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NCR board's CEO/president decision brightens an already bright future

by Thomas C. Fox

NCR Today

We are less than a year from *NCR's* 50th anniversary. And now, a bright future just got brighter. I could not be more pleased with the *NCR* board of directors' choice of longtime journalist and current *NCR* managing editor Caitlin Hendel to be the next CEO/president of the National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company.

I've known Hendel for fewer than five months. However, in that relatively short period, I've grown to admire her values and professionalism. As we've become colleagues, I've watched her enrich the *NCR* family. She is animated by a spirit of love for family and church, by commitments to collaboration and quality journalism, and by *NCR's* mission of justice, inclusiveness and transparency.

She grew up in a journalism family, is married to a journalist, and has two grown children. Her life has been richly blessed -- and she is quick to share blessings with others. This woman is the right person to lead *NCR* forward.

I write with pride, thinking of those who have carried the *NCR* mission to this point -- too many to name here -- and those who continue to be drawn to *NCR's* sometimes edgy journalism, both board and staff. I chuckle, filled with warm memories: so much fun over the years, the humor, the tears, the shortcomings, dreams fulfilled and unfulfilled. We've been the targets of many. I've been called the son of Satan by my detractors. I must have been doing my job well, at least part of the time. As we've traveled sometimes bumpy roads, we've encountered both joy and pain. In the process, we've uncovered unexpected sources of light and hope. You sense the Spirit.

How grateful I am. You, our readers, our supporters, have stuck with us as we have tried to provide

quality, independent journalism. Message to our friends: This transition is a time to celebrate. Message to our detractors: We're not going away.

With your continued support, we've come to a new launching point. Next year, we will publish a fully electronic version of the paper, yours in full the day after it goes to press. As we maneuver through the new digital age, you will find Hendel an already experienced guide. Her leadership role syncs well with maestro editor Dennis Coday, who daily conducts a young and talented editorial staff. Yes, we are well-positioned to move forward, reporting in a multiplatform environment to an increasingly global audience.

You, the readers, and we, the providers of vital, life-giving information, each shaped by the Gospels and a church council that has formed our dreams (and *NCR* itself), long for community marked by authentic spirituality and respect for life, and for justice, peace and a sustainable world. Being first-rate journalists is our mission, our contribution to the wider church and world. This purpose binds us with you, builds community and fosters hope.

Next October, *NCR* begins a yearlong celebration of its 50th anniversary. It will be a time to recognize the unlikely achievements of an initial handful of journalists. It will be a time to sit back, capture the lessons and discern the pathways ahead.

I cannot imagine a better person to be at the helm at that time than the seasoned journalist, mother, wife and colleague the *NCR* board of directors has chosen to lead us forward.

A side note: I'm not going away. I will remain *NCR* publisher, collaborating with our new CEO/president and our editor and staff. I will write as time allows, but my focus will be twofold: raising funds to keep the *NCR* mission growing and directing our new global Catholic sisters' initiative, made possible by a three-year, \$2.3 million grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

Pope Francis is encouraging us to go out to the peripheries where the Gospels are preached and celebrated. As most *NCR* readers well know, that's where our women religious have been active for decades with relatively little recognition. The new initiative will help us better tell their stories and allow them to share their own. In the process, we will expand our overall coverage and report the world from the ground up.

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Hendel will officially take on her new responsibilities Jan. 1. Onward, Caitlin!

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