

MINISTRY TO, WITH, BY, AND FOR YOUTH:
A RESOURCE UNIT ON THE COMMUNITY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT

SUBMITTED TO
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BY
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PROLOGUE

This resource unit was designed out of a perceived need for junior high teaching materials on the concept of the community of the Congregational covenant which address factual material as well as the developmental needs of adolescents. A sharing session, which culminates the unit, provides an avenue through which the entire congregation may review its commitment to the local church covenant and also a means by which youth may be integrated into the life of the congregation.

In order that this unit could be tested to at least a small degree, it was designed for a specific group of youth with whom I have worked for about three years at Merrill Congregational Christian Church, Merrill, Michigan. Then, to determine whether or not this resource unit is effective and appropriate for the intended age group, nearly all of this material was used with my youth group, grades four through eight, with most being in grades five through seven. On the basis of this use of the unit, some changes were made in the original version, and these changes are reflected in various aspects of the resource unit. It is my hope that this resource unit will be a useful tool to others who are also ministering to this age group.

MINISTRY TO, WITH, BY, AND FOR YOUTH:
A RESOURCE UNIT ON THE COMMUNITY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT

Among numerous implications for youth ministry of Search Institute's three-and-a-half-year study, "Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations," Project Director Peter Benson states that we must change the way we think about Christian education. Christian education and other areas of congregational life must be connected; kids must be a part of the total life of the congregation.¹ Are we shortchanging our Congregational youth if we do not challenge them to examine what it means to be involved in the commitment to community which our church covenants imply? The word commitment is often used by young people today in a secular sense to describe interpersonal relationships. When I challenged my youth group to examine and describe our church covenant, the word commitment was used most frequently in their description.

God's new covenant proclaimed that: "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."

Matthew 18:20

The great fact for the people of the Congregational Way is that Christ made a covenant with His people. . . . it is the Congregational Way particularly which makes a covenant between a congregation of believers and God the actual political and spiritual basis of the organized life of each individual church.²

The local church covenant is most basic to the polity of each Congregational church.

Since the earliest days of Congregationalism this covenant has actually been a written document, an agreement among the the original members of a church and between themselves collectively and Christ, that they would walk together as Christian brothers, following the Master and working with and praying for each other . . .³

The Salem Covenant of 1629, the first Congregational covenant made in America, has often been used as the covenant for a newly gathered Congregational church because of its directness and simplicity. It reads:

We Covenant with the Lord and with one an other and doe bynd ourselves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his Blessed word of truth.⁴

The covenant remains as an important common agreement in each local church. The autonomy of each local church allows for possible variation of individual church covenants.

In an attempt to make learning about Congregational history and polity more relevant to the lives of the youth, and, hopefully, to the adults of my own local church (Merrill, Michigan, Congregational Christian Church), I have designed a resource unit on the concept of the church covenant as viewed by Congregationalists. Youth and adults have contributed to this resource unit and have helped this to be a very enjoyable and rewarding effort. I hope that this material might be helpful to others, realizing that modification might be necessary according to the needs and experiences of the youth involved.

The main part of the program is designed for youth of junior high age; however, it is intentionally intergenerational because

adults other than the stated leader could be involved in teaching the material and in other ways suggested in the unit, and all ages will participate in the presentation shared by the youth at the end of the unit. I have used most of this material with my youth group, grades four through eight, with most being in grades five through seven.

Why TO, WITH, BY, and FOR Youth? We must challenge or present TO youth the need for commitment to the covenant relationship, study, and learn WITH youth what this relationship means in order that their lives in the faith will be enriched and guided, so that ministry BY youth may be possible.⁵ There is no covenant without commitment and no covenant without community. Both issues are addressed in this resource unit in such a manner as to reflect the developmental needs of adolescents.

Junior high youth will be able to relate to the concept of a covenant relationship. They are learning to think abstractly, to make the transition from hands-on to ideas. While their motivation for learning may be greatly affected by other current interests in their lives, it should be expected that motivation will be high with the use of methods which gain their interest and provide pleasant memories of activities. Community-building activities, which are an integral part of this resource unit, should help this study have positive effects on a long-range basis. But this should not be expected to make youth permanently committed to all of the statements of the covenant. Human nature needs reminding. . . .

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Both goals 1 and 2 relate to Objectives 1 and 2.

