

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

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"Come to the Water"

by Harry Foockle, Vice-President for Planning

The theme of the 2015 Annual Conference for the International Council of Community churches can be "life saving or gut wrenching."

Water is a life saving ingredient for our world, but at the same time it can be deadly in carrying so many germ laden species.

Here in the United States we spend billions on clean water systems for our citizens. As caring people of faith we send money and supplies around the world to help bring clean life saving water to our planet.

It seems to me that Jesus was profound in the example He used as recorded in John 7:37: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me." He knew that water was essential to life and living, but there was more. Jesus knew that "Spiritual water for the Soul" was just as important.

If we are not careful we can become dried up Spiritual Wadi's. Our life stream that flows from the heart of God can be dammed up, dried up and dumped on. In a word Sin can bring infectious germs into our life, but there is hope and help for all of us.

Hope and help comes from the "Source" of the Water of Life. It comes from the one who was in the beginning, is now and forever will be the "Source" of all life.

So "Come To The Water" that will be provided at Annual Conference in Dublin/Columbus, Ohio July 13th through July 16th 2015. You are promised to find a Fountain filled with hope and overflowing love for those who are thirsty.

I hope you are making plans now. Everyone who is reading this article knows full well that our communities are hurting and here at the ICCC we offer spring of everflowing Spiritual Soul Cleansing water.

So come!!! Come to the Water!!! Watch the next newsletter and the ICCC website for more information!



2015 Bible Study Leader

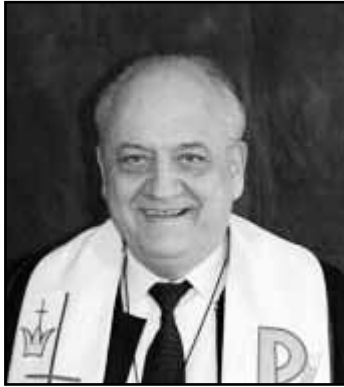
We are pleased and excited to announce that Dr. Shannon Craigo-Snell will be our Bible Study Leader at the 65th Annual Conference being held in Dublin, Ohio July 13-16, 2015. She will also lead a pastors' workshop.

Dr. Snell joined the Louisville Seminary faculty in 2011 as a constructive theologian who is committed to bringing theology alive in the context of the global church. Her ability to engage students in theological conversations that are simultaneously Christian, biblical, historical, systematic, doctrinal, theatrical, multi-religious, and multi-cultural are well-suited to the Seminary's mission of preparing men and women for ministry in a multi-religious world.

In 2014 Craigo-Snell was ordained to the Office of Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The Reverend Doctor Craigo-Snell now finds herself more deeply committed to always working within the context of the church. Being blessed with the opportunity to preside over the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is of particular interest to her. "My own calling is to be a theologian of, in, and for the church," she states. "I am called to teach and write in service to the church, thus I am excited about teaching in the seminary setting. Louisville Seminary is a place where I can bring the interdisciplinary scholarship and attention to religious diversity that I have honed in the university into the work of preparing Christians for ministry."

For more, visit the ICCC website www.icccusa.com.





Opportunities For Impact

President's Message

Rev. Dr. Richard O. Griffith

We all have influence, and are influenced. We are the people we are because of many things – heredity (influences our likes, skills, personalities, how we deal with stresses); environment (were we raised urban? rural? happy home? dysfunctional environment?); people who have impacted us (teachers, pastors, friends, enemies). And because you are reading this, you have been impacted in such a way that the ICCC is an important part of your life, part of the way you express (even exude!) your Christian faith and commitment.

I am writing this to invite you to express / exude your commitment to Christ and the Council in ways that are most meaningful for you.

Following are some of the opportunities where you could volunteer to share your expertise and interest.

Regional Relationships – Has special responsibility for developing, maintaining, and enhancing relationships between member churches and centers and their regional associations; make recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding the size, composition, and boundaries of regions. Please contact Shyreece Pompey (269) 849-6419 or Pompey.Shyreece71@gmail.com.

Planning – Has special responsibility for planning Annual Conference, and for developing other plans to enhance the Council's life and ministry. Please contact Harry Fockle (816) 616-0333 or harryf@acckc.org.

