

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

APRIL 2025



International Council of Community Churches

Volume 75 |

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

| Number 6

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YOU ARE
invited

Seventy-five years ago, a brochure announced:

“ONE OF THE GREATEST EVENTS IN THE HISTORY of Protestantism will take place at Lake Forest, August 16 - 20, 1950, when the churches of the Biennial Council of Community Churches and the churches of the National Council of Community Churches come together in one great merging convention.”

Now that 75 years have passed, the International Council of Community Churches is returning to its birthplace at Lake Forest College, July 22 - 24, 2025, to celebrate its 75th Anniversary Annual Conference. You are invited! Come join us to celebrate our past and move us into our future!

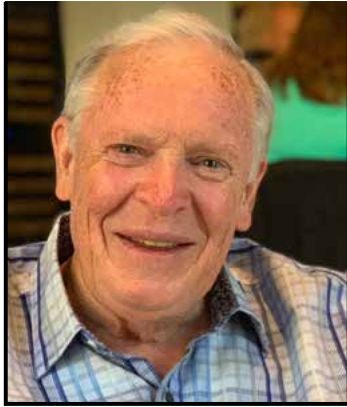
Our theme this year is “*Seeking God’s Vision: Remembering the Past, Dreaming a Future.*” For 75 years the ICCC has been seeking God’s unity and reconciliation, so for three days in July we will gather to explore how the ICCC has done that over the last seven plus decades, how we are doing it today, and dream how we will answer God’s call to do it in the future.

Our opening day, Tuesday, July 22, will remember our past. This day will feature a historic display of pictures and items from our history, memories from past leaders and long-time conferees, and a video tribute to our history. That evening will be an Anniversary Buffet and a 75th Anniversary Worship Celebration in the historic sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest, across the street from the college. Worship that evening will include Rev. Donald Ashmall, ICCC Council Minister Emeritus, as preacher; the celebration of Holy Communion; and a processional of ICCC clergy.

Our second day will focus on our present, including auxiliary meetings, presentations on our current ministries and missions, workshops, a delegate business session to approve a revised constitution, and evening worship.

Our third and final day on July 24 will look at the future. Many events on this day will be led by our southside Chicago ICCC churches.

Make plans now to join us in Lake Forest “where it all began,” for our celebration of 75 years of seeking God’s vision of unity and reconciliation.



Executive Director's Message

Bruce Merton

"The Lord of Life, Decider for Eternity"

Soon Christians around the world will celebrate Resurrection Sunday (Easter). Preachers will declare and people of the pew will affirm that Jesus is "The Lord of Life!" Together we'll lift our songs, prayers and praises to the one in and through whom God conquered the "last enemy which is death."

I find myself wondering why we declare and, ostensibly, believe that Jesus is the "Lord of Life" while constantly and consistently taking life decisions – existential and eternal – as the church's arena of authority. The church, in its wide variety of ecclesiastical shapes, doctrinal forms and composed theologies, has intentionally and sometimes malevolently made decisions that belong to the one who is, by God's grace, the "Lord of Life."

The church, in its various manifestations, has ruled itself to be the arbiter of truth, the broker of holy authority, the "decider" of the matrix for life, here and in the hereafter. The result? Instead of working, serving and ministering towards the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer that we may all be one, the church has become a source of division, hostility, and estrangement. The institutional church decides who can receive God's love, grace and mercy. The church has decided the proper and godly shape of love between human beings. The church has decided, in its incredibly finite wisdom, that it knows fully and completely the infinite wisdom and will of God. Even though Jesus said, "I have sheep that are not of this fold and I will bring them in," the church has declared Jesus wrong because only those we deem to be "elect" make it into the kingdom which belongs exclusively to God.

Jesus, the Lord of Life, declared, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." (John 14:6) Why can't the church accept the face value of what Jesus said? The Lord of Life is the WAY! The Lord of Life is the TRUTH! The Lord of Life is LIFE! The Lord of Life is the DECIDER, not the church!

In her book, *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*, Barbara Brown Taylor relates the story of New

Testament scholar and Orthodox Jew, Amy Jill Levine. She writes,

When someone asks her (Levine) for her interpretation of John 14:6, she says that she imagines herself at the pearly gates after a long and happy life. While she is waiting in line with everyone else to see if Peter will let her into heaven, she makes a list of everything she wanted to ask him while she was still in the classroom: "Can you speak Greek? Where did you go when you wandered off in the middle of Acts? What happened to your wife?"