Goals:

1. To provide a program whereby youth may study the concept of the Congregational church covenant primarily through community-building activities, reflection, and discussion.
2. To involve adults other than the stated leader at least informally in the study in order to help integrate youth into the total life of the congregation.

Objectives:

1. Youth will be able to show that they understand the general meaning of the word covenant by restating it in terms of both commitment and involvement with God and or another person or persons.
2. Youth will be able to restate their own Congregational church covenant as observed in their choice of words and in their planning for practical means to carry out at least one aspect of it.

OUTLINE

Session I - What Is a Covenant?

Session II - Congregational Covenants: From the Mayflower to Salem to Merrill [Your Church]

Session III - The Unity of CommUNITY

Session IV - Making It Ours: Restating the Covenant

Session V - Sharing Our Insights

Session II may be modified or expanded, depending upon the background of the youth in Congregational history and polity. This unit could be used 1) during or following a confirmation or membership class in which Congregational history and polity is studied; 2) concurrently with a Congregational history and polity unit involving youth and adults which is being held separately. Another alternative would be to expand Session II, thus increasing the number of sessions available to present Congregational history and polity. Suitable educational materials are available in We Would Be Free⁶ or Celebrating Who We Are: Heritage Resource Kit of the Commission on Christian Education, National Association of Congregational Christian Churches.⁷

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN RELATION TO SESSIONS

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

	SESSION				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Goal: To provide a program whereby youth may study the concept of the Congregational church covenant primarily through community-building activities, reflection, and discussion.	X	X	X	X	
Goal: To involve adults other than the stated leader at least informally in the study.	*	*	*	*	X
Objective: Youth will be able to show that they understand the general meaning of the word covenant by restating it in terms of both commitment and involvement with God and/or another person or persons.	X Inc.	X	X	X	
Objective: Youth will be able to restate their own Congregational church covenant as observed in their choice of words and in their planning for practical means to carry out at least one aspect of it.					X

*The involvement of adults will include at least one sharing time when the findings of the group are presented at the end of the unit, in a worship service or other congregational meeting, listed as Session V above. Additional possibilities include asking for help with typing and printing the church covenant, or computer help such as that suggested on handout WF.1; videotaping part or all of the sessions and helping to make a shorter videotape which two or three youth could show and discuss with shut-ins; youth sharing with adults at the end of a session if they come to pick them up; making cookies.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF YOUTH SESSIONS I- IV AND SHARING SESSION V

For Sessions I-IV, A = Introductory Community-Building Activity
 B = Main Lesson
 C = Take-with Idea
 D = Closing Activity: Song and/or Prayer

- I. What is a covenant?
 - A. Get acquainted/Reacquainted: Talk/Questionnaire
 - B. Idea of the covenant
 1. Personal knowledge
 2. Bible covenants
 - C. Our church covenant/Design logo
 - D. Prayer: Include thanking God for the new covenant.
- II. Congregational Covenants: From the Mayflower to Salem to Merrill [Your church]
 - A. Trust walk
 Song: "We Covenant with Hand and Heart"
 - B. View use of Congregational covenants historically
 - C. Wordfind
 - D. Closing song: "We Covenant with Hand and Heart" (SS.1)
- III. The Unity of COMMUNITY
 - A. Dependency Activity
 Song: "We Covenant with Hand and Heart"
 - B. Scripture Study: I Corinthians 12:12-27, The Body of Christ
 Model
 - C. People Cookies: Relate to the fact that all people have different abilities and work to do for the kingdom of God.
 - D. Closing sentence prayers by volunteers: Thanking God and asking for his help as members of the body of Christ.
- IV. Making It Ours: Restating the Covenant
 - A. Tower building
 - B. Making it personal: Restating the covenant

C. Summarizing and planning sharing session

D. Song: "We Covenant with Hand and Heart"

V. Sharing Our Insights

A. Explanation of study
Present logo

B. Read local church covenant together
Hear restated covenant

C. Symbolizing our church covenant together
1. Make rope
2. Song: "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

Session I - What Is a Covenant?

Aim: The idea of the covenant will be introduced by appealing to youth's understanding of the term.