Membership Services – Has special responsibility to review, develop, and enhance services provided to member churches and centers by the Council its regions; conduct periodic formal and informal surveys of clergy and laity to determine the effectiveness of existing services and to solicit proposals for new services provided to member churches

and centers. Please contact Wayne Samuels (773) 968-6071 or wlsamuels@yahoo.com.

Membership Enlistment – Has special responsibility for enlisting new member churches and centers into Council membership; develop and execute programs of marketing to prospective member churches using all available means of networking and communication; develop and execute planned programs of direct contact with prospective member churches and centers. Please contact Don Ashmall (207) 479-6499 or icccda@sbcglobal.net.

Leadership Development – Has a special responsibility for development of leadership skills and aptitudes among laity and clergy, for the benefit of the member churches and centers of the Council, and for the benefit of the Council; develop and implement programs, and recommend programs developed by others, for leader development. Please contact Bruce Merton (239) 851-6821 or mertonbn@aol.com.

Informational Services and Outreach – Has special responsibility for publishing, using all available media: news to the general public about the Council and its member churches and centers; sermons, worship materials and other information that may be useful to member churches and centers; and other materials relevant to the Council, its vision and mission, and its programming; cooperate with other (Council organizations) in developing means and methods of publication via all available media ... that will assist their initiatives. Please contact Mike Donahue (512) 819-1611 or revdonahue@yahoo.com.

Financial Development – Has special responsibility for encouraging member churches and centers in their support of the Council

and its ministries; develop additional sources of funding including grants from individuals, foundations, corporations and associations; prepare a proposed annual budget for submission ... to the Annual Conference; consult ... in matters related to financial development; add or delete names of agencies and institutions to or from the Council's list of endorsed mission agencies and institutions. Please contact Roberta Smith (908) 419-8660 or RobertalCCC@aol.com.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations – Has special responsibility to maintain the Council's relationships with others religious bodies through bilateral and multilateral dialogues, (and at) gatherings of conciliar organizations. Please contact Herman Harmelink III (845) 473-1652 or hharmelink3@gmail.com.

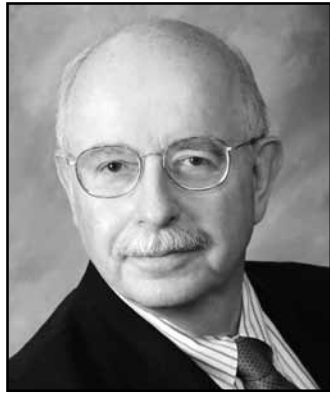
And don't let this list limit you!

As Robert Edwards wrote in 1961:

*Skills and time are ours for pressing /
Toward the goals of Christ, Your Son:
All at peace in health and freedom, /
Races joined, the church made one.
Now direct our daily labor, / Lest we
strive for self alone;
Born with talents, make us servants /
Fit to answer at Your throne.*

Yes, we all are born with talents, and can continue to influence the Council and its people, where increasingly we can be the exemplar of the influential ideal where there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, black, white, pink, purple, gay, straight, young, old, liberal conservative, angel or adversary, but where we all strive to become one in Christ Jesus.

Dick



Perspective

Don Ashmall
Council Minister

We all have a view of our world and our universe, and that view starts with our own experience. In the town where my wife and I make our home, it's a given that February will require boots and mittens rather than sunscreen and beach balls. But our home is not the only place on the planet, which is one reason why some of our neighbors are spending time in locales where they can phone us with laugh-filled messages like "It's 85 degrees here; how deep are the snowdrifts there?" Those of us who love the crystal clarity of a winter morning laugh along. We know what they're missing.

In short, it's a matter of perspective. Discovering a perspective other than our own is a difficult thing to do. We're all limited by our age, gender, race, educational background and more. One result is that we tend to use jargon that is incomprehensible to others with different perspectives. Imagine your own confusion if you knew nothing about the Christian church and somehow wandered into a conversation that included terms like "benediction," "offertory" and (even more confusing) "Gloria Patri." It's not just the language that would be confusing. The entire perspective would need explaining.

