



May 15, 2020  
**NACCC NEWS**  
The Messenger



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## Church Resources Available

Michael Chittum, Executive Director

One of the challenges of the current time is how can we continue to be church in such dramatically changed circumstances. In collaboration with our ministry partner, the [Center for Parish Development](#), I have placed two resources on our website that can help you support your congregation and help you keep the people engaged. The first is a video and letter to our churches from April 22, 2020. The second is a study entitled Who Is Your Church? Both can be found at this link: <https://www.naccc.org/now-trending.html>.

These resources can be used in a variety of ways. Both invite reflection, and both are designed to be the basis for members of your church sharing with each other. I pray that both will be a blessing to you.

## Impact of COVID-19 On Missions

Julie Robie, Missions Administrator

COVID-19 has impacted all NACCC missions. And all NACCC missions share the common goal of touching lives for Christ in the middle of despair and uncertainty as they respond to catastrophic food shortages, the lack of ability to offer medical care and the challenge of teaching social distancing and hand washing, sometimes to those who have little clean water and live in crowded circumstances. For many of the missions, fund raising events have been cancelled and reservations for the use of their facilities have stopped coming in. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the [COVID-19 Disaster Relief Appeal](#). The appeal will run through May.



*Left: Love Worth Sharing, Haiti  
Right: Hosanna Industries has made over 1,000 masks*

## Join This Year's Virtual Annual Meeting

Debby Fulton, Director of Development and Communications

Due to the COVID pandemic, the NACCC Annual Meeting (AM) will be held via ZOOM technology on Saturday, June 27th, at 3:00pm EDT. We encourage delegates and other individuals from member churches to virtually gather.

The agenda, supporting materials, and directions of how to join the meeting are being finalized and will be emailed (or mailed) to members and leadership by the first week of June.

In the meantime, churches should appoint an AM delegate and alternate delegate and provide that information to the national office by filling out [this form](#). All necessary AM materials will be provided to those delegates in advance of the meeting.

As members, your voice and vote are important to the work and direction of the NACCC, so please make plans to attend.

## More Coronavirus Resources

[Center for Healthy Churches](#)

[Church Mutual](#)

[Vanguard Blog for Institutional Investors](#)



[The historic commemoration of the Plymouth Landing](#)

[Profiles of Congregationalists](#)

*Send us your news and photos!  
Submissions for the June issue are due by May 25, 2020  
[development@naccc.org](mailto:development@naccc.org)*

## National Association of Congregational Christian Churches

8473 S. Howell Avenue, P.O. Box 288

Oak Creek, WI 53154

800-262-1620 ext. 1610

## A letter to the member congregations of the NACCC:

I have been in conversations with my friend, Ray Schulte, Executive Director of the Center for Parish Development, discussing material which we can offer as a resource to the member churches of the NACCC in these days. As you remember, the NACCC and the CPD are in a ministry partnership helping churches in a process of church renewal. This will be the first of such resources I will suggest you can use within your congregation.

One of the most challenging parts of this pandemic is that when we need to “be the church” most we are isolated and cut off from one another. But **just because we can’t GO TO CHURCH, does not mean we will stop BEING THE CHURCH.**

I am writing to offer suggestions to help us share with one another in ways that name who we are, what we do, the fears we are experiencing, but also contribute to claiming faith and our hopes.

In these times it is helpful to remember our past as a way to deal with the present and look to the future. Here are questions that invite you to remember together. You know of God’s blessings at your church. You know about faithfulness, about challenges met and ministries that were fruitful. Those are the stories that we want to claim. This exercise blesses us as we share with one another.

**1. Remember a time at your church when you felt most alive, most connected to God and to one another. What happened; what was your part in it? Describe what you felt. What do you value most about being church together?**

**2. Reflect on our current experience of this pandemic and share:**

*What has been taken?*

*What has not been taken?*

*What have we been given or what are we being given?*

**3. Reviewing what you have shared, does it offer any new perspectives for what we face today? How does what you shared have an impact on how you think about the future?**

**4. How will you share your stories and thoughts with others in your church community?**

Within your ministry context, I would urge you to find a way that you can engage the members of your church in thinking about these reflection questions and finding a way that you can share individual’s responses with the whole church. Perhaps there could be a calling tree or a Zoom call or an email chain employed. There is benefit in encouraging our people to reflect on these, but there is immeasurably more benefit in having all in the church hear one another’s thoughts.

Grace and Peace, Michael

**Pandemic, we can't go to church! But, does that stop us from being the church?!**

## **Who Is Your Church?**

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*It is common to think of church as a place where certain things happen. It is often seen as the source of religious and spiritual services designed to meet individuals' needs. When these notions are primary, a congregation can lose a sense of its connectedness and community. These notions lead to limited expectations and unsatisfactory participation patterns. Then, when we can't go to church, is all lost? We find ourselves in the midst of such a time. **Who is your church?***

It is interesting how the ways we talk about something can give insight into some of the assumptions and expectations that are operating in our behavior. It is very common to talk about, "going to church" or to ask, "what church do you go to?" In a similar fashion we "go to the store," "go to the club," and "are at the game or the movies." We do not talk about "going to the family," however. In fact, to use those words in connection with family sounds awkward and wrong.

We *are* family, *and* we *are* church. At first this may seem to be merely a clever observation about our use of words. But it is more than that. The shift in choice of words from, "I go to church" to "we are the church" implies some very different ways of thinking and then behaving.

