In 1648, pilgrims on the Congregational Way attempted to define a way of doing church in *The Cambridge Platform*. In the second chapter of the platform, the authors explore the nature of both the visible and invisible church and the people that form these bodies of faith. They write,

The Catholick church is the whole company of those called that are elected, redeemed, and in time effectually called from the state of sin and death unto a state of grace and salvation in Jesus Christ.

This church is either Triumphant, or militant. Triumphant, the number of them who are glorified in heaven: Militant the number of them who are conflicting with their enemies upon earth.

This Militant church is to bee considered as Invisible and Visible.

Invisible, in respect to their relation wherein they stand to Christ, as a body upon the head, begin united unto him, by the spirit of God, and faith in their heart: Visible, in respect of the profession of their faith, in their person, and in particular Churches: and so there may be acknowledged an universall visible church. (Walker 204-205)
Through the second chapter of the platform and on into the third and fourth chapters, the authors of the platform define and explore in very powerful and moving language the Visible Church, and its membership of the visible saints. The platform builds upon a rich tradition of the Visible Church that is illustrated through many of the classical Congregational documents and statements including: *The Points of Difference* from 1603, Henry Jacob’s *Divine Beginning and Institution of Christ's True Visible or Ministerial Church* from 1610, William Ames’ *Marrow of Theology*, and John Cotton’s *The True Constitution of a Particular Visible Church Proved by Scripture* from 1642.


Throughout this diverse literature, authors have very successfully defined both the practical and theological dimensions of the Visible Church. They have provided modern Congregationalists with a robust and solid ecclesiology that gives them a strong way of being church. Steven Peay asks, “So what does it mean to be church in the Congregational Way?” and then proceeds to answer this question (Peay 35). But building from Peay’s statement, people on the Congregational Way must ask: What does it mean to be a visible saint in the Congregational Way. Within this ecclesiology both old
and modern, the participations on the Congregational Way must flesh out both practically
and theologically what it means to be a saint on the Congregational Way. Peay
challenges Congregationalists when he writes, "Lest the 'visible saints' of the
Congregational Way become ever less visible, it is incumbent upon us that we think and
articulate our Way theologically and not politically, as we are made visible saints through
profession of Jesus' Lordship and gathered into covenanted relationship" (Peay 44). The
Congregational faith must seek an understanding of what it means for an individual saint
to walk on the Congregational Way as a member of the Visible Church. William Ames,
in his *Marrow of Theology*, defines the visible and invisible church and saint as such,

24. The militant church is both invisible and visible that is, to outward
sight or sense. 25. This distinction is not a division of genus into species,
as if there were one church visible and another invisible, or of the whole
into the members, as if one part of the church were the church were visible
and another invisible. It relates to phases of the same subject: invisibility
is a condition or mode of the church having to do with its essential and
internal form; visibility is a condition or mode of the church having to do
with its accidental or outward form...27. The accidental form is visible
because it is an outward profession of inward faith, easily perceived by
sense. (Marrow 177)

It is a fundamental question of what makes a visible saint on the Congregational
Way. Theologians on the Congregationalist Way must articulate both practically and
theologically what it means for a Congregational saint to be visible to the world. This
formation of becoming a visible saint is a very important aspect of Congregational and
indeed to Christian development, and it the leadership, pastoral and laity, who must train and educated the saints who are on the Congregational Way to be that shining beacon of visible saintliness. Ames has made it very simple that the qualities of sainthood are just visible signs of the inward faith. Sainthood is visible because other people may see it in the actions of the visible saint.