Materials:

Bibles

Heavy paper or posterboard, 1 piece, 12" x 12" or larger

Heavy paper for logos for each youth to take home, 2" x 6"

Permanent markers to share

Scripture references listed in Lesson B.2 below in large print on card

The words covenant and covet in large print on card

Copy of local church covenant for each person (Sample: CC.1), p. 18

Questionnaire (Q.1), p. 17

Lesson: The unit will be introduced with the youth having a chance to become acquainted by sharing their best memories of helping or being helped. They will also begin to share possible ways of working with each other via a questionnaire for which they seek responses from each other. The idea of the covenant will be explored from youth's personal experience and their knowledge of covenants in general. Discussion may bring responses about Old and/or New Testament covenants, such as that of God with Abraham and Sarah or Jacob; the New Covenant in the New Testament; the local church covenant; a general definition such as commitment, trust, or agreement may be offered. The local church covenant will be reviewed briefly and a logo will be designed to symbolize it.

A. Get Acquainted/Reacquainted (20 min.)

1. Your best memory of helping someone; of being helped; of God's help to you. Ask each person in turn to choose one of these to share with the group.
2. Questionnaire (Q.1)
Try to find at least two people who like to do each of these things. Discuss how it helps the group if not everyone wants to do the same thing. Collect questionnaires for later reference.

B. The Idea of the Covenant (20 min.)

1. Discussion: What does the word covenant mean to you?
The words covenant and covet should both be written in large print and distinction should be made between them.
2. Review Bible covenants
Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 15:18, 17:1-21)
Jacob (Genesis 35:1-15)
The New Covenant (Romans 11:27; Matthew 18:20)

C. Our Church Covenant/Design Logo (20 min.)

Look at local church covenant (CC.1) briefly. Cooperatively

make logo of ideas represented therein on large card to be displayed in meeting room. Make individual logos to take home for bookmarks or for bulletin board.

D. Prayer: Include thanking God for the new covenant.

Session II - Congregational Covenants:
From the Mayflower to Salem to Merrill [Your Church]

Aim: The purposes or use of covenants in Congregational history, including the Mayflower Compact, the Salem Covenant of 1629, and the local church covenant, will be reviewed briefly.

Materials:

- "We Covenant with Hand and Heart" tape or song sheet^o (SS.1), p. 21. Blindfolds for half of the group
- Large print copy or on overhead projector:
 - 1629 Salem Covenant (CC.3), p. 20
 - Mayflower Compact (CC.3), p. 20
- Copy of local church covenant for each person (Sample: CC.1), p. 18
- Wordfind sheet (WF.1, WF.T1), pp. 22-23
- Covenants in Congregational History (CH.1, CH.2), pp. 24-25

Lesson: The trust walk and a song, "We Covenant with Hand and Heart" will be used to reinforce the covenant idea. The use of three covenants by Congregationalists will be examined. A wordfind sheet will be used to briefly summarize.

A. Community Building

1. Trust Walk^o (20 min.)

The group is divided into pairs. In turn, one person is blindfolded and is led by the other. The object is to learn to trust the guidance of the other indoors and out, up stairs and down, around obstacles, etc. Depending upon the youth and area involved, it may be wise to limit the range of the walk. Additional adult supervision may also be helpful.

Discussion: What can you say about having to depend completely on someone else? As you proceeded, did it become easier to trust your leader? Why or why not? Did you feel that you were a better leader if you were first a follower?

2. Reflect on a song. (10 min.)

"We Covenant with Hand and Heart" (SS.1); listen to the tape and then sing along or play and sing for group.

Discussion: What is involved in this covenanting: what body parts of each of us? In what way does this covenant go beyond our lives or does it stop here? How may this covenant be kept, or what do we do to make it true (besides singing or saying it)?

B. Covenants in Congregational History (20 min.)

Please see pages 24-25 for lesson on covenants.^{1o}

1. The Mayflower Compact (CC.3)
2. The Salem Covenant of 1629 (CC.3)
3. Local church covenant (CC.1). (Save to use in Session IV.)

C. Wordfind relating to lesson (WF.1, WF.T1)

D. Closing song: "We Covenant with Hand and Heart" (SS.1)

ALTERNATE LESSON SUGGESTIONS

Please see Outline, p. 4, for additional lesson suggestions.

Session III - The Unity of CommUNITY

Aim: To explore the idea that although each person is different and has different interests and abilities, the cooperative efforts of all make a unified body in the church.