When it is finally her turn to talk to Peter, she starts pelting him with so many questions that he just waves her through. This concerns the next person in line, who has heard of Dr. Levine and knows she is a Jew. "Excuse me," the guy says to St. Peter, "but I don't think she's supposed to be here." That is when Jesus sticks his head through the gates and says, "It's fine, Peter, I know her and she's okay by me." **GET IT?** "No one comes to the Father but by me, and she's okay by me." Levine's point is that no one enters the presence of God except by God's grace. No church, no church doctrine, no individual gets to referee that. Where the Way of Jesus is concerned, he is the Decider.

Jesus is the Lord of Life! Jesus is the Way!
Jesus is the Truth! Jesus is the Life

and

Jesus is the Decider!

Let it be! Let it be!

Bruce

ICCC APRIL 2025

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

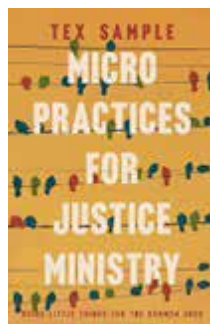


Book REVIEW

By Rev. Kenneth N. Nelson

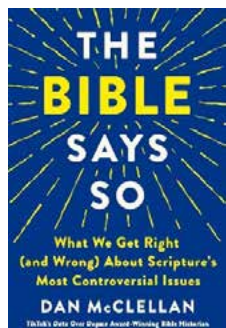


As the ICCC celebrates 75 years of Christian reconciliation and unity, this month's book selections reflect the intersection of faith, community, and social change. These thought-provoking titles, highlighted in Publisher's Weekly, offer valuable insights for believers seeking spiritual growth, justice, and deeper biblical understanding.



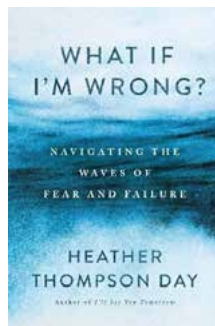
Micro Practices for Justice Ministry: Doing Little Things for the Common Good. Tex Sample. Abingdon Press, \$19.99 trade paper (192p), ISBN 978-1-7910-1242-3

Tex Sample (*Blue Collar Resistance* and *The Politics of Jesus*) presents a practical and accessible guide for faith leaders committed to justice. He illustrates how relationship-building, self-care, and community engagement can create lasting social change through small but meaningful actions. From real-life clergy experiences, Sample provides an actionable framework that aligns with ICCC's mission of faith-driven social justice.



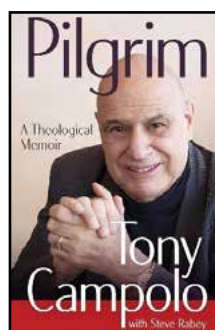
The Bible Says So: What We Get Right (and Wrong) about Scripture's Most Controversial Issues. Dan McClellan. St. Martin's Essentials, \$30 (320p), ISBN 978-1-25034-746-6

Biblical scholar and "Data Over Dogma" podcaster McClellan challenges common misinterpretations of scripture, offering historical and textual analysis on contentious religious topics. He explores misunderstood symbols (such as 666), reinterprets debated teachings, and examines how scripture has been used to justify modern biases. A thought-provoking resource for readers seeking a deeper, historically grounded understanding of biblical texts.



What If I'm Wrong? Navigating Through the Waves of Fear and Failure. Heather Thompson Day. Thomas Nelson, \$19.99 trade paper (224p), ISBN 978-1-4003-4157-3

Author Day (*It's Not Your Turn*) delivers a heartfelt reflection on faith, doubt, and resilience. Inspired by her father's battle with Alzheimer's, she reconsiders long-held beliefs about suffering and divine justice. Through personal stories, she explores themes of risk, struggle, and spiritual growth, offering encouragement for those navigating uncertainty in their faith journey.



Pilgrim: A Theological Memoir. Tony Campolo, with Steve Rabey. Eerdmans, \$23.99 (272p), ISBN 978-0-8028-8494-7

The late pastor and activist Campolo (*Connecting Like Jesus*) shares a deeply personal account of his evolving faith. He recounts witnessing racial injustice as a youth, challenging conservative evangelical norms, and his later advocacy for LGBTQ+ inclusion. His reflections also critique the politicization of faith in modern America, offering a bold and introspective look at Christian ethics.