The Cambridge Platform continues in the second chapter to define church and provides an outline of several of the qualities that make up a visible saint. It notes that, A Congregational-church is by the institution of Christ a part of the Militant-Visible-Church, consisting of a company of Saints by calling, united into one body, by a holy covenant, for the publick worship of God, and the mutuall edification one of another, in the Fellowship of the Lord Jesus. (Walker 205)

As men and women, a priesthood of all believers, live and practice theology on the Congregational Way, they have a rich tradition of biblical, historical, and personal experiences to use as sources to form and develop theology. The theology of a visible saint on the Congregational Way may be developed using both sources of biblical witness and historical foundations. The Pauline writing of the New Testament and the foundational texts of Congregationalism provide excellent definitions and language of the making of a visible saint that may be used to jump into modern practical application of Congregational growth and spiritual development. Building upon these two sections of the Cambridge Platform, the Visible Church is made up of saints who exhibit five visible primary aspects or behaviors: they are called, they profess their faith through action and
voice, they live in covenant, they practice public worship, and they exhibit mutual edification towards each other.

The first aspect of a visible saint is that they are called. This concept of being called should be understood both as a corporate calling of the community of faith to live the holy life and as an individual calling of the person to live the holy life. This aspect of calling is illustrated in the Points of Difference, “That every true visible Church, is a company of people called and separated from the world by the word of God, and joined together by voluntarie profession of the faith of Christ, in the fellowship of the Gospell” (Walker 78). The visible saint is a member of the visible church. They are individuals who chose by the answering of their call from God to lead lives within and through the gospel message. The visible saint is visible to the world in their life style that demonstrates them to be a different type of person that is separated from the worldly life style. The call is made visible in the saint. Thomas Hooker gives an extensive treatment to the concept of visible saints in his Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline. Hooker writes,

The myfticall Body is the Church of true Believers, who being effectually called by his word and fpirit, by faith yeelding to the call, are fpirituall united unto Chrift, from whom, as from a head, all fpirituall life and motion is communicated on his part, and received on theirs...The Political body or Church visible refults out of that relationship which is betwixt the profeffours of the faith, when by voluntary confent they yeeld outward subjection to that government of Chrift, which in his word he hath preferibed...(Hooker 3)
The early Congregationalists argued that the visible saints are men and women who have been called by God and that the answer of this call results in their joining together into relationship with each other in the church and in local congregations. For a visible saint to be a visible saint, they must answer the call of God and join themselves to other men and women who have answered the call. In an age when so many people claim to be spiritual without being religious, it is important to stress that Congregational membership is the visible result of the inward answering of the call of God. As Christians draw nearer to God they will find themselves drawing nearer to the fellow pilgrims on the Congregational Way and indeed on the Christian Way. This builds upon an ancient hallmark of the Christian faith. Dorotheus of Gaza wrote about his aspect of congregational life over 1,600 years ago. He writes,

Suppose that this circle is the world and that the center of the circle is God. Leading from the edge to the center are a number of lines, representing ways of life. In their desire to draw near to God, the saints advance along these lines to the middle of the circle, so that the further they go, the nearer they approach one another as to God. The closer they come to God, the closer they come to one another. (qtd. Johnson)

As Congregationalists answer their call from God, the must begin to live a visible Christian life style because as they are drawing nearer to God they are becoming more holy in their individual and corporate lives toward themselves and towards each other. The concept of call has firm and well-developed roots in both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament is full of images, terms, and metaphors that describe God’s people who are partaking of the salvific act through Jesus Christ. The
Congregational Church was born through these descriptions, words, and images and people attempting to rediscover this way of being church. Wayne Meeks provides some excellent theological language to describe Pauline ecclesiology that illustrates this sense of call and this sense of holiness that may be very useful to Congregational theology. While examining the concept of the *ekklesia*, Meeks coins the terms Language of Belonging and Language of Separation (Meeks 85-94).