That may explain why changing the printed worship bulletin's "Gloria Patri" to "Praise Chorus" doesn't necessarily improve communication. The fact is that we are insiders, accustomed to the cadence and knowledgeable about the details. We have a perspective, and if we want to open the

doors of the church to those who are now outsiders, we need to think hard about the varied perspectives of outsiders. We need to ask how the gospel as we understand is relevant to their perspectives. Then we need to think even harder about how to reach across the gap between perspectives. It's going to be hard, stressful work.

It's easier, safer, less stressful simply to do nothing about communicating with outsiders. We all know that Christianity is an evangelizing faith, and that we are commanded to share our joy in it. And (let's be honest about it) there's the matter of the survival of our own congregations. We're all getting a day older every 24 hours, and if there aren't any new people joining, sooner or later there isn't going to be a congregation. But reaching out is scary. It feels more secure simply to do nothing.

Our fear has to do, more than anything else, with those outsiders' perspectives. They are younger than us, or older. They look different. They dress different. They like different kinds of music. Whatever they are, they are other than us. And if we deal with them, we may find ourselves changing. And therein lies the fear behind all the other fears.

After all, we can deal with our fear of rejection – of the outsiders telling us to buzz off because they aren't interested in what we have to say. Every salesperson faces that fear and overcomes it as she or he discovers that rejection is "their" problem and not

"mine." We can deal with our fear of being ridiculed – of the outsiders mocking us and caricaturing us as cartoon character zealots. We know ourselves better and we can shrug that off. But to imagine that encountering them will change us? What might we become? Would we even recognize ourselves? That is truly terrifying.

But why is it so frightful? We are not the people we were fifteen or thirty years ago. We have grown. We have found new depth in our lives and in our faith. We have in a word, developed a new perspective. Why not open ourselves to new growth in spirit as we open our congregations to new growth in numbers? Why not welcome new insights as we welcome new people into our midst and into our lives? The same God who has sustained us in the past will not abandon us as we discover new perspectives!

By the way: if this applies to individual congregations, it also applies to the community church movement. Many of us have understood the movement in piano key terms – simply black and white, and all English speaking. But God's children come in many hues and speak multiple languages. God's children come in every variety that comes to mind – and some that our minds have yet to grasp. God's children have many perspectives, and God loves us all. May God grant us a growing perspective as we continue to open the movement's circle of Christian fellowship in our own towns and cities, in our own nations, and worldwide.

REVIEWS

Dr. Robert M. Puckett



SHORT STORIES BY JESUS: *The Enigmatic Parables of a controversial Rabbi*; Amy-jill Levine; Harper One, 2014, 313 pages, \$19.25.

Jesus was a master storyteller whose parables are among the greatest stories ever told. His stories were intended to challenge his hearers to see the world in a different way. However, in many cases we have become so familiar with them that we fail to really understand their challenge. Amy-Jill invites us to give them a careful fresh hearing. She reminds us that context matters. "A text without a context is just a pretext for making it say anything one wants." (p. 8) Christians often forget that Jesus was a Jew and that most of his hearers were also Jews. So Christians sometimes get the context wrong and therefore get Jesus wrong.

Amy-Jill Levine is a self-described "Yankee Jewish feminist" who teaches New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School in the buckle on the Bible belt. She clearly believes that Jesus was a great storyteller whose stories are pearls of Jewish wisdom that have profound meaning. She says "The people who first heard him did not, at first, worship him. Yet they paid attention, because for those with ears to hear and some patience to ponder, the parables speak to their hearts. I do not worship Jesus as Lord and Savior, but I continue to return to these stories, because they are at the heart of my own Judaism. They challenge, they provoke, they convict, and at the same time they amuse....The parables have provided me countless hours of inspiration, and conversation...If we hear them in their original context, and if we avoid anti-Jewish interpretation that frequently deforms them, they gleam with a shine that cannot be hidden." (p. 282)

The lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son parables are all considered together to give us hope for our own reconciliation, from the personal to the international. They encourage the hearer to be thankful for the

blessing of family and community. "Finding the lost, whether they are sheep, coins, or people, takes work. It also requires our efforts, and from those efforts there is the potential for wholeness and joy." (p. 70)