Materials:

- Larger than life-size paper table covering or other paper or cardboard
- Pencil for each participant
- One dry-marker
- People-shaped cookies
- Bibles
- "We Covenant with Hand and Heart" (SS.1), p. 21

Lesson: The Apostle Paul speaks about the body of Christ having many parts which work together in I Corinthians 12:12-27. Youth will be asked to reflect upon their own and their peers' positions in their youth group in the Dependency and Model activities. The people cookies may be used as a reminder of the necessity for all parts of the body to work together for a human body as well as for every person to do his or her part as a member of the body of Christ.

A. Dependency Activity (10 min.)

1. In groups of two or three, youth will attempt one or more of the following:
 - a. Tie your own or another person's shoes with one hand.
 - b. Put on your coat or jacket and zip or button it with one hand.
 - c. Try to read another's lips

Discussion: Could you do the activity easily? Why or why not?

Did you find that you needed another body part?

2. Review from Session II: Song "We Covenant with Hand and Heart" (5 min.) Use song sheet (SS.1) or tape.

B. Main lesson

1. Scripture study (10 min.)

Have youth read I Corinthians 12:12-27 in groups of two or three to find the main idea of this passage. Discuss: How does Paul describe the body of Christ? Is one part more important than another, or one person more important than another?
2. Model: Compare Human Body with the Body of Christ (25 min.)

Ask for a volunteer model to be traced around on large piece of paper and for another person to do the tracing. If no one volunteers, draw or have someone draw a life-size person on paper table cover. Add eyes, nose, mouth, ears, heart. If you can foresee that this could be a problem, be prepared when the session begins with a drawing that has

areas for signatures circled. This also helps save time. Using a pencil for drawing around the person's body may be better than a marker which could stain clothing. Then the outline could be traced with a marker to make it more visible. Ask youth to identify one or two body parts with which they most closely associate themselves as a member of this group and write their name on that part or parts. Then have them write the names of at least two other persons from the group on the body part(s) where they would place them in relation to the group.

Discussion: Describe yourself as a member of this group in terms of the body parts you chose, or in terms of how you participate best in this group. Would you like to think of yourself in any other ways as a member of the body of Christ?

How do our different interests and gifts support what we have just been doing? Can you defend the statement: "We should all be good at the same thing." ? Why or why not?

C. Serve People Cookies (10 min.)

Help the youth to summarize the need for all of the body parts to work together; e. g., What if the hands are not working? the eyes? the feet? What does this mean for the church?

D. Closing sentence prayer by volunteers thanking God and asking for his help for each to carefully use the abilities God has given for furthering his kingdom.

Session IV - Making It Ours: Restating the Covenant

Aim: Youth will be helped to restate their own church covenant in order to understand it better and plan to share their findings with the congregation.

Materials:

- 20 Gumdrops and 20 Toothpicks for each participant
- Local Church Covenant (Sample: CC.1), p. 18
- Local Church Covenant with lines for writing (Sample: CC.2), p. 19. [CC.1 and CC.2 should be replaced by the covenant of the local church.]
- "We Covenant with Hand and Heart" song sheet (SS.1), p. 21

Lesson: Youth will find ways to work together via the tower building activity. They will review and restate the local church covenant by focusing on action and then summarize their study by making a plan for sharing their insights with the congregation.

A. Introductory Activity: Tower Building (15 Min.)

Divide into groups of at least three people. Using gumdrops and toothpicks, the task is to build a tower which is as tall as possible. Talking is permitted but it may help other groups if heard. Each person is to participate in the group's effort.

Questions for reflection and discussion following:

How did your own performance relate to your view of yourself as a part of the youth group last week? What body part(s) did you represent? Do you think of yourself differently than you did last week? Did each person contribute or have some responsibility or did any one person do it all? What does this experience say to you about members of our youth group working together?

B. Making It Personal - Restating the Covenant (30 Min.)

Relate above activity to this.

1. Review logo of "Our Church Covenant" made during first session.

2. Give each person a copy of your church covenant (CC.1) printed in an easily readable format. Read and discuss each section briefly to make sure that the youth have the general idea. Then give another copy of the same covenant expanded on the page with lines for writing. (CC.2) As a starter for thinking about each section, the verbs and infinitives could be underlined: the actions, the to do's: are gathered, to maintain, etc.

3. Youth may be divided into groups to reflect on the meanings of the individual parts and then have overhead or large chart with blanks for restating sections. Leaders should anticipate possible word changes as part of preparation.

It takes less time if each group is not totally responsible for each section, which may be too much for most youth of this age to deal with at one time. Ask whether the restated covenant is more understandable to them? Why or why not?

