

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY



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International Council of Community Churches

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2024 Annual Conference held in Kansas City, MO



Another great conference, another fantastic gathering of God's people, another good week.

You'll never know what you missed if you weren't there; but if you weren't there, know that you were missed. When the ICCC family comes together, we gladly gather to enjoy each other's company, celebrate God's love and grace with each other, and be inspired by the program and presenters. And if you were not at the conference this year, know that your absence was felt.

You missed St Monica's Choir, and an inspiring evening of celebratory, worshipful music. You missed an inspiring message from Rob Scheer about his own experience in the foster care system, homelessness, and why he started the Comfort Cases program. You missed the satisfaction of being part of the Comfort Cases solution, with an opportunity to positively impact a challenged child's life. You missed some wonderful workshops on a wide variety of interesting topics.

You missed the good food we always enjoy, along with the fun and fellowship we always anticipate.

We were glad to welcome everyone here to Kansas City – the City of Fountains in the Heartland of America. If you weren't one of them, you missed it, and we missed you.



Jerry Brown,
VP for Conference Planning

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President's Message

Bob Fread

Am I profoundly humbled to be serving as the ICCC's new President. As many of my longtime ICCC friends came up to me toward the end of conference with hugs and congratulations, many said, "Let me know if I can help you in any way". My first thought was "Yes! I need you. I need your prayers!"

I want to thank our new Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Bruce Merton, for all his help, support and hard work during his first few months and helping me in my first several weeks. I have found that Bruce and I not only share a common passion for the ICCC, but also many ideas and approaches for ministry within the Council. Then a huge thanks to DeAnn Bath, who keeps me on track, so I know what I need to do plus has the information to help me get it done. I appreciate she is always a phone call or email away.

I have shared that one of the areas we as ICCC need to strengthen is our relationships: relationships between the Council and our churches, relationships between our local churches and relationships between our people as they network in mutual support of each other's ministries. Before the first board meeting, I spent many hours in one-on-one Zoom and personal meetings with most of our vice presidents, regional trustees and auxiliary leaders. Our conversations were to learn about each other and build relationships so together we can better serve this Council. I was honored to get to know better some of our amazing leaders.

Then in my first six weeks I began travels around to the amazing churches and centers of our ICCC family. Seeing church buildings and

sanctuaries, meeting pastors and parishioners, seeing the local communities where our churches minister, plus simply building relationships in our ICCC family has been amazing! I have already found myself at Antioch Community Church (Kansas City), ABBA Church of Renewed Faith, The Center, and Bethany Union Church (all in or near Chicago).

As I travel, I post pictures and information about our churches and centers on the "International Council of Community Churches Group" Facebook page. I do this so that you can see and meet our ICCC family through me, as just one more way of building relationships.

Grace & Peace to my ICCC Family,
Bob





Executive Director's Message

Bruce Merton

We Welcome the New "Executive Diakonos"

On Monday, June 3, of this year I received the following email from a long-time I.C.C.C. member and good friend. It said, "Congratulations! You are now The Big Cheese. I pray for you!" (Actual punctuation and wording copied.)

I took the email as a tongue-in-cheek reminder of my new role as "Interim Executive Director" of the I.C.C.C.

After almost 3½ months "on the job," I am not sure congratulations are in order. Certainly, there is need for prayers, but the last thing I want to be is "The Big Cheese."

Do you recall the word of Jesus recorded in Mark 10:44? "Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant." My paraphrase: Whoever wishes to be The Big Cheese among you must be your servant."

The word "servant" in the above verse is translated from the Greek word "diakonos." It is the word for a servant whose primary responsibilities were to "serve food" and "wait on those at the table."

The servant/diakonos brought food for nourishment, sustenance and strengthening of the body. The servant/diakonos waited on people gathered about the table.

The length of my tenure as "Executive Director" is not known. I do know that I want to be "Executive Diakonos" rather than The Big Cheese.