We'd love to hear from you! How have these books influenced your thinking or actions? Have they challenged, inspired, or reshaped your faith journey? Share your thoughts with us at iccnw@sbcglobal.net by the end of the month. Let us know if we may feature your insights in future discussions. Thank you for being part of this community!

A Season of Renewal: Honoring Women's History Month and the Light of Spring

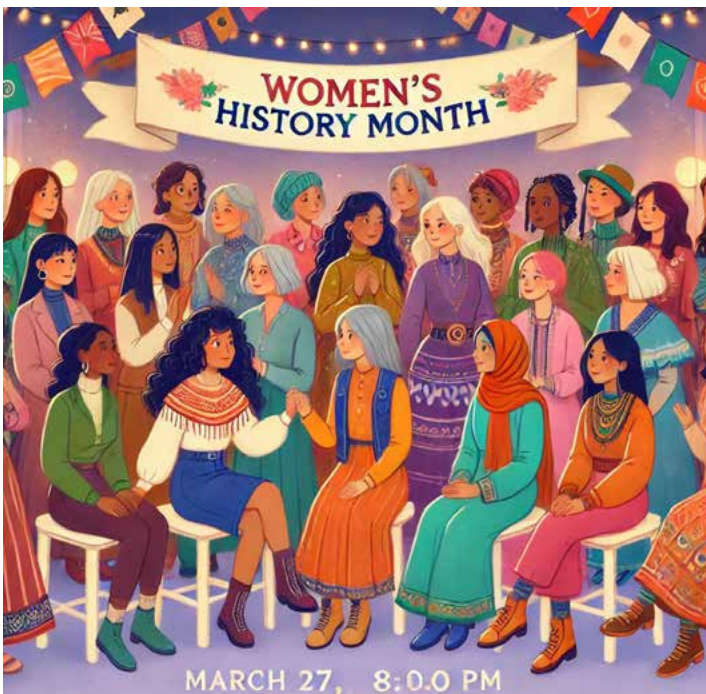
by Winessa Crutchfield, ICCC WCF President

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." — Matthew 5:16

As we step out of winter and embrace the renewal of spring, let us reflect on the **goodness of the God we serve**. Just as the earth awakens with new life, may we also seek to **plant love in the hearts of others** and commit ourselves to **good works that glorify our Father in heaven**.

In celebration of **Women's History Month**, the Women's Christian Fellowship Executive Board sponsored a special virtual gathering on March 27. The purpose was to honor the **strength, faith, and legacy** of women throughout history and in our daily walk with Christ. Co-chairs of the event were **Mary Louise Woodcock** and **Sandra Roberts**. "She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come." — Proverbs 31:25

In His Service,
The Executive Board
of the Women's Christian Fellowship



Proposed Constitutional Amendments

Dear ICCC Member Churches & Centers,

By the time you read this, you should have received a final copy of the proposed revised ICCC constitution, which will be voted on by delegates at the Annual Conference.

This is a reminder that ALL additional proposed amendments must be submitted in writing and received in the ICCC Office by **April 21, 2025**, by mail or email. Proposed amendments received after April 21, 2025, will not be considered at the annual meeting. At the Annual Conference no amendments will be received or considered from delegates on the floor.

Thank you for your careful and prayerful consideration of the Proposed Constitution.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Bob Fread, President
Rev. Dr. Bruce Merton, Executive Director

Conference Volunteers Needed for Children

With the annual conference coming up, we are searching for caring, enthusiastic volunteers to help with the children's program. This is a great opportunity to invest in our youngest attendees, creating a fun and meaningful experience for them while their families participate in the conference.

The time commitment is about eight hours total, spread over the three-day conference. If we get enough volunteers, we can rotate shifts so that everyone gets a break.

If you're interested or have questions, please reach out to Rev. Amanda Alvarado at amanda.alvarado@uprisingaustin.org. Thank you for helping us make this a welcoming and engaging space for all!





International Council of Community Churches

TO: ICCC MEMBER CHURCHES

FROM: Pastor R.C. Fleeman, Peace Community Church, Ft. Myers Beach, Florida

Dear ICCC Church Families:

I have been tasked with creating a commemorative booklet for the ICCC's 75th Anniversary. The conference planning committee wishes to include congratulatory ads in the booklet. Hopefully, every member church will participate by purchasing an ad.