The theology of belonging and separation that Paul forms in Romans begins in chapter one with verses six and seven, “...including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints” (Romans 1:6-7, NRVS). Paul is establishing two very important theological concepts of his ecclesiology here in this greeting. The idea of call, *kletoi*, and the idea of saint, *hagio*, are both foundational in the development of Pauline Christian community. Paul is stressing a sense of call upon the community as “objects of divine favor and grace” (Fitzmyer 238). This sense of call finds connectedness with the concept of saint. First the community has been called into relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul uses the same sense of call, *kletoi*, that he uses earlier in chapter one to describe himself in relationship with God. Both he and the Christian communities that he is writing this epistle for, are called into relationship with Jesus Christ and this brings them into relationship with each other. Right from the very beginning of the Epistle’s greeting Paul begins using a theological language of belonging that creates a sense of unity, solidarity, and communal identity based upon this common calling. But this calling also creates a sense of visible separation between this community of saints and the wider worldly community. This illustrates a very important concept in Paul, namely that all Christian ecclesiology and all
Christian soteriology is communal. One biblical scholar has gone so far as to argue that for Paul soteriology is ecclesiology. Luke Timothy Johnson writes that “it can be argued that for him [Paul] soteriology is ecclesiology: all of his language about salvation (soteria) has a communal rather than an individual referent” (Johnson 201).

Ames with his strong use of Pauline materials in his *Marrow of Theology* builds this communal nature living of the call of God into the Congregational Way. He writes that,

> The church is indeed the company of men who are called…Because the end of calling is faith and the work of faith is a grafting into Christ, and this union brings with it communion with Christ, the church can be defined as a company of believers, a company of those who are in Christ…It is called a company because it consists of a multitude joined in fellowship or a community of many…where it is named a Body joined and made up of diverse members. Hence it is often called in Scripture a House, family, city, kingdom, or flock. (Ames 175-176)

This creates a strong sense of visible belonging while at the same time creating a sense of separation from the wider world.

The second theological thrust of this scripture from Romans is Paul’s belief that the *ekklesia* is not only called into relationship, but its membership is also called to be saints. This magnificent Greek term, *hagio*, has at its roots the very concept of holiness. The Greek term brings with it a cultural and historical meaning that includes “awe,” “reverence,” and “sacred sanctuary” (Kittel, v. 1, 88). But Paul is also bringing to it the Hebrew Testament’s sense of holiness. Elizabeth Johnson traces this sense of holiness to
the Hebrew term, *kadosh*, which takes on the connotation of belonging to God. She writes,

> In a general sense, the Hebrew word “holy” (*kadosh*) means dedicated or set apart. It carries the connotation of something separate, pure and clean, unmixed with evil, like a wellspring of clean running water, something rock hard the strength of its integrity, something burning bright in contrast to the darkness...It points to God’s being utterly transcendent, completely apart from what is finite or sinful. Yet divine holiness does not refer primarily to moral perfection or ritual purity. Instead, it bespeaks the mystery and power of a gracious God...The word “holy” bespeaks the experience of God’s being unlike anything or anyone else, in the face of which people are moved to fall silent, sing, dance, raise their arms, or fall on their knees in adoration. (Johnson 50-51)

As Paul carries this concept of saint into the New Testament communities, it carries two huge theological implications. First, it highlights that this community stands as new holy people who are heirs to God’s call upon Israel to be a holy people or a holy community set apart for God. Individuals are called to something that is namely saintliness. This provides a language of separation that gives the community a sense of identity to separate itself from the world. Secondly it carries forth the call to a holy life that is derived through the reconciliation of individuals through Jesus Christ, who is the source of holiness, to a holy communal life together. This theological idea is carried through the Epistle of Romans to the 15 and 16 chapters. In chapter 15, Paul again begins to use the word “saint” but this time it is in reference to the *ekklesia* in Jerusalem. This
demonstrates the unity of Paul's ecclesiology of the identity as holy called communities. Just as the Roman Christians are called to be saints, and all that this entails, the Christians in Jerusalem have the same call upon their community. Finally, in chapter 16 reminds the Roman Christians that they are saints again (v. 2) and therefore must welcome Phoebe from the church in Cenchreae as saints would. As holy people welcoming another member into the holy calling into their local ekklesia, they are recognizing another visible saint by recognizing his or her calling to a mutual holy life together.

