

CELEBRATING YOUR CHURCH'S ANNIVERSARY TIPS AND TRICKS FOR A MEMORABLE COMMEMORATION

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

KYLE ROBERTS: Well, good afternoon, everyone. My name is Kyle Roberts, and I am the Executive Director of the Congregational Library & Archives. And I want to welcome you to today's virtual program, "Celebrating Your Church's Anniversary," with Keiko Denbeau, Linda Lacy, and Norm Erlendson.

I want to begin by acknowledging that the Congregational Library & Archives resides in what is now known as Boston, which is in the Place of the Blue Hills, the homeland of the Massachusetts people, whose relationships and connections with the land continue to this day and into the future.

For those of you joining us for the first time, the Congregational Library & Archives is an independent research library. Established in 1853, the CLA's mission is to foster a deeper understanding of the spiritual, intellectual, cultural, and civic dimensions of the Congregational story and its ongoing relevance in the 21st century.

Now we do this through free access to our research library of 225,000 books, pamphlets, periodicals, and manuscripts, and our digital archive, which has more than 130,000 images, many drawn from our New England's Hidden Histories project. Throughout the year, we offer educational programs and research fellowships for students, scholars, churches, and anyone interested in Congregationalism's influence on the American story. Please check our website, congregationallibrary.org, to learn more about what we do and for news of forthcoming events.

I've been here a little over two years, and one of the most frequent reference questions that we receive at the library is about how to plan for a church anniversary. Whether your church is celebrating 25 years or 350 years, an anniversary really does offer a great opportunity to make meaningful and creative connections with your congregation's mission and its story: past, present, and future. It's a great time to learn more about the people who founded and led your church, the role that it's played in the community, and about events that have really shaped its unique identity.

So I knew that I wanted to kick off our fall 2024 programming season with a roundtable that would feature people in Congregational churches across the continental United States and Hawai'i who've recently helped to plan and lead church anniversary celebrations.

So our format today is as follows. I've asked our three panelists to start us off with just kind of a brief introduction of themselves and their church, and a little bit of an overview of what they did for their program, for their anniversary programs. Then we're gonna have some conversation, a roundtable conversation with some questions that I pulled from, you know, what we get from our reference inquiries. And then we're gonna have plenty of time for Q&A from all of you, our great audience members.

So we have three speakers, and I'm gonna introduce them in the order in which they're going to do their introductions.

So Linda Lacy's first. Linda received an interdisciplinary BA degree with emphases in art, education, and communication from Chadron State College. As an artist in residence with the Nebraska Arts Council for the past 25 years, Linda has received and instructed numerous painting and pottery workshops for children and adults in schools and communities across Nebraska. She's also been a member, a treasurer, and a landscape manager of Ashby Congregational Church in Ashby, Nebraska for the last eight years.

Our second speaker is Keiko Denbeau, who is a grandmother and a retired Army officer. And who gets the award for persistence in getting onto our Zoom program today. She's been a member of the Kawaiaha'o Church for 40 years. Between volunteering at her church and working on a federally funded grant, also at her church, Keiko spends her time making memories with her children and grandchildren.

Our third speaker is Reverend Norm Erendson who has been pastoring Congregational churches in Washington state and Connecticut since 1990. Norm was the pastor of the First Congregational Church of Snohomish, Washington, and so he's a twofer for us. So he was... helped plan their centennial celebration in 2003. And then more recently was... and is more recently the pastor of First Congregational Church of Stonington, Connecticut, also known as the Road Church, which is in the midst of a year-long celebration of its 350th anniversary.

So we've got some wonderfully creative people for you today. I'm going to ask Linda to come up first. I'm gonna ask her to turn on her video.

LINDA LACY: Yes. This is the Ashby Congregational Church in Ashby, Nebraska, which is a very remote area in western Nebraska. We probably have about 5 to 7 active families in this church. And we put on quite a celebration.

First of all, I want to say that I have been a member of this church for 18 years, not eight. I have been their treasurer for eight years. I am married. I have five children. My husband and I have five children and eight grandchildren.

