two years. The award is given to those who exemplify the excellent spirit of the Rev. Charles Rush and emphasize the importance of Christian social involvement.

- Beatrice Diffang, Mission School of Hope in Camaroon. She was nominated by Grace Church of Columbiana, Ohio. Dr. Lisa Bircher accepted the award for Beatrice.
- Janice Ferguson was nominated by Heritage Congregational Church, of Madison, Wisconsin. Dr. Synthia Taylor received the award and spoke about Janice's work.

Growth Ministry Council

Chair Rev. Irv Gammon

Irv noted how wonderful it was to have a great time with the youth at last night's karaoke night. This year they were able to cut the cost of youth attending by almost two-thirds. They also oversee the team that creates the Advent and Lent devotionals. Their third focus is to support churches as they change and grow.

Vitality Ministry Council

Chair Rev. Robb Tarr

The members of the Vitality Ministry Council were recognized, those who are incumbents, as well as those newly-elected and retiring. Robb spoke of their work and noted that, with some extra funds this year, they were able to support participation in events such as the Boston

Seminar. This year they are not awarding a Charles R. Russell preaching award or Harry R. Butman award for distinguished service to the NACCC.

He described their new special projects grant award program and invited applications. One aspect of this program is to widely share the information and ideas that it generates.

Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies

Rev. Gerry Krupp, NACCC Director of Programs noted that during the past year, there has been a significant shift in how the NACCC has organized that program, which is now under the purview of his position. He gave a brief summary of CFTS. He acknowledged the wonderful support for CFTS by all of the NACCC churches and introduced the current CFTS participant, Rev. Lennox Benjamin Fisher. He invited attendees to celebrate Thomas Rockwell, who is graduating this year.

Lay Ministry Training Program

Chair Rev. Doug Grey explained that LMTP exists to equip someone to make a difference in their church. He summarized what the program provides and acknowledged those who were responsible for making the program possible. He called on the body to celebrate that today, we are graduating the first cohort of Lay Ministry Training Program participants.

Rev. Wendy Van Tassell spoke of her experience as the Cohort A Mentor. She then called forward two of the graduates who were present in person, Nancy Hayes, First Congregational Church of Royal Oak, Michigan, and Jeff Kauffman, Congregational Church of Bound Brook, New Jersey, to the front. She then recognized four graduates who joined via Zoom and one who was not able to attend.

- Kathleen Avery Vsetecka, Yoked Parish of Becket, Massachusetts
- Marilyn Tirado, Stafford Springs Congregational Church, Connecticut
- Harry Vega, Stafford Springs Congregational Church, Connecticut
- Linda Shaw, Yoked Parish of Becket, Massachusetts
- Stephen Rice, Arbor Grove Congregational Church, Jackson, Michigan

Recognitions

Board of Directors Citation

Vice Moderator Jodee Lord recognized Rev. Tom Van Tassell, who read the dedication and presented the award to Rev. Richard Miller-Todd.

Host Committee

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter called Jami and Rev. Ed Backell forward and thanked the Host Committee for their wonderful work and service in making the 70th Annual Meeting and Conference the great experience it has been.

Recognition of Outgoing Leadership

Vice Moderator Jodee Lord called those who are outgoing NACCC leaders up to receive thanks for their service. Rev. Dr. Beth Bingham, Board of Directors; Claude Johnson, Nominating Committee; Rev. Ian Macdonald, Vitality Council; Rev. Emily Raasch, Nominating Committee; Art Ritter, Board of Directors; Ezekial Rodriguez, Growth Council; and Jerry Zwaga, MOMC.

Installation of NACCC Leadership

Moderator Art Ritter then led the liturgy of installation for incoming NACCC leadership.

2025 Annual Meeting Preview

Co-Chairs, Rev. Joyce Acree and Rev. Dr. Karen Robu invited everyone to the 2025 Annual Meeting and Conference in St. Louis, Missouri with the theme: “Come and See.” They invited everyone to contribute their ideas and thoughts since they will be chairing the new version of a host committee.

Closing Remarks

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter spoke of his experiences over his four years as Vice Moderator and then Moderator.

Benediction

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter offered the Closing Prayer of Benediction.

Adjournment

Moderator Rev. Art Ritter noted that no further business was before the assembly, so he passed the gavel to Moderator-elect Jodee Lord, who declared the Business Meeting of the 70th Annual Meeting and Conference in Spokane, Washington adjourned at 11:05 am, PDT.