In the *Cambridge Platform*, the authors write,

> By Saints, wee understand, such as haue not only attained the knowledge of the principles of Religion and are free from gros and open scandal, but also do together with the profession of faith and Repentance, walk in blameless obedience to the word... (Walker 205)

This powerful statement illustrates three aspects that are results of call. The visible saint's life is visibly free of scandalous behavior. The visible saint's life is a holy life that illustrates Christian virtue and charity. Edmund Morgan writes “to make the visible church as much as possible like the invisible, the later Congregationalists argued that the visible church in admitting members should look for signs of faith” (Morgan 34). Visible saints are men and women who live out their faith. They show the signs of their faith through their actions and words. They demonstrate the signs of their faith through their outward actions as they “walk in blameless obedience to the word.” These outward behaviors were very important to the founders of the Congregational Way. To live as a visible saint, people must demonstrate their faith through their behavior. Ames provides
excellence language that illustrates this separation from the world and this belonging to God language. He writes,

Because of this receiving, calling is termed conversion, Acts 26:20. All who obey the call of God are completely turned from sin to grace and from the world to follow God in Christ. It is also called regeneration or the very beginning of a new life, a new creation, a new creature. (Ames 158-159)

The visible saint's calling is a calling to a life within the community. The calling is to live the holy life not only as an individual but also with a community of faith. Hooker illustrates the importance of communal call as an outgrowth of the individual's call. He writes,

For take all the faithful whether they be feemingly or fincerely fuch, scattered up and down the face of the whole earth, these are but like scattered ftones in the freet or timber felled in the woods, as yet there is neither wall made up, nor frame erected...But they cannot (to common fenfe) be thought to make a visible communion when they are, not only fevered one from another, but it may fo fall out, as in times of perfecution, they be wholly unknown each to the other...But the church we are to attend, muft be visible: fo many as may comely meet together in one place...But they cannot (to common fenfe) be thought to make a visible communion when they are, not only fevered one from another, but it may fo fall out, as in times of perfecution, they be wholly unknown each to the
other... But the church we are to attend, must be visible: so many as may comely meet together in one place...(Hooker 45)

The expression of the visible saint’s faith is the visible church. The call of God upon the visible saint brings that man or woman into community with other men and women who have also been called by God. These people walk on the Congregational Way together. The call upon each of their lives is to live a holy life as a community of God in Christ. All of these expressions of faith from Ames and Hooker illustrate the firm Congregational nature of the call. One person cannot make a church. The Christian faith while it can be persevered in isolation is meant to exist in community. The visual expression of the believer’s call and faith is the body of the believers that is the holy community of the church.

These visible saints in their communities of faith must continue on beyond their sense of call by God to live a holy life. The two acts are totally linked into one another. The call does not exist without the visible signs of being called. According to the biblical and historical sources, to be a visible saint, a person must also profess their faith in both voice and action. William Ames writes that “the profession of the true faith is the most essential mark of the church” (Ames 181). This profession is not only the voicing of their faith but in the living out of their faith in actions. Ames writes, “Their acts of communion among themselves are all those in which they strive to do good to each other. The acts are especially those which directly further their communion with God in Christ” (Ames 178). Also least any of the believers argue that these actions of faith are only expression of faith that he or she has a duty to demonstrate to his or her fellow members of the faith i.e. saint to saint, Ames writes, “Many acts of kind are to be performed
towards those who are not yet members of the church, for they ought to be judged as belonging to it potentially” (Ames 178).

Thomas Hooker devotes the whole of chapter six of his Survey to the Summe of Church Disciple to the question of profession. In the chapter right before this consideration, Hooker has asked whether or not baptism makes a person a member of the visible church. He has concluded that baptism does not make a person a member of the visible church and in chapter six he also concludes that profession in its traditional sense does not make a person a member of the church because for Hooker the verbal profession of faith is too limited. He argues that, “Profession is yet larger, and includes alfo a futable carriage in the life, to far as the profeffion which is made, is void of feandalous courfes” (Hooker 60). In other words, Hooker believes that profession is not only the verbal utterances of person, but must also be viewed as the visible profession seen through that person’s actions. When this is the case Hooker believes that “Profeffion conceived according to the complafe of the former explication, doth make (add a caufall power with baptifme to) a member of the vifible church, and fo a member of all the vifible congregations on earth” (Hooker 61).