Our celebration was June 22nd and 23rd of 2024, and we celebrated 100 years. A couple years before we started planning, we had an incident of a hailstorm that threw some stones

through our beautiful stained glass windows, which were all memorialized, and they were all 100 years old, and it devastated us, but it moved us to start some renovations. We had all of those refurbished, all... a new roof put on, several new items put into our church to renovate including the repainting of the sanctuary.

And most importantly, but not the most expensive, was our front door. We said we had to have a new front door. This is our welcome to our church. And so from a \$10,000 project went to \$75,000 project within days.

And we just said, this is time to celebrate. And for 100 years, our little town is quite unique. It's a town of probably 50 people. It is not the county seat, but we are the only church in this town, so it's very, very much a community church. And so we decided, we started planning about two years ahead of time.

And it was obvious for our little town, it's very unique, but we are known for our country music dances in the street. And we said, this is typical for our church celebration to have a country music dance in the street. And we decided it would be a local band. And a young man is a new star, country music star, has recorded in Nashville, and so we hired him. It had to be a year ahead of time, and we got him to come with his full band to perform this street dance.

And we decided to have a barbecue, also completely free to the public. Now, this is the poster that we had, the band helped us make, and we included, of course, the part of the church service on Sunday, which I'll talk about in a minute. But this was to bring the people into our little town because of its remote area.

We started out forming committees right away. One thing that was very important to us was to involve the public. We had to involve everyone that we could to help us. First of all, because there's so many, so few of us.

We started sending letters to past members and pastors. We advertised. We sent this letter that, with the poster to the radio stations, and I asked that we are... said we were a nonprofit. We were not going to charge people to come to this. It was free to the public, though we put out free will donation buckets. And therefore maybe they would give us free advertising. And they did.

It was amazing that people came forward. If you don't ask, you'll never get the answers you need. And I even got a phone call from one of the radio stations asking me to come in for a, for an interview, which I had to drive 65 miles to go do. And I said, you bet I will do this.

People were just amazed at why our church was going to sponsor something like this, and it just was a natural to us.

We fed over 200 people at our barbecue the night of the dance. It was so well organized. We ended up having someone local have a wedding that same day. And we said, oh my gosh, how are we ever going to do all this because all of the... the motel, the hotel that we had in the local town was full. So we had to search out accommodations.

For our pastors, we sent letters asking for past pastors to come... and posters. On Sunday, also, we had planned for additional music, gospel music. We had the pastors speaking. We had a dinner all ready, homemade by everyone that attended the church. Besides, the barbecue was catered and we had that all, which we all participated in that, too, the night before.

We had also at the church a table with historical memorabilia, photographs, books, anything that anyone could contribute to the many years, the 100 years that we had going. I had earlier made a new Facebook page for the church. We did a lot of information on there. People contributed old time pictures, weddings that were performed, baptisms from many years ago that added to the preparation of all of this.

And the... one thing... And this may be an odd thing to talk about, but when you're talking about getting things going, I wrote many grants. And even though we were just asking for donations, the donations started coming in in preparation for this because they know we are a small church.

And when I wrote these grants, first of all, NACCC is always there for us. They had a grant for us for performing arts, and I went to our local, like, community foundation and our Chamber of Commerce. But the most important thing was to say that this was a community celebration, not just a church celebration. And we ended up getting more money than what we asked for. It was amazing. It... definitely God was in control here. And, and then with all the donations and everything was paid for. We didn't have to take any money out of our church coffers to put on our celebration. It was amazing.

The one odd thing I want to tell everyone is that because we were not prepared for so many people, though we were prepared for, to serve 200 people, and we served that plus. We didn't want to put our plumbing in trouble at the church. So we hired and got porta potties, enough for the public. And that's something important to remember.

Had all the accommodations for any pastors and anyone else that needed something. I opened up my home to people coming. And another important part of planning is the follow up. We sent a lot of thank you notes. We sent gift cards, what money allowed, and lots of pictures of after the, of the party and everything that went on on our Facebook page with the church.

[Loudspeaker Talking] Sorry, I'm in a school.