Genuinely, with my whole heart, mind, body and spirit, I want to serve the I.C.C.C., its member churches, centers and people. I want to bring the nourishment, sustenance and strengthening presence of God's love in and through Jesus to our wonderful fellowship. I genuinely want to wait on and serve those who gather at I.C.C.C. tables, altars, pews and pulpits.

Serving with an excellent standard marked by being pastoral, prophetic and practical in word and activity is my goal. Perfection is not and cannot be a goal as I am not perfect!

The I.C.C.C. is in a precarious position! We are struggling, like most churches and church based organizations, with issues related to staffing, finance, conference, program and mission. There are answers, but no easy answers. If we survive and thrive it will be up to each church, center and member, lay and clergy, to pitch in at a level never reached before.

As "Executive Diakonos/Servant" I need your prayers, direction, instruction and encouragement to be the best I can be. This is where you come in!

Please feel free to contact me with questions, concerns, comments, and requests for help. I encourage you to use my personal email: mertonbn@gmail.com OR call my phone at (239)851-6821. I promise you a prompt response coupled with a willingness to listen, help and serve to the best of my ability.

In a real and tangible way we must be servants to servants!

Please provide me the courtesy of answering correspondence, phone messages, emails or texts. If your church's, center's, key lay leader's or pastor's contact information is not current, please update that information with DeAnn and me.

Your caring, compassion, and consideration in letting and encouraging me to be "Executive Diakonos" will go a long way in making me a good Executive Director, but never "The Big Cheese"!

Grace and Peace,
Bruce

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International Council of Community Churches

*"As people devoted
to following Christ
we are committed to
community,
to treasuring diversity,
to living our faith
in service and love."*

ICCC OCTOBER 2024

75th Anniversary Theme: Reflecting the Majesty of God (Revelation 4:3 ESV)



Book REVIEW

By Rev. Kenneth N. Nelson



At its next Annual Conference, the ICCC will celebrate 75 years of service as a voluntary association of self-governing churches committed to Christian reconciliation and unity. This year, the ICCC Book Reviews will explore engaging books and themes that honor our past and contribute to our future. Let's read and discuss!



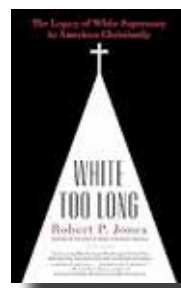
Turnaround: The Remarkable Story of an Institutional Transformation and the 10 Essential Principles and Practices that Made It Happen by Jason K. Allen, B&H Books (September 13, 2022), \$12.99 (192 pages) ISBN-13 978-1535941167

How do you save a sinking ship? Dr. Jason K. Allen, author, and president of Midwestern Seminary, believes he has ten principles to answer this question with a yes.

What do you do? What can you learn from someone who has transformed the faculty, the facilities, and the school's reputation from failing to fabulous? How did he lead Midwestern Seminary to become the fastest-growing and one of the largest seminaries in the world?

Does Dr. Allen believe there are applications for churches and nonprofit organizations? Maybe. "I believe you will be inspired by a compelling institutional story, equipped through its leadership lessons, and relieved to know you will not have to reinvent yourself to lead faithfully," Allen said, "Most likely, you simply need to be emboldened to lead as you already know how." Allen begins his book by asking leaders to consider four longitudinal themes: Lead Where You Are, embrace God's Kind Providence, understand that Credibility Is Essential Credibility, and It Takes a Team. As you read this book and realize how these longitudinal themes and ten principles align, you know you have a different framework for your context.

"So, ask yourself: How is my relationship with my team members? Am I investing most in those who invest most in my organization? Am I observant and aware of their life stages?" Allen writes, "Do I strategically serve them in moments of grief or seasons of turmoil? Do I set before them a map for their future, helping them chart their course in my organization?" By reading this book and engaging in these questions in a book discussion format, many organizational leaders and their teams are equipped for a better and enduring future. This book is worth reading now.