The theological concepts are building upon a firm biblical foundation. In one of Paul’s most moving passages, he writes “because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9, NRSV). Profession is key to as a visible aspect of the saint’s participation in the savific act of Jesus. Biblical scholar Joseph Fitzmyer writes “Faith begins with a confession of the lips that ‘Jesus is Lord,’...This is not a mere external or public affirmation, but the inmost and profound dedication of a person to God in the Lord Jesus”
The interpretation of profession as both voice and action provides a very powerful visible sense to the visible saint. What may be heard by the ears as profession must also be seen with the eyes to demonstrate the visibility of saintliness. The inmost transformational change of the call will be professed in ways that make the visible saint a visible beacon of light and hope to the world around him or her.

One of the most important aspects of being a visible saint on the Congregational Way of the Christian is that their communities of faith exist together in covenant. As the Cambridge Platform states, “A Congregational-church is by the institution of Christ a part of the Militant-Visible-Church, consisting of a company of Saints by calling, united into one body, by a holy covenant…” (Walker 205). The concept of church covenant is one of the foundational expressions of the Congregational Way. This is the method by which the individual unites himself or herself to the local community faith. This ties the aspect of calling into the behavior of professing and provides an outward visible symbol of the saint’s Christian faith. William Ames writes, “believers do not make a particular church, even thought by chance they may meet together and live together in the same place unless they are joined together by a special bond among themselves” (Ames 180). For Ames this special bond is the covenant. He writes,

This bond is a covenant, expressed or implicit, by which believers bind themselves individually to perform all those duties toward God and toward one another which relate to the purpose of the church and its edification…This joining together by covenant makes a church only as it looks towards the exercising of the communion of the saints. (Ames 180)
The Biblical foundations of Covenant as it relates to the Christian communities of faith would take volumes to explore, but a few themes from the Pauline materials illustrate the strong biblical theology of church covenant. The Anchor Bible Dictionary defines Covenant as “an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance” (Freedman, v. 1, 1179). The sense of covenant is a bedrock of the biblical story and the living out of the Christian faith, and the Congregationalist tradition has taken this bedrock as the theological thrust of their expression of the Christian faith. When Jesus provided his fellowship with the New Covenant at the Last Supper, the sacrament of the Eucharist became a visible symbol of the disciples participation in the New Covenant. Paul writes of this new covenant in First Corinthians 11:25, “as this cup is the new covenant [kaine diatheke] in my blood.” The visible saint is participating in this new covenant each and every time they take the visible symbol of it in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Also Paul’s use of kletoi hagioi [called to be saints] in the Epistle to the Romans implies the covenantal relationship of God and the saints and the saints among themselves (Hawthorne 182).

The Cambridge Platform gives a very direct and powerful statement on the need for visible saints to have a covenant. The authors of the Platform write, “Saints by Callings must have a Visible-Political- Union amongst themselves” (Walker 207).

In moving and beautiful language the visible saints of the Cambridge Platform write,

This Voluntary Agreement, Consent, or Covenant (for all these are here taken for the same): Although the more express and plain it is, the more fully it puts us in mind of out mutuall duty and stirreth us up to it and
leveth lesse room for the questioning of the Truth of the Church-estate of a company of professors and the Truth of membership of particular persons...where there is real agreement and consent, of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one Congregation for the publick worship of God and mutuall edification (Walker 208).

_The Cambridge Platform_ does not dedicate any one form or type of covenant that the visible saint must enter into but rather it recognizes that they are many forms of covenants including written, spoken, and even "silent consent, without any writing, or expression of words at all" (Walker 208). The visible saint in order to be a visible saint to the senses must live in covenant with God and with those who God has called. The Covenant is much more than just a form of government or bylaws. The covenant is a solemn agreement of called men and women who have professed by voice and action to live together in holy community. Theologian Elizabeth Johnson has explored the visible saint very effectively and powerfully. She writes,