From a Jewish perspective, the Good Samaritan parable reveals how the love of God manifests itself in action. The misguided lawyer's question, Who is my neighbor, is a polite way of asking Who is not my neighbor? or Who does not deserve my love? Whose lack of food and shelter can I ignore? "The answer Jesus gives is, 'No one.' Everyone deserves that love--local or alien, Jews or gentile, terrorist or rapist, everyone." (p. 86)

The Pearl of Great Price asks what is your ultimate concern? What is your greatest value? What do we keep and what do we divest? "Once we know that material goods will only collect rust or dust, and once we know that the only thing that counts is treasure in heaven, surely we must find a new way to live." (p. 150)

The Mustard Seed parable shows how the kingdom is already present revealed in small acts that can produce great things "The kingdom is present when humanity and nature work together, and we do what we were put here to do--to go out on a limb to provide for others and ourselves as well. (P. 167)

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus shows how some people condemn themselves to damnation even as their actions condemn others to poverty. It calls upon us to aid the poor and feed the hungry. "Recognize, as Jesus put it, that you cannot serve both God and mammon." The Rich Man asks that Lazarus warn his five brothers but the Torah has already insisted that they

"love the neighbor" and "love the stranger." Will they listen? "Will we?" (p. 273)

The parables help us ask the right questions. They have great power. Hearing the parables anew in their original Jewish context enables us to ask ourselves important questions, such as, "What is our pearl of great price? What would satisfy us, and what *should* satisfy us" (p. 277)

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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Ecumenews

by Herman Harmelink III, Vice-President for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

If you have a very long memory, you may recall reading about a famous sermon preached by Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church, at Grace Cathedral (Episcopal) in San Francisco, in 1960. Blake's good friend, Dr. James Pike, was the Bishop of California, and had invited Blake to preach during a meeting of the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches. In his sermon, Blake proposed that the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches join in inviting other mainline Protestant churches to engage in conversations which could lead to the formation of a united church, "truly Reformed and truly Catholic." Thus was born the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) in 1962. A plan of union was prepared and sent to the churches around 1970, but none of the communions approved it. Since then COCU's ambitions have been more modest, with its present goals of combating institutional and systemic racism in the church and in the world, and of working towards full reconciliation of membership and ministry of the now ten communions involved (in other words, full communion).



For a considerable period of time and for a variety of reasons, COCU was so quiescent that some believed it had died, and others expected nothing from it. In 2002, however, the member communions recommitted themselves to each other, and formed a successor organization called Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC). In a meeting in December 2014 of the Coordinating Council of CUIC, attended by Abraham Wright and myself from the ICCC, the ten churches agreed to plan for a Plenary towards the end of 2015, to which each member communion would be invited to send a stated number of delegates (the figure at previous plenaries has ranged from 5 to 10). The goal of the Plenary would be to engage the member communions more directly in CUIC and its efforts to move forward this long process of trying to manifest more clearly to the world the unity for which our Lord prayed, that the world might believe. We invite you to pray for Churches Uniting in Christ, and for the member churches individually both in your private prayers and in your public worship. The member churches are: African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal. Zion Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Episcopal Church, ICCC, Moravian Church, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ and United Methodist Church.

A Call to Pray!

For all those who wish to join us in fervent prayer please call 1-605-562-0020; member id number 378277696 on the following date in your respective time zones. Pacific Time is 5 pm; Mountain Time is 6 pm; Central Time is 7 pm; and Eastern Time is 8 pm.



During our prayer phone conferences I look forward to hearing your praise reports (answered prayer) as well as prayer request. Let us never forget that God still answers prayer and tell Him "Thank You".

March 9, 2015

Scripture Focus—"For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants." (Isaiah 44:3)

Prayer Focus—Multigenerational blessings

Sis. Shyreece Pompey
ICCC/WCF Spiritual Leader

Have the people of your church or ministry center seen this issue of **The Christian Community**? If you received this issue via your computer, will you print out the pages and give them to another member of your congregation and/or post them on a bulletin board? Share the good things that are happening in the community church movement!
Thank you.