White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity Paperback by Robert P. Jones. Simon & Schuster; (1st edition July 13, 2021), \$14.94 (Paperback 336 pages) ISBN-13: 978-1982122874

What is your mission? When people in the Christian family begin to answer this question, we quickly refer to the Great Commission from

Matthew 28. But Jones insists, "Although many observers still fail to see it, the beating heart of Donald Trump's "Make American Great Again" (MAGA) movement is its militant mission to restore a white Christian America." The Kirkus Review notes, "Jones, ... argues persuasively that the ideological origins of American racism are best understood in relation to religious edicts dating back to the late 15th century. The Catholic Church's Doctrine of Discovery gave divine sanction to the imperialist ambitions of white Christians and provided rationalizations for centuries of violence directed against nonwhite peoples."

In four chapters, Jones defends his claims with evidence that challenges how some should interpret the Great Commission. Jones, as *Publishers Weekly* writes, "delivers" a refreshing blend of historical accounting, soul searching reflection, and analysis." In discussing the White Incursion and Dakota Disenfranchisement, Jones describes a unique partnership: "Even though Sibley was a Democrat and Ramsey was a member of the newly formed Republican Party, the men found common ground on one shared priority: wresting control of the Dakota people's homeland from them, thereby preparing the way for the coming white incursion."

Jemar Tisby, the author of *The Spirit of Justice: True Stories of Faith, Race, and Resistance*, observes, "In the end, 'White Too Long' seems to present a stark choice: Hold onto white Christianity or hold onto Jesus. It cannot be both."

SHARE YOUR COMMENTS. Please share your thoughts at ICCCNOW@sbcglobal.net by the end of the month. Also, let us know if we can quote or paraphrase your comments. Thank you for your feedback and have a blessed month.

Future of the ICCC: A New Day, A New Vision

by Bob Fread

(The following is taken from a presentation to the 2024 Annual Conference given by Rev. Bob Fread and the Rev. Dr. Bruce Merton.)

“But now thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine...Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:1,18,19a) The prophet Second Isaiah is offering the Jews a new opportunity as they sit in exile in Babylon. Through all the challenges of exile, sitting by the rivers of Babylon weeping (Psalm 137:1), the prophet’s vocation is now to prepare God’s people for a new day, a new opportunity by returning to Jerusalem. This new day would not be easy. It would involve a long journey and rebuilding walls, Temple and a city. But God is willing to wipe away the old and do something new through them. Keep this vision in mind.

A couple years ago the ICCC formed a strategic planning group known as RRR (meaning “Reframe, Revision, Reimagine”) Several months ago as that group gathered on Zoom, we had what I would call a “come to Jesus meeting”. You may know “come to Jesus meetings” are not easy. They confront you with uneasy facts. They make you uncomfortable. They force you to deal with issues one doesn’t want to face. That was the reality that evening with the ICCC. We had issues that needed to be addressed honestly and quickly if the ICCC is to have a future. We identified six areas that needed to be addressed in coming months. These were: 1. Finances, 2. Staff and office, 3. Annual Conference, 4. Partnership with other church bodies, 5. Member church donations, and 6. Governance. What we are addressing here is just two of these areas: Annual Conference and finances

All of us know that both society and religious institutions, including the church, have been changing. Many former, old ways and traditions are no longer followed. Change must come for a new day to come! Each new day is God’s opportunity to bring the change that our world, our church and our ICCC needs.

In 2022 and 2023 the ICCC lost over \$63,000 on Annual Conferences. Our 2024 Conference will lose in the neighborhood of \$15,000 to \$20,000. These losses are due to hotel contracts with room night and food and beverage requirements, that because of smaller attendance, we were not able to meet and therefore forced to pay large penalties. We can no longer afford to sign these types of

contracts and host conferences in these types of hotels. Beginning in 2025 the Board of Directors decided that all conferences must be self-supporting and can no longer run deficits that drain Council savings. Beginning in 2026 the conference will be hosted by an ICCC local church, with hotel rooms available in the area. Next year will be a transition year with conference being held at Lake Forest College, where the ICCC was founded in 1950. This will be a smaller facility than what we have been accustomed and will require lodging in a nearby hotel. Conference will be reduced to three days with schedule and programing being reimagined. Our Annual Conference MUST be revised and brought into a new day.