So our Facebook page is just simply Ashby Congregational Church on Facebook, and we have since... since our big celebration, our church has continually had new visitors stopping in.

Of course I have... I own and operate a pottery shop and art gallery on Main Street. As you can see, I have some of my personal painting in the background here just to add a little finesse to our interview today.

And I always invite any of my visitors to stop in at our church. The door is always open if they would like to see it. So, I think that's important. Our church is in a small town, and our door is always open to anyone, and, they love that. It's a little country church.

So I guess we had a very successful celebration of 100 years. And, we have continued... it has helped our little church have new people coming to visit. We have a youth fellowship that we did not have before, it meets every week. We also have Bible studies now, adult Bible studies that we were not doing before. So it's been a great, great plus for our church.

KYLE: Well, that is a fantastic lead off for us, Linda. Thank you so much.

LINDA: You're welcome.

KYLE: I'd like to invite Keiko to come up now. And, Linda, we'll bring you back for the, for the roundtable and the Q&A.

LINDA: Okay.

KEIKO DENBEAU: Hello everyone, I'm Keiko Denbeau, and I represent Kawaiaha'o Church.

We have a unique story in that our church was started over 200 years ago. And it was because of a young Hawaiian that got converted to Christianity. And it took him all the way to New England and Connecticut to go through this faith journey, and started this faith journey where he wanted to bring back Christianity to his home country, Hawai'i.

\Sadly, he died. However, his dream, or his vision did not die. And so the story about our church over 200 years ago begins with this young man named Henry Opukahaia.

And what happens is in April, on April 23, 1820, our church gets established. And so on April 23, 2020, we were to celebrate our 200th anniversary. But as you can imagine, 2020 was the year of Covid. And so much of what we had planned, did not take fruition. But let me tell you what happened prior to that.

So you see... you see our church in front of you. This is a photo taken.. taken in 18... in the 1850s. It is a church that was really designed by our first pastor, Hiram Bingham.

So what we did, in looking forward to our bicentennial celebration was to form a committee and subcommittees three years prior to 1820, I'm sorry, 2020. And that would have been in 2017. So we had talked about and planned things like doing a luau... a major luau in April 2020, tea on the lawn too in 2020 to reenact things that were done back in the 1800s. So all of that was in the planning process.

And to launch the actual bicentennial, what we did in October 2019 was to have a delegation of church members, as well as others that were part of the organization of our church. We went back to Boston. We also went back to Connecticut, and we reenacted the way the first company of missionaries left Boston wharf in October of 1819. Did a whole bunch of celebration there, as well as doing a worship service at Park Street Church, which started the first company of missionaries to come to Hawai'i.

So a delegation, team did that reenactment in October 1819... in October 2020. I'm sorry, October 2019. And we started a new year with a whole bunch of planning. As well as the launch of the speaker series.

So in planning it, we did a video of our history of our church. So as you can see in the background, there is a video called *A Witness to Aloha*. This particular video, we had ordered multiple copies to be distributed to schools, as well as any public institutions that were interested in learning about our church, our history, history of Christianity that was brought to Hawai'i, as well as having the actual video televised over our local, our State of Hawai'i network. So it was seen statewide.

We also did a mug in commemoration of our bicentennial that was distributed to many people and should have been distributed to the luau that we would have held. And we actually had church members weave this lei in front of us. As you may well imagine, leis are a very significant part of the Hawai'ian culture. So this lei represented the colors of our church. Where this lay was woven by the members of our church with a tag that celebrated our bicentennial, as well as having a scripture reading to go with it.

So all of these were planned to have been distributed, as I said, throughout the year. Sadly, the luau did not happen. However, as I said, any form of celebration or any of that, we continued using our YouTube channel. So we are on YouTube.

And so what we did was back in September of 2019, we launched a speaker series to go along with the celebration of the bicentennial. And what we did in the speaker series is really address our history, the culture of our church. And we launched it in September of 2019, and here I am. I did the first speaker series called "If the Walls Could Speak." And because our church was laden with so much history in terms of it being a history for the kings and queens of our Hawai'i.