Mission Statement

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



Sharing Joys:

• **Saint Nicholas Mission**, Chelsea, MA celebrated their 5th Christmas at Atria Maplewood Place Senior Living in Malden, MA with a special Service of Holy Communion. Pictured is their pastor, **David Dismas**, one of their deacons, **Robert Lefebvre** (who



also served as organist. Seminarian **Dave Wood** also participated in the service. Photo taken by **Lee Spatafore**.

- With grateful and believing hearts, **Rev. Denise Sager**, ICCC Regional Trustee, announced the birth of **New Hope Community Church** in Dallas, Texas! The congregation is served by **Rev. Denise Sager** and Evangelist **Belete Belay**, of the Mekane Yesu Church of Ethiopia. They solicit your prayers for an outreach ministry inclusive of all people. Tuesday nights they meet in a local chapel for prayer, praise, and healing ministry. Bible Study has already been requested by the people. Rejoice with them and spread the word! They are a small church with big intentions, serving the Lord Jesus whose Holy Spirit is unleashed in our midst.
- This has been a banner year for **Rev. Vince Carroll**, Senior Pastor, and the **Longboat Island Chapel**, FL. Since his arrival in January '13 much has been completed. Numerous projects concerning "bricks and mortar," landscaping, and a renewed and vital outreach program (from \$0 dollars in '13 to nearly 20k in '14 and counting). The Lord's Warehouse is grossing more each year. Their attendance is up 25% and through their concerted efforts as a chapel to date, nearly one million dollars has been donated for the general fund, restricted accounts, building, outreach and the church just purchased a condo (an on island residence for the pastor). It has been a blessed year indeed. Their outreach now has predicted a 50k budget for next year and Aging in Paradise completed its first year under a paid director in the black.
- The people of **Bethany Church**, CT, **Rose Tressel** Senior Pastor, made prayer shawls and lap rugs for Connecticut Hospice patients as their outreach work. Each blanket was accompanied by a prayer for comfort: *As you wrap yourself in this lap robe of comfort... May the Mother of Mercy, the Father of Faithfulness and the Spirit of Compassion wrap you in their all-encompassing love this day. May you find comfort from all that appears too much to bear at this moment, from all that feels as if it might be a breaking point, from all that seems to threaten your peace of heart. May you be comforted by the presence of those who love and support you, by faith in the eternal Loving One, by the memories of what you hold most dear. Blessings of the Angel of Comfort be with you and all you love now and forevermore.*



Our prayers are with:

- **Kimberly Hopely** and her family for the passing of her mother, **Elaine Morrissette**, on December 30, 2014. Our hearts and prayers go out to Kim, wife of **Dale Hopely**, Senior Pastor, **Church at Litchfield Park**, AZ. Cards can be sent in c/o the church: The Church at Litchfield Park, 300 N. Old Litchfield Rd., Litchfield Park, AZ 85340.
- All the efforts of our **Liberian churches** to address the Ebola virus crisis are undergirded with prayer. **Rev. Wesley Artee** of the **Liberian Interchurch Council** led a three week series of prayer meetings that ran through February 1. As the gatherings began, food and fellowship were shared. Please pray with and for Liberia, its people and its churches.
- The family of **Rev. Ralph E. Marsden, Jr.** who passed on December 24th. **Rev. Marsden** served as pastor at **Greendale People's Church**, Worcester, MA beginning in 1970, retiring in 1998. He also served as **ICCC** president 1972-1974. Visit www.milesfuneralhome.com to view his obituary and sign the guestbook.



Clinical Pastoral Education Distance Program

Chaplain Ron Ringo, Eagle's Wings Ministries & World Spiritual Health Organization invite any ICCC members and friends to this new opportunity, the Clinical Pastoral Education Distance Program, to continue in your training and education for the care of those you have stewardship.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is the interfaith and interdisciplinary professional training for chaplaincy, integrating both theology and psychology. In CPE, chaplains, theological students, laypersons, ordained clergy, medical staff, mental health professionals and members of religious communities learn clinical pastoral skills and relationship "tools" to effectively minister to people. Through practical clinical experience, written case studies, individual supervision, relevant reading and seminar participation, students are encouraged to develop competent and caring pastoral relationships and skills.