Most of us in North Americans have grown up with an understanding of the church as a building or place where certain things happened in a predictable fashion and at certain times. Participation in the life of the church involved going to that place and participating in certain activities.

The dominant experience has been that of a voluntary association, organized and run by professional clergy. While laity may be involved in certain aspects, in most of our experience the primary responsibility for the ministry of the church has rested with the professionally trained clergy – the pastor or pastoral leader. There exists a clear and definite set of tasks that everyone (even those not involved with the church) 'knows' are clerical duties. The problem is that such a division can overlook the giftedness of the whole community, stimulate passivity and dependence, and restrict the scope and power of the church's ministry. This has served to reinforce assumptions and patterns of participation that find us going to church to receive the services provided by the trained few.

Instead, the church is, in reality, a gifted Christian community that is called and sent. It is a community where commitment, accountability, trust, openness, long-term relationships, and sacrifice are the standards that guide its life together.

**Reflect together on the life of your congregation in today's context.**

1. The church – “place?” or “program” or “a called people sent on a mission?” Which do you say? Why?
2. What role has past cultural forces had in shaping your church's understanding of itself as church? How do notions or understandings of church shape our experience (what we do and what we say) as the church?
3. We are NOW in the midst of a pandemic, and we can't go to church. As God's people, what have we lost? What have we not lost? How are we challenged to learn from this experience in this crisis? While not caused by God, is the Spirit providing us with the grace to embrace a deeper understanding of our identity and call?

**Bible Study: Making a connection**

The call to “*be the church*” assumes a particular kind of community, a community in which the Word of God is not only proclaimed, but also embodied in a life together where gifts are shared. What would such a community look like?

- Read *The Household of God* (See on the next page).
- What is the vision of the church proclaimed within this text?
- What do you appreciate about this vision? What is challenging about it?
- To what do you sense God may be calling your church now?
- To what extent are you experiencing church as described in the article now?
- What new ways of being church do you hope will continue?

## The Household of God:

Those who through faith “have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3), now become “living stones” of God’s household. The resurrection is not a private event that involved Jesus only. It is a public and world-wide event – the beginning of the “New Creation.” And the reality of this New Creation is made visible through the relationships, life, and structures of the household of God—the church.

Consider, for a moment, what God is doing. Although it may not be a familiar way of describing God, the Bible affirms that God is creating, redeeming, and sanctifying households. In ancient times, a household was not primarily defined by blood relationship, but by participation in the same fortunes, the same work, the same successes and failures, and the same dangers. The communal identity of early Christians was shaped by the reality that they were now “members of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). All believers, former Gentiles and Jews alike, were “members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). And all believing households together constitute the one “household of God” (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 4:17).

The word “household” is associated with many images: parenthood, childhood, birth, adoption, brother- and sisterhood, familial love, and domestic service. Describing the church as “household of God” indicates a communal understanding of the Christian experience. Membership in this new household involves sharing in a common life held together by shared commitments and to the way of life in Christ. It is a way of life that does not make sense if lived apart. The Christian identity is distinctly a communal identity.

God’s household – the church – is to make visible to the world a distinctive way of life. Through its relationships of fraternal love, mutual respect, and humble service, the church proclaims the redemption of God’s creation in Jesus the Christ. It is the manifestation of God’s Dream.



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One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)  
Disaster Relief  
April/May 2020 COVID-19 Disaster Fund Relief

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NACCC, through the Mission and Outreach Ministry Council, is launching a Disaster Fund appeal in response to identified COVID-19 needs of our vetted relief organizations and National and International Missions.

**If you send a donation via check, please include a note, or write on the memo line** with your donation indicating that the funds are intended for:

April/May 2020 OGHS COVID-19 Disaster Fund Relief

Please send Donations to:

NACCC-OGHS

PO Box 288

Oak Creek, WI 53154

Or donate online at: [www.naccc.org](http://www.naccc.org)

Go to the Donate button at the bottom of the page.

Remember to indicate on the "drop down" option--OGHS/COVID 19 Disaster Fund Relief

For questions please contact Julie Robie, Missions Administrator,  
at 1-800-262-1620 Ext 1618 or [Jrobie@naccc.org](mailto:Jrobie@naccc.org).

THANK YOU for your gift. We appreciate your prayers and generous support.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

**Year 2020 - Delegate Certificate**

**[Only One Delegate per Church]**

(A separate card must be completed for each person to be certified)

This Certifies

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Use Rev., Dr., Mr., Mrs., Miss – Please Print)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street, City, State, Zip)

Is the duly accredited **Delegate** of the

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Official Name of Church) (City) (State)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Office: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signed by Officer other than the Delegate)

Please return to: Carrie Dahm/NACCC Annual Meeting, PO Box 288, Oak Creek, WI 53154; OR Scan/Email [email](#); OR Fax: 414.764.0319

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

**Year 2020 - Alternate Certificate**

**#1 Voting Priority Alternate**

(A separate card must be completed for each person to be certified)

This Certifies

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Use Rev., Dr., Mr., Mrs., Miss – Please Print)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street, City, State, Zip)

Is the duly accredited **#1 Voting Priority Alternate** of the

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Official Name of Church) (City) (State)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Office: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signed by Officer other than the Alternate)

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