And because our history has so much to do with community gatherings, funerals, whether it was a big fire, so forth that, not only... a big fire in a town, Chinatown very close by, that we would house those victims of the fire. So I talked all about all of these things, and I called the speaker series, "If the Walls Could Speak," so that I could capture all the history of our church that the walls have witnessed.

So that was the first speaker series. And throughout the year, of 2020, during the year of the pandemic, we delivered the speaker series via YouTube.

So another speaker series we talked about, the way our oral language, our oral Hawai'ian language was converted to the actual, written language. So that in itself was quite a treat for many people to hear the history of, the evolution of the written language for the Hawai'ians. Which the, the missionaries had a big role in doing that.

And we also did a speaker series called, "I Am Henry Opukahaia." This is the gentleman who reenacted the story of Henry Opukahaia that I had initially introduced to all of you. This person, a young Hawai'ian, was a very key, in fact, instrumental... and we'd like to call that this is the hand of Providence that would convert a young Hawai'ian not knowing anything about God, to become part of a shipping vessel. And that would land up in New York, ultimately in Connecticut, that he would learn all about Christianity. And his dream of wanting to bring back Christianity is realized when the first company of missionaries come to Hawai'i. So here is an actor reenacting the role of Henry Opukahaia. His dream, his actual demise as he becomes a victim of disease in February of [1818], and he passes away.

So what we did throughout the year is constantly doing the speaker series, and what we did also our press releases to keep the idea of the bicentennial of our church in the forefront of, to the public.

We also did things like putting up a banner so that even as Covid happened, we would put up messages that this is our bicentennial year. We would put up messages of hope so that the public would be included in the bicentennial celebration, but also a message through the banner of hope, encouragement, and trusting the Lord that we would come back to normalcy in his time.

So, this is the way we celebrated 2020, and we closed out the year, December of 2020, in the same fashion with that every Sunday... we delivered a message so that in October of 2020, we closed out the year, stating that this is the one year of the celebration that we did. Unfortunately, we couldn't do it in person, but we connected via YouTube.

So that's our story of our bicentennial celebration. Thank you.

NORM ERLENDSON: So my name is Norm Erlendson, and I am currently pastor of the First Congregational Church of Stonington, Connecticut. It's also known as the Road Church.

I began my ministry in Congregationalism about 35 or 40 years ago in the Pacific Northwest, specifically Seattle. I've served churches in both California and Washington state before moving to Connecticut in 2018.

When I came to the Road Church, our 350th anniversary was about five years away. And so, this was kind of on the top of my agenda to kind of start early, deciding how we wanted to proceed with this, what we think we could, thought we could do.

And so we... in 2019, we had a kind of a vision retreat that talked about a lot of things regarding the church when it starts, you know, with a new pastor, maybe, there's some new opportunities there and some adjustments that need to be made. But included in that was the 350th that was looming, not too far down the distant future.

And so we wanted to get an early start. And, we... so we cast a vision, and the church actually had some good ideas of what we wanted to do. But it wasn't very long before Covid came, and the whole process kind of came to a grinding halt.

The church didn't completely shut down. We didn't meet in person for several months in 2020. We slowly started coming back. We, started doing services online, and video, and YouTube, just so that people who couldn't come or were not ready to come, would be able to keep in touch with the church and have a church service. So, we did that for, better part of a year.

And once we started getting back to normal, as best as best we could, we again, we revisited what we wanted to do for our 350th. And this started becoming serious in 2022, just two years before the event.

Our church was founded in June of 1674. And so we wanted to do something in early June to have any, like, a weekend event, Saturday and Sunday event that would be a community-wide celebration of this church. Of course, the church was founded just a few years after the town of Stonington. And so we, you know, we're a well known church, respected and all of that, but we are a small church. And so, we had to kind of take that into account as to what we were able to do. Even though we're including the community in it, we... it is not a fundraiser.

It was going to be something that the church was going to host, and to pay for, and to just promote and invite as many as possible to come and join us on June 1st and come to our worship service Sunday, June 2nd.