Here's how it will work:

- Ad prices are below. Despite inflation, the prices have not increased in several years.
- Choose the size of the ad you want to have included in the booklet.
- Create your ad copy / layout and send it to me.
- Hopefully your ad will highlight your church and offer congratulations to the ICCC on its 75th anniversary. You might also wish to include the number of years your church has been a member of the ICCC.

Please send the ad copy to me at: icccbooklet2025@gmail.com . I can accept ads in JPEG, pdf, and MS Word, PowerPoint and Publisher formats.

I am willing to help you with the layout for an ad if you wish. If you prefer, you may also mail the ad copy to me at:

Rev. R.C. Fleeman
c/o Peace Community Church
P.O. Box 60958
Fort Myers, FL 33906

Please send funds to cover the cost of the ad to the ICCC office by mail and indicate that the payment is for an ad in the booklet. Payment by check should be mailed to:

ICCC
P.O. Box 249
Loudon, TN 37774

DEADLINE: April 30, 2025

AD PRICES:

- 8" width x 11" height (Full Page): \$200.00
- 8" width x 5" height (Half Page): \$110.00
- 4" width x 5" height (Quarter Page): \$ 60.00

Thanks,
Rev. R.C. Fleeman



PASTORAL
SEARCH
COMMITTEE

Seeking Pastor

Seeking a Shepherd for Our Little Church in the Woods

Bradford Woods Community Church, nestled in the heart of Bradford Woods, PA, (just a stone's throw from Pittsburgh), a vibrant non-denominational congregation, seeks a dynamic pastor who embodies warmth, charisma, and a passion for community. We are looking for someone who can connect with people, inspire growth, and lead our church. We're a close-knit congregation averaging about 30-35 in Sunday attendance, with a rich history dating back to 1915.

Our ideal candidate will embody Christ's love, foster inclusivity, and guide us in spiritual growth and community service. We are also looking for someone who can connect with people to grow the congregation in an intentional and meaningful way. If you are driven to make a difference and eager to engage with our congregation and the broader community, we want to hear from you!

Come help us continue our mission of spreading God's love through worship, education, and outreach in our serene woodland sanctuary. For more details, please contact us at BWCC2025@gmail.com

Bradford Woods Community Church
4836 Wexford Run Road,
Bradford Woods PA 15015
724-935-3135

What to Expect at the 2025 Annual Conference

If you have attended the ICCC Annual Conference in the past, you will find this year's conference quite different. Because of large financial deficits caused by guaranteed hotel contracts and declining attendance, a more financially responsible and stable conference has been planned.

Length of Stay

July 22

This year's conference will cover three days, **July 22 - 24**. Registration will begin the morning of Tuesday, July 22, with events starting after lunch. The conference will end following worship on the evening of Thursday, July 24.

Hotel

There will be no conference events hosted at a hotel. It is recommended that conferees have a car for travelling between the hotel and college.

The ICCC has a courtesy block of rooms at a **Hilton Garden Inn**, which is the closest to Lake Forest College. Information on this hotel is enclosed in this issue or can be found at www.icccnow.org.

Location

Most conference meetings will be held on the campus of Lake Forest College in Brown Hall. This century-old building has a new conference center attached with the latest digital technology and green design to respect God's creation. Our primary conference room, the Tarble Room, is a beautiful room filled with natural light, featuring windows on three sides and great views of the tree-lined campus. Brown Hall is surrounded by convenient parking and close to the Student Union, where the cafeteria offers three meals a day.



Brown Hall on Lake Forest College Campus



Tarble Room, primary meeting room for Annual Conference

75th Annual Conference

July 22-24, 2025 – Lake Forest, IL

Conference Lodging Information

The ICCC recommends using the Hilton Garden Inn in Lake Forest, IL, for those attending the 2025 Annual Conference.

The hotel address is:
26225 North Riverwoods Boulevard
Lake Forest, IL 60045.

This hotel is about 5 miles from the Lake Forest College campus and is the closest hotel to the college.

The ICCC has a courtesy block of rooms at the special rate of:

- \$159 plus tax for a king room or
- \$169 plus tax for a double queen room.