The purpose of this restating is not in any way to suggest an actual change of the covenant but to help youth relate to it in their own language. The result may well be a very incomplete or one-sided restatement of the covenant but the exercise will hopefully provide an understanding of and a lasting identification with the covenant rather than have it be just another formal statement.

C. Summarizing and Planning for Sharing with Congregation (15 min.)

Allow youth to briefly review and relate an activity to the covenant concept: e.g., trust walk, people cookies, model: body of Christ.

Suggest to youth that they might like to share their insights with the entire congregation, for example, in the regular worship service or at a family night. Be certain to have permission of the proper person(s) for a time of sharing with the congregation, and know the type of congregational function, as well as the date and time before planning the sharing session with the youth. Ask for volunteers to share with the congregation in the following ways (or others that they may suggest):

1. While one person draws using overhead projector or a large model on paper or other background and explains step-by-step the student-made diagram of the meaning of the local church covenant, the congregation could be asked to draw it/theirs. Some of these could be posted on a bulletin board.
2. One person might read the new version while the congregation is following the original and be asked to relate to the insights of the youth. This presentation should be accompanied by a statement to the effect that the purpose of this unit is to have youth reflect upon the covenant and restate it in an attempt to understand it but not to seek a change therein.
3. Rope may be made and tied in a circle to symbolize to symbolize the unity of the community in covenant relationship. (Please see Session V for instructions.) This activity needs to be worked out carefully before doing with a larger group.

D. Song: "We Covenant with Hand and Heart"

Session V - Sharing Our Insights

Aim: With permission of the proper person(s), youth will share insights gained from the study of covenant relationships with the congregation in conjunction with a fellowship type of meeting such as a potluck dinner, or during the worship hour.

Materials:

Copies of the local church covenant for all to read (Sample: CC.1), p. 18

One copy of restated covenant (Sample: CC.2), p. 19

Writing tool and surface for large logo

Five yards of yarn such as knitting worsted weight for each family or representative unit. Families could be asked ahead of time to bring a piece and one to share if others do not have yarn. Or three or four knitters might be willing to share enough pieces of different colors. Experiment with the number of strands according to the number of participants: For an old-fashioned rope-making device, a total of about twenty-one strands may be about right. For hand-twisting, fifteen strands will be enough. Twist together tightly and while two people are stretching the rope, grab it in the middle and allow it to double back on itself, thereby twisting itself together.

Rope-maker if not using hand twist method

Sharing Session: Youth will share insights from their study with the congregation. The present covenant will be read by the group and the restatement and the logo will be presented. A rope will be made with strands of yarn brought by individuals or families to symbolize the unity of the community. To emphasize this unity, the group will sing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."

A. Introducing the Study (3 min.)

1. The purpose of this unit has been for study and insight, not for suggested change of the church covenant.
2. Draw and explain logo to congregation.

B. Examining the Local Church Covenant (10 min.)

1. Read church covenant together. Ask each person to think about its personal meaning, or any new meanings to them.
2. Have one of the youth read the restatement of the church covenant, ask congregation to consider meanings.

C. Symbolizing Our Church Covenant Together (15 min.)

1. A rope may be made by twisting pieces of string or yarn which represent individuals or families, and then formed into a circle and tied in a knot, symbolizing completeness and unity. This symbol could be mounted on a board and placed in the youth room meeting or other appropriate place in the church along with a copy of the church covenant and the youths' covenant logo.
2. Sing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds".

QUESTIONNAIRE

Q.1

TRY TO FIND AT LEAST TWO PEOPLE WHO

like to make posters. _____

like to write songs. _____

like to bowl. _____

want to invite friends to our youth group. _____

like to write short skits, dialogs, plays. _____

like to have a speaking part in a program in church.

like to help plan programs. _____

like to sing. _____

like to make things with their hands. _____

would like a week-end retreat with others their age.

PLEASE MARK AN X AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH ACTIVITY THAT YOU LIKE.

YOUR NAME _____

[Please replace with your church covenant.]

CC.1

OUR CHURCH COVENANT

Congregational Christian Church, Merrill, Michigan; adopted 1978

We are gathered together as a Christian Church

to maintain the worship of God,

to proclaim the gospel of Christ,

to develop in men a consciousness of their relations
and duties to God and their fellowmen,

and to inspire them with love for truth,
passion for righteousness,
and enthusiasm for service.