To find out more about this program, please visit the ICCC website for more information.

If you would like to join the Distance CPE Program, please email Chaplain Ron Ringo at usmcchappy@gmail.com or call at (619) 855-5446.

The ICCC's Facebook page is open to you!

Join the group, learn what's happening around the Council, and post notices and photos of your church's exciting ministries!



65th Annual Conference July 13-16, 2015 Dublin/Columbus, OH

Hotel Information

The 2015 Annual Conference will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 5100 Upper Metro Place, Dublin, OH 43017. Phone: 614-790-9000. Centrally located to a variety of Columbus-Dublin activities, this Embassy Suites hotel



is close to a number of attractions including golfing, shopping, sports team venues and the Columbus Zoo, one of the oldest and largest zoos in the country. While at the zoo, check out Zoombezi Bay, a modern water park.

At Embassy Suites Hotels every room is a two-room suite perfect to spread out and relax. The private bedroom boasts luxurious Sweet Dreams bedding, while the separate living area has a sofa bed, armchair, work table, wet bar, microwave, refrigerator, coffee maker, and internet access. There is a TV in both rooms and more than enough room for your family, work or both. Enjoy onsite services like a fitness room, an indoor pool, a pool table and a business center that includes a complimentary printing service.

Hotel Dining:

At Embassy Suites hotels guests get more with every stay, like free cooked-to-order breakfast, complimentary appetizers and beverages at the nightly Evening Reception, and a complimentary beverage area. At any time of day, you can enjoy a freshly prepared meal at Kilpatrick's where a robust menu of meats and pastas please any guest.

Hotel Reservations

For those conferees planning on attending the conference you will need to call Embassy Suites Hotel to reserve your room at **800-220-9219** or **614-790-9000**. Inform the reservations clerk that you are attending the 2015 ICCC Annual Conference to get the special rate of \$119.00 + tax per night. **The cut-off date for hotel reservations is June 19, 2015.** After this date, normal hotel rates will be in effect and space may no longer be available. **Please note: the special rate of \$119 + tax is negotiated only for conferees. Those utilizing this special rate are expected to register for the conference. Thank you for your cooperation.**

Check-in: 4:00pm

Check-Out: 12:00pm

Transportation To and From the Hotel

Port Columbus International Airport has several options for transportation to the hotel. You can call the Embassy Suites for information on bus and super shuttle services. Dublin Taxi Service offers guests a discounted rate of \$35.00 each way. 614-766-6666. Complimentary self parking is also available at the hotel, if you are driving or renting a car.

For hotel information, visit their website: <http://embassysuites3.hilton.com/en/hotels/ohio/embassy-suites-columbus-dublin-CMHESES/index.html>. For airport information, visit their website: <http://flycolumbus.com/> or call 614-239-4000.

Did your congregation send photos from the Christmas season to the Christian Community? Share your pictures of Lenten and Easter events at your church. Send them to iccc60423@sbcglobal.net!



Seeking a Senior Pastor

Community Church at Tellico Village is seeking a Senior Pastor to lead our pastoral team and congregation following the retirement of our pastor who served for seventeen years. CCTV is a 1400 member interdenominational church located SW of Knoxville, TN in a planned community on Tellico Lake in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains. The church is affiliated with the International Council of Community Churches. The ideal candidate possesses a deep personal faith in Jesus Christ and demonstrates a true desire to shape their ministry by the Great Commandment. S/he values Christian unity and ecumenical cooperation. S/he is a mature "people-person" with leadership skills who has a passion for: preaching, developing fellowship, and spiritual growth ministries. Ministers from all denominations may apply. M. Div. required. If interested, visit us at www.tellicochurch.com and post resume to search@tellicochurch.org. Otherwise mail to TVCC Search Team, 130 Chota Center, Loudon, TN 37774. The deadline for submission of application materials is November 15, 2014.



DIVERSITY WITHOUT DIVISION.

2015 Annual Conference Program Book/Church Directory Ad Space

Indicate below the ad size you will submit.

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PLEASE MAKE SURE YOUR AD IS CAMERA-READY (THE AD WILL GO IN BOOK AS IS).

THE COUNCIL CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DESIGNING ADS.