So, everybody was excited about it. And, we really did decide to, try to do as much as we could. And so we started forming a committee of about 10 to 12 people. Each person had an area of responsibility to take care of that, so that after we had had a meeting and said what we needed to cover, we had a person in charge of each of these things.

For instance, parking. We didn't know how many people would come. So we had to make special arrangements. Our property was five acres. But it's not all, you know, open to parking. So it turned out that there are two schools, about a mile on each side of us off of the Pequot Trail, which is the road that the church has been on since its founding. And we arranged for, we got permission on Saturday, on the Saturday of the event from each of these schools to, direct... have use, have use of their parking lot for the people who came to our event. And we also arranged for a shuttle service between both of those areas to go back and forth constantly, picking up people, bringing them to our event, and then taking them back. So, that was our plan on that. That was a major logistical challenge that actually worked out very well.

Let's see, one person, we decided... as far as the celebration and the food, we thought that it would be easiest and probably most successful to contact food truck services. And so we ended up getting five food trucks that agreed to come on that Saturday. Variety of things. And, that proved to be an excellent idea. It... we wouldn't have been able to do anything ourselves for so many, and so, and everybody was really happy with that. And that turned out to be a real winning idea for us.

Somebody was in charge of activities on site for both children and adults. Another person was in charge of, dealing with all the permits and other areas that we needed to check with the fire department, police department, and the city hall. So... and that was taken care of. We also sent invitations to city and state officials, representatives from Hartford, Connecticut, and some local politicians who are our friends to come and give us some certificates of congratulations and say a few words about the church and its place in the community. And that's what you see here is the picture. Two of our representatives locally, presenting the church with some of the certificates commemorating the situation.

We had a photo booth come, and they had all sorts of costumes and paraphernalia that people could come and dress up in them, or wear a hat, or something, get an instrument, and pose, and get pictures. And all of this, of course, was free. So everybody really enjoyed that. And, there's some of our church members, kind of, letting loose and expressing themselves.

So... and then another person was in charge of putting all of these things together. Also, we had somebody in charge of music. We got local talent, folk singers and other musicians to be a part of our day of celebration. And along with that, of course, and it was very important was, of course, the sound system.

Someone else, took care of, we put a, we put up a 40x40 tent with tables and chairs. They could seat about 100 people under it. And so that was, again, another area that we... of responsibility that worked out well for us.

We got a person who was what we'd call our program runner that planned how the whole day would proceed and opened up at 11:00 in the morning on Saturday. And it went until four in the afternoon. And so we had, we had the sequence of events, kind of a plan that would take us through all those hours.

And part of that, someone else was in charge of our historical story and display of our historical documents and some objects that have been a part of the church history from almost, from its beginning. And so, on the hour we had, like, a 15-minute talk in the, in the church sanctuary. Two people shared that responsibility, and told the story of the church for anyone who was interested. And we did that three times.

Let's see. Oh, and then, of course, before all of this could happen, the property needed to be prepared for an event like this, which was kind of unprecedented. We had never done anything this big or this expansive. And, so we needed to put power outside of our church into our field. We have five acres. But nothing has really been done. It's been cleared a little bit, and a lot of it is mowed, but there's no power, no water, anything like that out there. So we had to really get that done prior to our event.

And all of that was, was accomplished. And we even included mowing right before the event. And... because it's all a nice big grass field. And we got a company to come and spray for mosquitoes, and ticks, and all of the pests. We didn't want the kids to take some ticks or mosquito bites home with them.

So, we tried to look at every single aspect of an event of this scope and covered the bases I think very well over the course of about a year. In the beginning of 2023, we started meeting monthly. And then, about 18 months before the event, we started meeting weekly just to go over everything. All of the folks in charge of these various areas I described would kind of give us an update. And, we would just kind of brainstorm to see what, you know, what we might be missing or what still needed to be done.

And so, like I said, everything worked out really well. But there was always that thing that we've never done anything this big before. And, so we were just hoping that the weather would be good. We had no control over that. And, we also, just didn't know how many people to expect. We got three or four hundred over the course of the day.