The other issue to address here is stewardship and how we financially support the ICCC. In my attendance at over 30 conferences, I have heard much talk about finances but little talk of stewardship. The ICCC MUST get better at communicating who we are, what we are about, what we are doing, what our churches are doing and why your church WANTS to support the ICCC. The Bible does not say “the Lord loves a grouchy and compelled by guilt giver”. I want an ICCC where our churches and many individuals WANT to give to us because of who we are and how we are doing God’s work!

In the last several months we have been developing a new stewardship initiative called “*Community Churches Together*” where you will be receiving communications from the ICCC sharing what is happening in the Council. The first resource from this initiative was distributed at Conference entitled “*Our Church is a Member of the ICCC*”. This can be found at iccnw.org under the “Resources > Council and Other Agency Resources” tab. We want to give our churches the tools they need to interpret and share the ICCC inside of their church.

We also want to build better relationships with and between our churches. Our churches are central to this Council. This is why our Executive Director, Bruce Merton is seeking to visit every ICCC church during his year as Executive Director, and I am seeking to visit every ICCC church during my three years as President. We want our churches to know their importance to the ICCC and our ministry together.

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“A New Vision” *cont’d. from p. 5*

by Bob Fread

As I chose an image to be displayed during my original



presentation, I wanted it to be a sunrise, signaling a new day. But I began thinking, how can you tell the difference between a sunrise and a sunset in a

picture? Yes, colors and context help, but the real way to tell is to know what happens next, beyond what a single image can show. Whether the image is a sunrise or sunset may never be known by the picture alone, likewise if the ICCC is in a sunrise beginning a new day, or in a sunset, will only be known by us through our actions and commitments to the ICCC in the future. It's all about our commitment to working for unity, reconciliation, justice and actively being the Council God calls us to be. As the prophet said, God is doing “a new thing...do you not perceive it?” I believe God is giving the ICCC a new day with a new vision.

***Let's make sure it is
the sunrise of a new day!***

“Conference 2024” *cont’d. from p. 1*

by Jerry Brown, VP for Conference Planning



ICCC Meeting in Central Zone, Region B

The International Council of Community Churches is planning a meeting for the community churches in Central Zone, Region B (Ohio, Michigan, Western Pennsylvania and Western New York) on Saturday, October 12, 2024. The meeting will take place at New Covenant Community Church, 1587 West Exchange Street, Akron, Ohio. Registration and continental breakfast begins at 9:00 am, and the program, which includes worship and a presentation by Rev. Bob Fread, our newly-elected ICCC President, begins at 10:00 am. Everything will conclude by 2:00 pm. Among the items on the agenda will be an update on plans for the 75th anniversary conference of the ICCC in July 2025. Registration for the meeting is \$10.00 and includes lunch.

We hope you will join us for what will be a great day of worship, fellowship, exchange of ideas, and getting excited for the Council's 75th Anniversary in 2025!!! Please bring your pastors and members from your church. More people=More Fun!!

Can't wait to see all of you!!

Mike Mahan
Gahanna Community Congregational Church
Gahanna, OH
Past President
Ohio Fellowship of Community Churches

To RSVP,
please send
an email
as soon as
possible to



Reesabms@gmail.com

Women's Christian Fellowship

Greetings,

Our 74th conference is in the books! The WCF had a wonderful experience during our meetings. Hats off to all our officers for sharing during our two days of workshops. We learned about the "Seven Characteristics of a Godly Women": Faith and Trust in God; Compassion and Empathy; Humility; Integrity and Honesty; Generosity and Service; Strong Character and Virtue; Spiritual Growth.