To this end we pledge our loyalty to Christ

and covenant with each other

to strive to express His spirit
in our individual and corporate life.

Hint: Type church covenant once for a copy which is spaced to be read easily. Then expand this copy to a worksheet with sufficient line spacing for youth to write.

OUR CHURCH COVENANT

CC.2

Congregational Christian Church, Merrill, Michigan; adopted 1978
[Please replace with your church covenant.]

We are gathered together as a Christian Church

to maintain the worship of God,

to proclaim the gospel of Christ,

to develop in men a consciousness of their relations
and duties to God and their fellowmen,

and to inspire them with love for truth, passion for
righteousness, and enthusiasm for service.

To this end we pledge our loyalty to Christ

and covenant with each other

to strive to express His spirit
in our individual and corporate life.

THE SALEM COVENANT OF 1629

We Covenant with the Lord and with one an other and doe bynd ourselves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to revealhimself unto us in his Blessed word of truth.

THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT, 1620

In the name of God Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign lord King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland king, defender of the faith etc.

Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia. Do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and one of another; covenant, and combine our selves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, Acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony: unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod the 11 of November, in the year of the reigh of our sovereign lord king James of England, France, and Ireland the eighteenth and of Scotland the fifty fourth. In the year of our Lord. 1620.

[Signers' names omitted.]

WE COVENANT WITH HAND AND HEART

Samuel T. Benade, 1746-1830 (1792)

WORSHIP 8.6.8.6.8.8.6. Iambic (159, A)

Der Sabbath ist uns Menschen will'n

Popular melody adopted at Herrnhut, c. 1740

C. Gregor Choralbuch, 1784

We cov - e - nant with hand and heart To fol - low Christ, our Lord;

With world, and sin, and self to part, And to o - bey God's word,

To love each oth - er heart - i - ly In truth and in sin - cer - i - ty

And un - der cross, re - proach and shame, To glo - ri - fy God's Name. A - MEN.

WORDFIND

WF.T1

The first governor (after John Carver) of Plymouth Colony was
Wm. _ _ _ _ _ Bradford

_ _ _ _ _ U S Hopkins was born at sea on the _ _ _ _ _ ,
the ship of the Pilgrims. (Hint: Boy's name=Sea) Oceanus,
Mayflower

The Pilgrims were known as _ _ _ _ _ because they
left the Church of England. Separatists

For a long time, the _ _ _ _ _ simply wanted to purify or
reform the Church of England, but later came to America and
joined the Pilgrims who were already here. Puritans

The Pilgrims settled for a time in Leyden (Leiden) and Amsterdam,
_ _ _ _ _ , before coming to America. Holland.

"We do bynde ourselves together . . .," begins the first church
_ _ _ _ _ in America from _ _ _ _ _ , Massachusetts.
covenant, Salem

The Pilgrims' first settlement in America was known as
_ _ _ _ _ Plantation (or Colony). Plimoth

The Mayflower _ _ _ _ _ was written as a civil covenant.

BRADFORD

OCEANUS

MAYFLOWER

SEPARATISTS

PURITANS

HOLLAND

COVENANT

SALEM

PLIMOTH

COMPACT

ablemantownhivesnorthTo
sevenSEPARATISTScartNeR
ninjatulbostonninelArde
puritulIarScovensaNnewW
oceanhHMiNcolortrEatslO
bradfilDardtryooVerallL
mayfloITLaBRADFORDiedaF
sallyiIHlLacriCoveninyY
holleRiniSALEMwitcheroA
agesUmmOCEANUSSchoolsaM
pliPhollsephDonCOMPACTb

WORDFIND

WF.1

The first governor (after John Carver) of Plymouth Colony was
Wm. _ _ _ _ _ .

_ _ _ _ _ U S Hopkins was born at sea on the _ _ _ _ _ ,
the ship of the Pilgrims. (Hint: Boy's name=Sea) Oceanus,
Mayflower

The Pilgrims were known as _ _ _ _ _ because they
left the Church of England.

For a long time, the _ _ _ _ _ simply wanted to purify or
reform the Church of England, but later came to America and
joined the Pilgrims who were already here.

The Pilgrims settled for a time in Leyden (Leiden) and Amsterdam,
_ _ _ _ _ , before coming to America.

"We do bynde ourselves together . . . ," begins the first church
_ _ _ _ _ in America from _ _ _ _ _ , Massachusetts.