It went very well. And so... and the church was really benefited by it. In other words, we all just really after the event, we just, you know, said a prayer of thanks because it just all really went so very well.

We had a... Sunday was also a 350th anniversary worship service. We had some special speakers and music. And then we took a picture of everybody, and we advertised this in advance. And so anybody who had any connection with the church over, you know, in their lifetime was invited to come to the service.

And we were gonna take a picture. And so we had a couple hundred people, and we had hired a photographer to take a group picture, a 350th anniversary photograph. And we're gonna make that available.

So, all in all, it was a lot of fun, but it was also, a lot of work. All right. Kyle, that's kind of my story of what we did for our anniversary.

KYLE: Well that was fantastic. I'm gonna invite each of our speakers to come back on. Well, the questions are rolling in, so we don't even need my pre-set questions. You're really, you're exciting our audience.

You know, I think one of the things that really struck me is that everything you've done, there's so much work that you've invested in this. And it feels like that this, that you...

Well, I guess I... the question I would ask is, would you all do it again? You know, can you maybe talk a little bit about the benefits for your own kind of church community as a result of investing in this? Because I can imagine people watching this might be like, gee, I don't know how to get a permit, or I don't know, you know, how to, you know, how to persevere in the middle of a global pandemic and still have a fantastic set of programs.

So, you know, would you all do it again?

NORM: Well, well, I would say, Kyle, yes, definitely, but not next year.

KYLE: Okay. [Laughter]

LINDA: I gotta say, yes, I agree with that one. We have mostly, I think, a lot like other churches, it's mostly older people in our church. It was hard for us to do all of this work with so few people, but it was a memorable event that we could not pass up. And if it would happen again, give me another five years. Yes.

Something that Norm said, which was interesting, even though we're a very small area, remote area, our... since the Covid, there's been a lot of rules and changes made. And we had to file for permits from the county commissioners, which we thought, oh my, in a little town of our size? Yes, we had to ask for a permit a year ahead of time to close off the streets. That was a safety thing.

And then the wedding was kind of a little roadblock for us that it was in Ashby. It was not in our church, but the people wanted to go right down Main Street. And we said, no, that's not gonna happen. They're gonna have to go around a block or so. But we overcame all these hurdles, and in fact, it just made everything better.

And, the results of our celebration has just been phenomenal. I don't know, the Lord's just looking out for us all the time, all the things that we have done with our church. And it just... the community came through like you wouldn't believe. We had no idea. They would donate for anything we asked. We got it.

And yeah, give me a couple of years. Maybe we'll do something again.

KEIKO: You know, I would do it. Yes, in a heartbeat.

I would do it, but not in the context of the year that Covid came, right?

So yes, all the planning that we did, it was such beautiful planning. And it would have been, I'm sure, beautifully executed with a luau that we were going to have at a hotel, which would have had 300, 400 people come to it. And so the sad thing is many things that we had prepared for, we would not... we were not able to deliver.

But the things that we've done to so-called institutionalize and leave a memory, the DVD that we did. To be able to televise it in the midst of Covid, that was really the way that technology would offer us today. And the way we communicated with our church through banners.

So we might do different things, different in a different way than you if we were to be able to execute in person. But I think we did very well in terms of reacting and really doing it so that, we... Oh, to include, that I failed to mention that we have a church bell that we, because we were 200 years old, we actually came in, in person and rang the church bell 200 times.

LINDA: That's nice.

NORM: Kyle, I have, I have one thing to add to my reservation to do it so quickly again. Out of, out of the success of this, we felt like, you know, it's David and Goliath, and we won the battle. We learned a lot. And so we don't want to forget that, and we want to build on it.

So we decided to make June, the first Sunday or weekend in June, Founder's Day, and do something every June. Maybe not as extensive as our 350th, but to keep, to make use of everything that we learned and accomplished and build on that success. And part of that is we created, or we started, a monthly lecture series that relates to the, our local history, the life of our church, you know, things like that.