On the sideline, we held the "silent auction" again this year with Elaine Dennis as the chair. If you would like to contribute to the board's efforts, e.g., Conference, Jordan Scholarship, or Church Women United, please do so.

The board rallied around our 2nd Vice President, Pastor Kirkman, to support The Shelter KC. This site supports women who suffer from addiction and abuse and are victims of sex trafficking. With much success, we were able to bless the shelter with \$1,200 in gift cards. We continue in our belief that "love is grown where seeds are sown". I am dedicated to serving two more years as your president, along with these powerful officers:

Saundra Nelson- 1st Vice President
 Elaine Dennis - 2nd Vice President
 Mary Louise Woodcock - Secretary
 Dorothy Garner-Campbell - Ass't Secretary
 Eloise Crenshaw - Chaplain
 Mary Summers - Treasurer
 Mrytis Brame - Assistant Treasurer & Parliamentarian
 Sandra Roberts - Administrative Assistant

Please look for announcements regarding our Holiday Virtual Open House in December. If there is anything I or the WCF Board can do to assist your ministries, please ask without hesitation.

Winessa Crutchfield
 WCF President



Our hearts go out to everyone suffering the effects of Hurricane Helene - flooding, loss of property, loss of loved ones, church damage, community destruction. The ICCC cares about you!! Our member churches can HELP by collecting donations and forwarding them to us marked "HURRICANE RELIEF".

Mail to: ICCC • P O Box 846 • Longmont, CO 80502

Or you can send donation via our online donation portal.
<https://www.iccnw.org/donate/>

Sharing Joys with:

- **Brenda Houihan**, Women's, Children's and Youth's Director at the **Church at Litchfield Park**, who has completed her Master of Divinity degree and will be ordained at the church on October 13th. **ICCC Regional Trustee, Rev. Rock Fremont, Jr.** plans to attend.

- **Aaron Nichols**, who received a Jordan Scholarship Award in July. Aaron is a member of **People's Community Church** in Detroit, MI and plans to study Aviation. We wish Aaron success in his future studies and endeavors.

- **Jordan Bowman**, who received a Jordan Scholarship Award in July. Jordan is a member of **Seneca Community Church** in Germantown, MD and plans to study either Criminal Justice or Bio-Medical Engineering. We wish Jordan success in his future studies and endeavors.

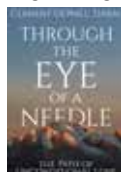
- **Rev. Clement DeWall** who is an ICCC Retired Clergy, formerly with *The Federation of Christian Ministries*, Cleveland, OH. Rev. DeWall has written the book *Through the Eye of a Needle: The Path of Unconditional Love* and is published by Atmosphere Press. For ways to purchase and further information, visit www.clementdewall.ai

- The Elders of **Antioch Community Church**, MO have announced the hiring of **Rev. Beth Armstrong** as their Senior Pastor effective immediately. She has been serving Antioch CC as their Interim.
- **Amanda Alvarado**, who was ordained by **upRising** - a church without walls and **Senior Pastor Karen Thompson** Woodworth, Austin, TX.

Sharing Concerns with:

- **Mrs. Mary Frances Garner, her family and Park Road Community Church** as they mourn the passing of Rev. Carter Garner, Mary's husband, on August 7th, 2024. "Rev. Garner's life was one of service to God and mankind. His salvation was sure and his convictions to our Lord Jesus the Christ will live through those of us he touched." ~ **Rev. Seretha Renee Pearsall**, Senior Pastor at PRCC.
- **Rev. Dr. Jud Souers and his family** with the passing of his longtime wife **Betty Souers**. "Heaven has a new angel" ~ Pastor Emeritus Judson Souers, **The Church at Litchfield Park, AZ**. Betty passed away September 2nd, 2024.
- The family and friends of **Mary Summers, Douglas Memorial Community Church**, MD. Mary passed away September 16th, after a short stay in hospice. Many of us got to visit and talk with Mary at the last Annual Conference this past July in Kansas City, MO. Mary was currently the treasurer for the ICCC WCF.
- **Rev. Marty Feltz**, Senior Pastor of **Grace Christian Church** in NC, who had surgery 10/2/24 to amputate one of his legs - below the knee - due to an aggressive cancer.