The Pilgrims' first settlement in America was known as
_ _ _ _ _ Plantation (or Colony).

The Mayflower _ _ _ _ _ was written as a civil covenant.

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SESSION IV. B.
 LESSON: COVENANTS IN CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY

CH.2

NOTE: This lesson is intentionally separate from other materials for the session, in part, because the teacher may wish to enlarge on the material contained herein: either from a general historical perspective or from that of the local church. Perhaps a covenant is being or has been recently written or revised. Interaction of youth with people involved in such could facilitate youth's understanding of both the process in the community of faith and the content of the covenant itself. As stated under Alternate Suggestions at the end of Session IV, additional possibilities for the Session IV are listed on page 4 of this resource unit.

We have learned that covenants have been important to the people of God over the centuries: the covenant of God with Jacob, the covenant with Abraham and Sarah. But God gave a new covenant when Christ came to be our savior. (Romans 11:27; Matthew 18:20)

The great fact for the people of the Congregational Way is that Christ made a covenant with His people. . . . it is the Congregational Way particularly which makes a covenant between a congregation of believers and God the actual political and spiritual basis of the organized life of each individual church.¹¹

The Mayflower Compact, a civil covenant, was written on the Mayflower in 1620. It was signed by all of the 41 men aboard, even though not all came to this land for religious reasons, not all of them were Pilgrims. The Pilgrims depended upon God to gain religious freedom, the freedom to worship him as he led them, not as a king or other leader declared they should worship. They also realized their dependence upon each other and in this way set up a government for themselves, later electing William Bradford as their first governor. They knew that they needed some unity in their community, to be able to live and work together. Before coming to America, Pilgrims had spent some time in Holland, at Leyden, and later at Amsterdam. They were not a part of the religious community in Holland and did not feel at home there, so they returned to England and set sail for America.

The Salem Covenant was written in 1629 by Puritans, who formed the first Congregational church gathered in America, in Salem, Massachusetts. (The Puritans had originally stayed in England, trying to purify the Church of England. Pilgrims are sometimes called Separatists because they left the Church of England in order to serve God.) There was already a church at the first settlement at Plymouth, Massachusetts (Plimoth Colony);

SESSION IV. B.

CH.2

LESSON: COVENANTS IN CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY (cont.)

this church at Plymouth had actually been gathered before the Pilgrims from Scrooby came across the ocean to what is now New England. The Salem Covenant is used as a model or as the actual covenant when a Congregational church is gathered.

Although our own church had a covenant for a long time, in 1978 (that was near the time when some of you were born), Merrill Congregational Christian Church rewrote its covenant. We may find our church covenant inside the front cover of our church hymnals. What did the rewriting of the covenant mean to our own church members? It made the language of the covenant, the agreement of the people of our church with Christ, easier to live by because it was easier to understand. Commitment to that covenant is made when one becomes a member of our church.

We will examine three documents which represent covenant relationships within Congregationalism. We can reflect on how the people who wrote them or those who later agree(d) to uphold them, were (are) concerned about:

1. How they serve God
2. How they are of help to others
3. How they help themselves

NOTES

1. Peter Benson, "A Tired Enterprise in Need of Reform." Youthworker, S 1990, 48.

2. Arthur A. Rouner, Jr., The Congregational Way of Life (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), 43.

3. Ibid., 46-47.

4. Williston Walker, The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893; reprint, Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1960), 116.

5. Adapted from John Schmidt, speech, 13 September 1990, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI.

6. Nancy Smart, We Would Be Free, The Story of the Congregational Way: Faith, Freedom, and Fellowship (rev. ed. Oak Creek, WI: The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, 1974).

7. Sonshare, Inc., Celebrating Who We Are: Heritage Resource Kit of the Commission on Christian Education, National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (Minneapolis: Sonshare, Inc., 1960).

8. Ibid.

9. Adapted from Orientation activities, 6 September 1990, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI.

10. Sources of information about Congregational covenants are: Gaius Glenn Atkins and Frederick L. Fagley, The History of American Congregationalism (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1942); Smart; and Sonshare, Inc.

11. Rouner, 43.

SOURCES CONSULTED

- Atkins, Gaius Glenn, and Frederick L. Fagley. The History of American Congregationalism. Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1942.
- Benson, Peter. "A Tired Enterprise in Need of Reform." Youthworker, S 1990, 48.
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