

MINISTER TOGETHER

*To minister to others locally, nationally, and globally with the same fervor as we minister to ourselves, through the sharing of our talents, gifts, and resources.
(From our congregation's Mission Statement)*

God calls us to minister to others through the sharing of our talents, gifts and resources. Another part of that message is that God also calls us to love his earth and to care for his people.

First Congregational Church was engaged in global ministry before our church was organized in 1856. New England Congregationalists migrated west of the Missouri River to this area in support of ending slavery. They were determined that the Kansas Territory would become a 'free state' and a war was underway to keep that from happening.

A few years later the Rev. Charles Blood arrived, sent here by the American Home Missionary Society in Ohio to bring spiritual support to those early arrivals. In 1859 a church building was dedicated at our present location. A portion of that church remains on the land where it was built and is now called Pioneer Hall. Certainly these early settlers were in a global ministry as they shared God's love for his earth in the sharing of their talents, gifts, and resources.

Our family moved to Manhattan in 1956 and found that the city was on the verge of changes: segregated elementary education ended; higher salaries for male than female teachers ended; a courageous realtor helped a black family purchase a house north of Poyntz Avenue. The City Commission also established a Human Rights Advisory Board. I was one of the seven members, a Methodist at the time, and two were members of First Congregational Church. Change has been slow and the struggle difficult but our church has persisted. Our church continues that effort in our continuing promise that we will minister to ourselves through the sharing of our talents, gifts and resources and also will love God's earth and its people.

Barbara Withee

