

*Stock Snippets for July 2012*

**July 1, 2012**

*These Historical Snippets involve Monthly Themes linked to Daily Themes.*

*Our monthly themes for July are: Ancient Times – Revolution, Emigration, & Values*

*Our Daily Theme is: Ancient Times – Revolution*

Church Historical Records include an extraordinary declaration embodied in minutes of a 21 June 1774 meeting held by the Connecticut General Association of Ministers. The declaration was reproduced in Fairfield West proceedings dated 11 October 1774 with instructions that Ministers were to transmit same to local parishes. It entered our records one month later.

The original 21 June 1774 meeting did – as claimed – address “sundry interesting and important matters”: a then imminent American Revolution, Emigration, and Values. Our focus today is Revolution.

British tea was dumped into Boston Harbor on 16 December 1773. Parliament, in retaliation, passed several Coercive Acts – including one that shut down Boston Port. Poverty and hunger, thereby, afflicted most inhabitants. The Connecticut General Association statement expressed, movingly, deep compassion and support for our suffering Massachusetts brethren.

*A Letter of Condolence to the Ministers of Boston under the present Melancholy Circumstances of that Town:*

*We your Brethren of the Colony of Connecticut by Delegation from the Several Counties in general Association in our Annual meeting cannot but feel deeply impressed with the present melancholy threatening Situation of America in general and the Distressed State of the Town of Boston in particular -- Suffering the Resentment of the British Parliament by which the Subsistence of thousands is taken away. We readily embrace this opportunity to manifest our hearty Sympathy with you in your present Distresses. We consider you as Suffering in the Common Cause of America, in the Cause of Civil Liberty which – if taken only – we fear would involve the ruin of religious Liberty also.*

*Gladly would we Contribute everything in our power for your Encouragement and relief. However, our Situation enables us to do little more than express our Sincere Affectional Concern and with fervent address to recommend your cause and the Cause of America, the Cause of Liberty and – above all – of Religion to the Father of Mercies who can easily afford effectual relief, who has the hearts of all at his Disposal. Can turn them as - ---- we feel deeply Sensible what a heavy Load must Lie upon the minds of Ministers of*

*Boston. Enough to Sink their Spirits unless armed with vigorous Fortitude and Resolution.*

*In hopes it may afford you Some Consolation, we assure you of our Sincere Condolence and un-remitting prayers in your behalf and that we Shall in every Suitable with the good people of this Colony to concur in every proper measure Calculated to afford relief to America in general and the Distressed Town of Boston in particular. We pray that the ministers of Boston may be inspired by the great heart of the Church with wisdom sufficient for their Discretion in Such a Critical Day as the present. And we cannot but hope the united prayers of America may obtain that audience in Heaven which will ensure Salvation to us-and that God would give them Firmness, Unanimity, Patience, Prudence and every virtue which they need to support them under their heavy trials and enable them to stand firm in the glorious Cause of Liberty and express such a temper and exhibit such an example as shall be well pleasing to God and recommend them as the compassioned of their fellow men. We earnestly pray that God would humble in all under a deep Sense of our numerous transgressions and criminal Defects, Show us the absolute necessity of Repentance and Reformation, humble us under His Mighty Hand, and pour out a fruit of fervent Supplication on you and us and all his people in this Land.*

## **July 8, 2012**

*These Historical Snippets involve Monthly Themes linked to Daily Themes.*

*Our monthly themes for July are: Ancient Times – Revolution, Emigration, & Values*

*Our Daily Theme is: Ancient Times – Emigration*

Last week, we scrutinized 21 June 1774 minutes recorded by the Connecticut General Association of Ministers. These proceedings, embedded in our historical records, illuminate three challenges: impending Revolution, Emigration, and Values. First discussion, fittingly on Independence Day Eve, addressed a Pastoral resolution supporting blockaded Boston . Today another American theme focuses vision – Emigration.

Population was shifting Westward. The Wilderness beckoned promising better land, better compensation, better jobs, and better chances. What it meant – then as now – was real estate sales, vacant homesteads, and lost friends. What it meant – then as now – was empty Pews.

Ministers had to address empty Pews. Exodus from local parishes was one thing, exodus from Faith another. Shepherds were needful to keep migrating Sheep within the Fold. Congregationalism required Missionaries: Wilderness-venturesome spirits pledged to preserve wandering souls.

The 21 June 1774 General Association meeting sketched practicalities. It recommended that “several Ministers of this Colony” promote a Subscription for Missionary support. Fund raising took more than two years. Matters reached fruition at a 14 September 1776 General Association meeting in New Haven. Three resolutions went forward. One was that, sufficient support having been expressed, two Missionaries would be selected the Spring ensuing. Another involved appointing one person per county to collect donations. The third provision was that a three-person Committee would gather all monies, appoint said Missionaries to a 4-6 month term, send them Northwestward no farther than the New York boundary, and undertake their supervision. This latter task included maintenance of an exact journal describing missionary activities—the better to advise successors.