These rates are good from Sunday, July 20 to Friday, July 25. The deadline to receive this rate is Sunday, June 15, or until the hotel sells out of rooms, whichever is first.

We encourage people to make reservations EARLY. Reservations may be made by:

- clicking the link below OR

<https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.hilton.com%2Fen%2Fbook%2Freservation%2Fdeepink%2F%3Fctyhocn%3DORDLFGI%26groupCode%3DICCC25%26arrivaldate%3D2025-07-20%26departuredate%3D2025-07-25%26ci-d%3DOM%2CWW%2CHILTONLINK%2CEN%2CDirectLink%26fromId%3DHILTONLINKDIRECT>

- **calling 847-735-8374** and using the code **ICCC25** OR
- making your reservation online through www.hilton.com and entering the code **ICCC25** in the **Group Code** field. It should automatically give you the ICCC rate IF your reservation is for the dates included (between July 20 and July 25).

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the new conference format, no conference programming will be held at this hotel. Most conference programming will be held on the Lake Forest College campus, 555 North Sheridan Road, Lake Forest, Illinois 60045. Individuals will be responsible for transportation between the hotel and the college.

Other Lodging Options (5 to 10 miles from college)

Sleep Inn, 3250 Bittersweet Ave, Lake Bluff, IL 60044, (224) 303-4592

Comfort Inn and Suites, 517 E. Highway 83, Mundelein, IL 60060, (224) 245-5077





International Council of Community Churches
ICCC Registration Form – 2025 Annual Conference: July 22-24
75th Anniversary Conference
"Seeking God's Vision: Remembering the Past, Dreaming a Future"
Lake Forest, IL

Name (as you would like it on badge) _____

Full Address _____

Telephone (_____) _____ E-mail Address: _____

Emergency Contact Name _____ Phone _____

Church (member of) _____

First Conference: Yes No Status: Clergy Laity

➤ ➤ ➤ **FOR THE ELEMENTARY AND YOUTH PROGRAMS ONLY!** ⬅ ⬅ ⬅

■ Age (on 7-1-2025) _____ Grade completed by (7-1-2025) _____

■ If **under 18**, an adult who is registered for the Conference and who will serve as a sponsor and assume responsibility for said young person must sign below:

_____ Sponsor Signature _____ Print Sponsor Name

CONFERENCE FEES

Fill in Dollar Amount for this
Registration

Infants/Small Child (birth to not entering kindergarten)	\$ 0.00	\$
Elementary Child (entering kindergarten - entering 6th grade)	\$ 100.00	\$
Youth (completed 6th grade - entering 12th grade)	\$ 150.00	\$
Young Adult (completed 12th grade - age 29)	\$ 175.00	\$
Adult Register by May 31, 2025 - Early Bird Special \$195.00	\$ 220.00	\$
Tuesday Daily Registrant (non-buffet registration is \$40)	\$ 100.00	\$
Wednesday Daily Registrant	\$ 60.00	\$
Thursday Daily Registrant	\$ 60.00	\$
TOTAL ENCLOSED		\$

A **75th Anniversary Buffet** will be served on Tuesday, July 22, and is included in the registration fee. Tickets for the Buffet are limited to 120 people, on a first come, first served basis. Buffet tickets are only sold as part of a registration. No buffet tickets will be sold after June 30. (Registrations without a buffet ticket will be reduced by \$60)

Please return this form with payment to: ICCC, PO Box 249, Loudon, TN 37774

Check or Money Order made payable to ICCC VISA MASTERCARD AMEX DISCOVER

Acct. #: _____ Exp. Date: _____ CVV: _____

Print name as it appears on card: _____ Signature _____

One form per person. Early Bird registration must be **received in the office by May 31st**. Registrations after June 30, 2025 will be accepted at Conference only and will not include a buffet ticket. **CANCELLATIONS:** A cancellation received in the office by July 11 will be refunded the registration fee less \$25 administration fee per person. Cancellations received in the office on or after July 12 will be refunded the registration fee less \$ 75 administration fee per person.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSIONS MAY BE VIDEOTAPED OR LIVE STREAMED. By registering for conference, you agree the ICCC may use or broadcast your image, name, voice and story in any medium or format, throughout the world forever, free-of-charge, and for any reasonable purpose in furtherance of its mission.