> An individual may be regarded as a saint or holy one, but only in virtue of belonging to the community. Furthermore, the designation implies that the community is theocentric, for its existence is grounded on the call of God, the living memory of Jesus Christ, and the consecrating gift of the Holy Spirit. It intimates that the community has a strong sense of ethical integrity, for while its sanctity is a gift given without regard for deservingness, the gift brings a responsibility to live worthy of this calling in love and justice. (Johnson 61)
To live in covenant is to be a visible saint in the visible church. The covenant is not the rule of law but rather the living out of the holy life. It is the visible expression of the inward covenant of grace that extends the salvation to the saint and creates the outward fellowship of living together in beloved community. Each member of the covenant must live out the terms of the covenant as a sign of his or her visible sainthood. Hooker states it very plainly when he writes, “Mutuall covenanting and confederating of the Saints in the fellowship of the faith according to the order of the Gospel is that which gives constitution and being to a visible church” (Hooker 46).

The visible saint’s participation in the church covenant may be either explicit or implicit. Hooker defines each as,

An Explicite Covenant is, when there is an open expreffion and profeffion of this ingagement in the face of the Aflembly, which perfons by mutuall content undertake in the waies of Chrift.

An Implicite Covenant is, when in their pracfice they do that, whereby they make themfelves ingaged to walk in fuch a foceity, according to fuch rules of government, which are exercited amongst them and to submit themselves there unto: but doe not make any verball profeffion there of.

(Hooker 47)

Hooker argues that an implicit covenant may be fully sufficient but that an explicit covenant is better. While the sacrament of Baptism makes the Christian an official member of the universal church, it is his or her participation as a visible symbol in the local church covenant that signals his or her intent and dedication to the congregation. The covenant is firstly a dedication to oneself to Christ and then to the other signers of
this local covenant. The visible saints enters into a covenant relationship with God and with the other visible saints to live out their holy callings together.

The importance of covenant may not be overstated for visible saints on the Congregational Way. Whole volumes such as John von Rohr’s *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* has explored and defined covenant’s role in Congregational theology. The Congregational covenant found in each individual congregation is a document in place and time that binds that community together. More than by-laws and statements of faith, the words of a church covenant provides each and every visible saint in that time and place view and method to see himself or herself as a visible member of this fellowship of the faithful. The church covenant for visible saints on the Congregational Way are living breathing documents that are a holy bond between the individual and the community of faith. These documents provide signs and seals similar to the marriage vows that have been spoken and witnessed before God.

Two of the major behaviors of a visible saint are expressions of this covenanted life together that are corporate worship and mutual edification. Ames writes that “natural worship is absolutely basic to salvation...Although we obtain eternal life neither by merit nor by virtue of our obedience, this part of obedience has such an essential connection with faith resting upon Christ for eternal life that it cannot be separated from it” (Ames 240). Ames notes that worship should be understood as both internal and as external, which makes it an attribute of the visible saint. Worship is a process and an activity that is an internal relationship between God and the believer and an external activity of the corporate community toward its maker and savior. All worship is directed at God and to God. All worship is to be scripturally based. Hooker writes,
The ordinances which these are to dispense, as preaching, prayer, feals, Church-censures, etc. all these are to be found in the word, and should be fetched from the word: and now under the Gospel, they are and ought to be the same; in all places, amongst all people at all times, in all succeeding generations, until the coming of Christ. (Hooker 5)

This scriptural based natural worship is an expression of faith, hope, and love toward God. It is the central duty of the community of faith to express and proclaim the goodness of God through public worship. The worshipping community is a visible witness to the world.

_The Cambridge Platform_ does not prescribe a set form or type of worship; rather, it directs the visible toward participation in public worship with the local community of faith. On the Congregational Way, worship is designed and ordered at the local level. This allows the public worship of a location to be meaningful and relevant to that worshiping body of faith. Worship is an action and expression that brings the community together for their purpose. It is visible saints in the visible acting out of the word of God as a group living holy covenanted lives that is the public worship of God.

Another very important behavior that exhibits the saintliness of a visible saint is their mutual edification of each other. Mutual edification is a visible sign of the express of the transforming grace of God. As the visible saints draw nearer and nearer to God, their relationships with each other must become deeper and more grace filled.