Rev. John Woodcock, ICCC Regional Trustee for the Eastern Zone, Region A is organizing a retreat for those interested at the Holy Cross Monastery in West Park NY January 23-25, 2025. Please contact Rev. John Woodcock for more information pastorsheepngoat@gmail.com.





PASTORAL SEARCH

Seeking Senior Minister

Church of the Loving Shepherd (CLS) is an inclusive, ecumenical community church located in West Chester, Pennsylvania and is rooted in the Christian tradition with 85 members and a typical Sunday attendance of 35 to 50.

Our sanctuary is a beautiful 205-year-old barn with a meditation grotto and garden. CLS is situated on fifteen acres containing meadows, woods, a labyrinth, a pond and a 170-year-old, historic, serpentine-stone manor house with an adjoining office.

Our pastor is retiring, and we are searching for a replacement. We are seeking an ordained pastor with a degree from an accredited seminary who has experience in conducting worship services, in providing pastoral care, and in congregational and community development. This position is for 30 hours per week.

Applicants should value and respect all faith traditions. Considerations that are important to us include openness, a positive outlook, community involvement, dedication to our food ministry program, and a strong interest in our music program.

We are seeking a pastor for an evolving community—a person who is open to sharing with, learning from, and growing with the congregation.

Please submit your resume and cover letter to churchofthelovingshepherd@gmail.com.

Ordained Interim Pastor

Wilson Memorial Church, an interdenominational church located in Watchung, NJ, is seeking an ordained interim minister for the period of one year starting Fall 2024.

Responsibilities include: service planning, preaching, performing the sacraments, pastoral care, funerals, weddings, baptisms, and collaborating with leadership.

During the interim's contract period, the church will be performing a congregational study and developing a pastoral search process. Hours and salary negotiable based on availability and experience. Housing available if needed.

Interested candidates should send inquiries and resume to personnel@wilsonmemorialchurch.org.

Please also visit our website wilsonmemorialchurch.org for more information.



Interim Pastor

The Protestant Community Church (also known as the Cathedral of the Woods) of Medford Lakes, NJ is seeking to fill the position of Interim Pastor. This will be a position beginning January 1 of 2025 and continue for the next 8-12 months. The Protestant Community Church (PCC) is located in a bucolic setting fewer than 20 miles east of Philadelphia. PCC is an interdenominational and congregationally governed church with an average attendance of 90-120 between two services at 8 o'clock and 10 o'clock.

The interim pastor is responsible for providing leadership and administrative oversight of the church's ministries, including worship, music, preaching, teaching, mission service, stewardship, and fellowship. This individual will work with the church staff to provide opportunities for members to engage in worship, discipleship, and mission. This individual will use their developed interim-specialist skills to assess the congregation's current and long-term needs and provide counsel and leadership to the church. The Interim Pastor will help to prepare the congregation for a new pastoral leadership.

The Interim Pastor is accountable to the PCC congregation and its Board of Trustees. The applicant must hold a degree from an accredited or recognized Seminary or Bible College, be Ordained or Licensed Minister, have experience as a Lead or Senior Pastor, preferably with interim training.

If interested in this position, please submit the following:

- Cover letter that includes salary expectation
- Current resume (including email address and contact telephone numbers)
- Personal Statement of Faith
- Submit three personal and two professional (minister/pastor) letters of reference
- Copy of Ministerial License and/or Certificate of Ordination

Please submit your information to:
The Protestant Community Church
c/o Carol R. Vahlstrom
100 Stokes Road
Medford Lakes, NJ 08055