And so, I mention that because an anniversary can be the launch of something, not just a one-time event. And so, that's what we're hoping to do.

KYLE: That's great.

Well, we've got... So let's, I'll turn to the questions and there's so many that's coming in. So thank you all. If we don't get everybody's question, I will share them with all of our speakers.

So Michael Rydberg from First Congregational Church in Marshfield, Massachusetts, well they're gonna celebrate 400 years in 2038. Mayflower Pilgrims started their church in 1632.

So, something that you had mentioned, Linda, really sparked Michael here. You know, besides the NACCC, and, you know, I think Keiko, as a UCC church, maybe the Hawai'i Conference, or the national office. Who do you recommend people look to grants for their anniversary? You know, were there any places that you got money from that, that when you started the process, you're like, oh, I wouldn't think to ask them, but...

LINDA: Are you asking me?

KYLE: I'm asking... Start with you, Linda, but ask everybody.

LINDA: Okay. We have written, I have written several grants for our church to NACCC. So I was familiar with some of the areas that they had available.

One particular, like I said, it's a very unique and very remote area. And many years ago, our little community was going to have their water source cut off, including my shop. And our local well man came to our church and said, I have come up with a solution because a lot of these older people in the community couldn't afford to put down a well, plus a lot of different rules and regulations were against it, not only the expense.

And they said that if you put this on the church and make the well connected to all these locations, and then guess who the treasurer gets to send a bill every month for usage. But it was something very unusual. We became the donors of water to the people of our community.

And in doing so, I reached out. A well was gonna cost thousands and thousands of dollars to put in. And we did it within three months' time. And the local people. And, we put that well down and provided for our community.

And NACCC, thank goodness they have always been there for us and for this celebration also.

And then again, I wrote grants to a lot of local organizations. And because we were making it more of a community affair, not just the church, they came through. And like I said, if you don't ask, you'll never know. So it's always worth a try.

And we have gotten to where anytime we have a fundraiser, we have kind of learned not to say, okay, if you're gonna have a supper and you have each ticket \$5, \$10 a piece, sometimes

you have a family that really can't afford all of that. And we have found out it's a lot easier just to put out a freewill donation, and those that can afford more will put more in. And those that can't still don't feel obligated.

And that works for us. And we had freewill donation buckets out all weekend long. And like I said, God provided for us and so did all those people.

KYLE: That's great.

LINDA: And I want to also tell you that I made the Facebook page brand new for our church, and there's a lot of information on there about our celebration, including other pictures. And you can message me too if you have other personal questions about our celebration.

KYLE: That's great. Thank you so much.

This is a question for Norm. So Greg Schumacher, asks, since the church is 350th celebration was only a few years after the town's 350th celebration, did you run into any celebration fatigue?

You know, was there any concern that too many things are being celebrated? And if so, how did you overcome it and maybe set the church's celebration apart?

NORM: Well, you know, there's a... there were several years separating some of those other celebrations.

And no, I have to say, we didn't experience a feeling of fatigue. It was just, it kind of just built an atmosphere of celebrations because, a lot of, a lot of things were founded around the time the church was too. And they were all celebrating.

KYLE: Great. Great question here for Keiko.

Aloha e Keiko. Is the *Witness for Aloha* video available online or for sale?

KEIKO: Actually, it is available through our inventory at our church.

And so through, Dr. Roberts, if you could make your, place your order or whatever you want to do, I would certainly love to send one to you or to anybody in this audience, yes.

KYLE: And I was looking at that.

I need to make sure we have a copy in our collection. So I didn't, I didn't check that in advance.

KEIKO: You know, once upon a time, it was available on YouTube, and I don't know if it was taken down, so I'll have to check. But certainly we have a supply of DVDs that we could distribute. Yes.

KYLE: So everybody, please email me, and I'll get a group order together. It looks fantastic.

Let's see... lots more questions here.

So I smile because my staff loves swag. They love imprinting our name on things. And I wonder if I could ask each of our speakers to talk a little bit about the things that you produced that people really gravitated towards. And also, if there's anything you produced that didn't, didn't succeed. Oh, I don't need another tote bag, for example.