Church activity addressed a larger goal: one parallel to, but distinct from, secular activity. Both involved Westward expansion. The latter, however, aimed at land; the former aimed at maintaining Congregationalism as a national religion. Such maintenance could happen only if our people’s Faith went with them into new territory. It must be remembered that Connecticut, at least by land claim, embraced more ground than today. British boundaries went East-West – lines drawn to establish rough parity between 13 colonies. Connecticut included mileage in the Western Reserve (northeast Ohio), Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California. This status persisted from 1662 until 1800 when, in exchange for Federal assumption of Revolutionary War debt, our state abandoned its claim.

Connecticut lost land. New England Faith, however, flourished Westward. Congregationalism kept growing. Its churches, colleges, and architecture pervade what were then “new territories.” Those Association Ministers knew what they were about; and they got where they were going.

## **July 19, 2012**

*These Historical Snippets involve Monthly Themes linked to Daily Themes.*

*Our monthly themes for July are: Ancient Times – Revolution, Emigration, & Values*

*Our Daily Theme is: Ancient Times – Values*

The present monthly journey explores meeting minutes. Embedded in our own historical documents, they record proceedings from two Connecticut General Association of Ministers sessions – one held 21 June 1774, the other convened 27 months later on 14 September 1776. They reflect, collectively, three topics: Revolution, Emigration, and Values.

All three were matters Ministers felt obligated to address. Two, Revolution and Emigration, arose from secular affairs. One, Values, was spiritual. Values, being spiritual, fell under Churchly purview. It warranted direct action – and justified, from clerical viewpoint, extreme measures. Today we address Values.

Present space is narrow. Time bars treatment of The Halfway Covenant or its consequence: The First Great Awakening. Values, meaning public morality, were deemed at risk. New generations had wandered from Puritan tradition; they had become materialistic, dishonest, and corrupt. On 14 September 1776, General Association Ministers prescribed an antidote: Church Discipline. They meant playing hardball.

The Connecticut Association advised each parish to appoint a Committee of Inspection, Inquiry, and Information. Drawn from a small number of pious Brethren, said Committee operated under direct Pastoral supervision. Its mandate was four-fold.

First, the Committee was instructed to maintain “a friendly Christian watch” over all Church members. Straying sheep, insofar as possible, must be led back – gently – to righteous ways. Second, the Brethren must oversee families – assuring that Parents guided Children through good example and wholesome Discipline. Third, the Committee had warrant to act in loco parentis when Parents dishonored these obligations. Should intervention fail to reclaim such Children, the Brethren must “dissolve themselves of their watch and care” – abandoning them to different Authority. The fourth provision was still tougher. Said Brethren had sanction to make inquiry and gather evidence about people deemed “fearless” in delinquency. Resolution through “private measures” must be tried first; failing that, they were empowered to exhibit a formal written complaint – supported by evidence – against miscreants. The Church might then proceed against offenders, effecting “righteous judgment” as necessary. Respecting civil right, the accused could make full defense and exhibit charges in their own name.

Tension between authority and personal liberty runs timeless. Governance determines the fate of Nations – and of Churches. Individuals yearn to breathe free. Striking balance, then as now, is Justice; but Justice, then as now, resides in the beholder’s eye.

**July 26, 2012**

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*Our monthly themes for July are: Ancient Times – Revolution, Emigration, & Values*

*Our Daily Theme is: Modern Times – Boston Replies*

This month’s journey began, fittingly enough, with a Revolutionary War-time message to Boston. It ends, fittingly enough, with Boston’s modern-time reply: 238 years later—and 10 weeks before we become one quarter millennium old. The Connecticut General Association, met at Mansfield 21 June 1774, dispatched support to beleaguered Boston then. Boston, engaged in July 2012 dialogue, hastens to our support now. History, given time, runs full circle. Given time, it must.

Life affords, on occasion, opportunity. Seizing opportunity opens channels. The American Association of Law Libraries Annual Conference, held last week at Boston, afforded opportunity: a long awaited chance for in-person dialogue with the Congregational Library. That opportunity, being seized, opens channels for getting our 250th Anniversary message out.

The Church Historian, clutching MTA Charlie Card in sweaty palm, traversed the Green Line to 14 Beacon Street on 24 July. Executive Director Margaret Bendroth, Librarian Claudette Newhall, and Archivist Jessica Steytler extended warm greetings. An indispensable networking support, hitherto virtual, grew yet more indispensable face-to-face. Comprehensive discussion took place about the 250th Anniversary Celebration's importance in context. It was resolved that these Historical Snippets will run henceforth on the Congregational Library blog – an intensively visited place assuring general release. Once linked with local websites, the host blog offers a platform for broadcast far and wide.

Victory demands getting the messages out. Our message, 238 years ago, gave Boston hope. They were not alone. 238 years later, Old North Church replies: One if by land, two if by sea. We are not alone.