

The Congregational Way - *Chris Surber*

As a Congregational Pastor I am probably asked one question more than any other, "What is a Congregational Church?" The answer to this question is varied, depending largely upon the perspective and theology of the person asked. There are those answers which focus almost entirely on the history of Congregationalism. These answers focus on the "Pilgrim" separatist who landed at Plymouth Rock after leaving England to settle in the New World.

There are others who focus almost entirely on Congregational Polity. That is, the way that Congregational Churches govern themselves. Here, I will offer a concise explanation of what I believe to be the highpoints of what we may learn from the history and practice of The Congregational Way which we can apply to the everyday practice of our faith as followers of Jesus Christ.

A Congregational Church is independent from any form of ecclesiastical church government. We recognize that Christ alone is the head of His Church. We do not seek to follow after man. We gather corporately under the headship of Christ to teach the Scriptures, worship God, and to accomplish the mission of the Church to gather men and women into the family of God as we seek to be followers of Jesus Christ.

A Congregational Church calls a Pastor as a spiritual leader, biblical teacher, and pastoral care provider. Congregational Churches are governed from within, by way of the boards and committees which are elected by the congregation. In a Congregational Church each member has a voice and each member is invited to actively participate in the decisions and planning of the life of the church.

Faith in God, as we find Him revealed in the pages of the Bible, is central to our way. In an age of radical departure from the truths of Scripture, it is essential that Christians recognize that God alone is all sufficient and that God has revealed Himself to us through the words He has spoken to us in the pages of the Bible.

Freedom is found in Christ alone. God has expressed His unending love and grace to humanity in the person, work, and life of Jesus Christ. He is the redeemer of all who place their trust in Him. In an age of radical self exaltation, it is essential that Christians recognize that Christ alone is sufficient for salvation from bondage to sin and its eternal consequences.

Fellowship in the Holy Spirit within the context of a loving church family is the hallmark of Christ's Church. In an age of radical disconnection and loneliness, it is essential that Christians recognize the need to be a light of hope in the midst of this often dark world. Love for one another and love for the people of our community is perhaps the strongest witness to the glory of God and the work of Christ in our lives. As we walk in fellowship with one another we express the fullness of the love of God!