So, maybe Keiko, if you want to lead us off since you gave us that great image, you know... What succeeded, and what do people think of it?

KEIKO: Well, they love the mugs, obviously.

And the leis... I mean, as I said, this is part of our culture. And so, the leis, in fact, we made over, I want to say a thousand of them. So, yes. So even during church worship service, as guests come in every Sunday, we have supply of them. We give them out.

In addition to that, we did T-shirts, white and black ones. And they are received well, and we continue to wear those whenever we have special events.

So that swag as well as, yes, a shopping tote. That was also something that we had purchased, and those were all supposed to have been swags given out to the luau, those people that attended the luau. So, we still have quite a, quite an inventory of that

KYLE: Great.

LINDA: I have one also. We didn't do a lot of things like making cups or whatever for the party, the celebration.

But I ahead of time, because I'm an artist, I went ahead and painted a picture of our church in the, before the renovations. It was more of a memorabilia thing, and all the prints were available for sale. And I have a copy here if you can see it, of it.

KYLE: Wow. Yep.

LINDA: I guess you're getting reflections a little bit.

And we sold several of those with all of the proceeds going back to the church. So, that's what we did.

KYLE: Love it. Norm, was there any...

NORM: Oh, yeah.

We didn't do a lot, but we of course, the obligatory coffee mug with our 350th anniversary dates.

But we also came up with a logo or a theme for the anniversary. And actually, the church has adopted it generally going ahead. And it's called, "share the love."

And, on one of the photos you saw the people up on the stage wearing those, and we made a bunch of t-shirts, and had them produced. And we just basically gave them away. So it was, and I don't know how many we ended up... I think we probably gave over maybe 100 or so.

And I don't know how many coffee mugs we sold. We were selling for about what it cost us to make them, \$8 or \$10.

So, but anyway, that was it. It added a little bit to the festivities and specialness of the occasion.

KYLE: Great question here from Anna Taylor Sweringen asking, did any of you compile an anniversary program brochure or any sort of, kind of publication for the, for your anniversary?

NORM: No, we have not yet.

KYLE: Yet, okay.

KEIKO: We did, a pamphlet that describes who we are. Also, all the events that we were going to have. Yeah, so we have a pamphlet, yes.

LINDA: We had our normal, pastoral bulletin on Sunday that had all of the speakers, special speakers, and the dinner, and everything like that.

And I have a lot of the planning, records for our party, our celebration. So, but as far as a formal booklet, that's to come yet, I guess.

KYLE: Well, I'm gonna give a shameless plug for the Congregational Library & Archives who collects material for all the Congregational churches, not just in what is now the United States, but also for many places around the world.

And we'd encourage everybody out there who's thinking about their anniversary to reach out to us and to see what what we already have in our collections related to your church. And for all of you as you produce things, please send us a copy of what you produce. You know, even if it's a just, you know, a script that you created, you know, for your marketing purposes.

It's great for us to be able to have, here in Boston, information about all of these churches, because it's funny, you know, we will... somebody will have had a 300th anniversary, and the people who are all part of that might pass on or no longer part of the church. And, you know, at 325 you don't want to reinvent the wheel. But if we have the material here, we're very happy to share it.

NORM: Right. Yeah.

KYLE: So, there are lots of other fantastic questions here, but we are at time. So I'm gonna send these along to our speakers.

Thank you all so much. I have many pages of notes written down.

You know, I think one thing that has been asked of us, and maybe I will reach out to our speakers for some guidance on this is, you know, if you were to create a checklist for what to do, maybe that would be a good resource that we could make up. And, it sounds like we certainly have the expertise with our speakers today to pull that together.

So, Keiko, Linda, Norm, thank you so much for sharing with us. And for everybody out there...

LINDA: Thank you for having us.

KYLE: Oh, absolutely.

NORM: Yes, it's been a pleasure to share what we've learned. It was, it was a huge education. And we're happy to share what we've learned firsthand.

KYLE: Take care, everyone.

KEIKO and LINDA: Thank you.