Paul writes a perfect definition of mutual edification in the Epistle to the Romans. He writes,
Love one another with mutual affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord...Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone with evil for evil, but take thoughts for what is noble in the sight of all...live peaceably with all. (Romans 12:10-18, NRSV)

Earlier the Paul has argued all Christians are one in the body, and now he, in these beautiful refrain of scripture, gives in the members of that body a list of ethical demands with the Christian community. It is the rule of brotherly and sisterly love. Paul uses the word *philadelphia* to demark it from the wider term of *agape* love (Fitzmyer p. 653). In this section, Paul provides visible saints with a list of behaviors and actions that they should demonstrate in their actions with each other and indeed with the larger world. These are the outward visible signs of the inward transformation from the accepting of God’s call.

Peay writes, “We are, in part, Congregational churches because other visible saints recognize us for what we are” (Peay p. 42). Christians should recognize each other by their Christian like attitudes and behaviors. This goes back to the idea of a language of belonging and a language of separation. The visible saints must live a life that allows other visible saints to see him or her as a saint. The framers of the *Cambridge Platform* note that “By saints, wee understand...[those who] walk in blameless obedience to the
word, so that in charitable discretion they may be accounted by calling, (thought perhaps some or more of be unsound & hypocrites inwardly…” (Walker p. 205-206). The authors of the platform explain that sometimes it will be hard to tell if a person is a called visible saint, but in the Congregational Way visible saints are given the benefit of the doubt. Mutual edification is a process of educating and developing other saints and potential saints through the law of love. Mutual edification builds up and supports other visible saints through behaviors and attitudes that encourage and strengthen the whole community of faith. Love, faith, and hope should become visible aspects of the daily lives of Christian community. Mutual edification is a process of building the beloved community into the DNA of Congregational existence together. It is not just about being nice to each other; rather, it is an outward sign of faith that these visible saints are brothers and sisters of choice.

According to the Encyclopedia of Religion, “saint is a designation that Christianity has used to recognize individuals deemed to have lived lives of heroic virtue and who, as a result, dwell eternally with God” (Jones 8033). The Encyclopedia continues to make two major points in the exploration of sainthood in Christianity. First the title saint is a “posthumous phenomenon,” and secondly that “Under the Roman persecution that began in the first century, many Christians gave up their lives rather than renounce their faith. These martyrs became the first person to be given the title hagios (saint), though earlier the word had been used in the plural to designate the faithful in general” (Jones 8034). The concept of the visible saint relies upon this much earlier reading, that is Pauline reading, of the term saint. Theologically and practically the term visible saint carries huge potential for the visible saints on the Congregational Way.
Visible saints in the Congregational tradition, that is built upon both a biblical and historical base, are living men and women who live their call to live holy lives in covenant with a community of faith through the practice of public worship and mutual edification. Theologian Elizabeth Johnson calls the idea of communion of the saints a "sleeping symbol," and indeed the whole concept of sainthood is a sleeping symbol that needs to wake up. The concept of visible sainthood is matter of Christian identity. As Congregational theologian recapture the biblical and historical meaning of the concept, they will be able to give the visible saints on the Congregational Way a powerful tool of identity and faith in action. Visible sainthood may become a tool for teaching Congregationalists about their faith tradition and more importantly about their identity and duties as Christians. As pastors and educators teach and learn about mutual edification, the bonds of covenant, the importance of public worship, the value of call, and the power of profession, their saintliness will become more and more visible to the world. They will continue to draw nearer and nearer to God and to each other in their spiritual pilgrimage.

In 1648, pilgrims on the Congregational Way attempted to define a way of doing church in *The Cambridge Platform*. They provided their theological descendents with powerful tools to keep the faith current in time and space. The language of the visible saints in the Platform continues to provide and empower men and women on the Congregational Way today with theological language to make the visible saints more visible. Theologians and pastors on the Congregational Way are visible saints in process who have the holy calling to help other called visible saints to become more visible in their saintliness.
Works Cited


