

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

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Only "You" Can Make It Happen

by Harry Foockle, Vice-President for Planning

The theme of this article is a take off on Smokey the Bear. Smokey is always saying, "Only you can prevent forest fires."

I was thinking about Smokey the Bear and the Annual Conference of the International Council of Community Churches (ICCC). That phrase "only you" fits us to a "T."

Think about this with me. Annual Conference is essentially the lifeblood of the ICCC. It defines who we are more than any other venue we use. Annual Conference is a come together place for renewal and sharing the love of God.

Your Planning Committee is putting together an Annual Conference that will bring hope and renewal to every Church in the ICCC. We will have outstanding Bible studies, our own ICCC Pastor's will bring the Word, the workshops will be fruitful for ministry and the love of old friends (and new) will be everywhere.

This great Annual Conference will happen in Dublin/Columbus, Ohio at the Embassy Suites in Dublin. I can tell you the facilities are absolutely wonderful. It promises to be another Spirit empowered Love filled Conference.

The theme of our Conference is from the great Gospel of John 7:37 where Jesus says, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me." Friends if you are "thirsty" this is the place to be July 13th through the 16th 2015.

So this brings us back to Smokey the Bear and "only you." If this Annual Conference is to be all it needs to be you need to be there. ONLY "YOU" CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN!!! Why not register today and "Come to the Water."



**ICCC Registration Form
2015 Annual Conference: July 13-16
"Come to the Water"
Dublin/Columbus, Ohio**

Name (as you would like it on badge) _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone (_____) _____ E-mail Address: _____

Church (member of) _____

Gender: Male Female

First Conference: Yes No

Status: Clergy Laity

Name and Telephone number of a person to be notified in an emergency

_____ (_____) _____

► ► ► FOR THE ELEMENTARY, TWEEN AND YOUTH PROGRAMS ONLY! ◀ ◀ ◀

- Age (on 7-1-2015) _____ Grade completed by (7-1-2015) _____
- 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 (not occupying chair at banquet)	\$ 0.00	\$ _____
Child (Ages 1-5)	\$ 35.00	\$ _____
Elementary (Ages 6-9)	\$ 60.00	\$ _____
Tween (Ages 8-10)	\$ 125.00	\$ _____
Youth (Ages 13-17)	\$ 145.00	\$ _____
Young Adult (Ages 18-23)	\$ 170.00	\$ _____
Adult	\$ 195.00	\$ _____
Continuing Education Certificate (for Clergy only)	\$ 10.00	\$ _____
Daily Registrants Circle Day(s) M T W Th	\$ 35.00/day	\$ _____
Late Fee - Add After June 20, 2015	\$ 35.00	\$ _____
CC	TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$ _____

A Banquet ticket is included in your registration fee. This meal includes: Fresh Market Salad, Grilled Flat Iron Steak served on an Herbed Compound Butter, Garlic Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans Amandine, Warm Rolls & Butter, Baked Caramel Apple Pie, and Freshly Brewed Coffees & Teas. *Chicken Option:* Double Breast of Boneless Chicken Rolled and Stuffed with Fresh Spinach, Garlic, Parmesan Cheese & Basil Topped with a Classic Mornay Sauce. *Vegetarian Option:* Breaded Eggplant cutlets Lightly Sautéed, Layered with Herbed Ricotta Cheese and Topped with Tangy Marinara and Fresh Grated Parmesan Cheese. *Kid's Meal Option:* Cheese Pizza and Applesauce.

Please circle one of the following for your preference at Thursday's Banquet Dinner.

Flat Iron Steak Chicken Option Vegetarian Option Kid's Meal Option

Please return this form with payment to: ICCC, 21116 Washington Pkwy., Frankfort, IL 60423

Check or Money Order made payable to ICCC

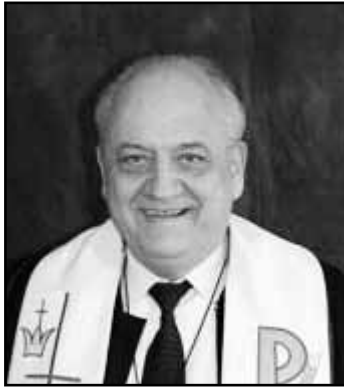
VISA MASTERCARD AMERICAN EXPRESS DISCOVER

Acct. #: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Print name as it appears on card: _____ Signature _____

One form per person. Pre-Registration ends on June 20th. All registrations after this time will be assessed a late fee of \$35.00. Late registrations will be accepted at Conference only. Do not send to the Council Office.

CANCELLATIONS: A \$25 administration fee will be assessed for each.



A Mentor in Ministry

President's Message Rev. Dr. Richard O. Griffith

I received an e-mail the other day – (the Rev. Dr.) John B had just died. He hadn't shown up at the Sunday School class he taught in retirement, and his daughter rushed over to his home, found him dressed for church, having passed away while looking at the bulletin from the Memorial Service for his recently deceased wife. Their dog was sitting by his side when Donna found him.

John was the senior pastor when I was his associate at a growing suburban church on Long Island. He had gone there after successfully ministering in a changing neighborhood in Queens. When he first arrived it was a white church; when he left, it was mostly black. And John had been raised in the segregated South!

There were several highlights while we worked together. We had told the congregation that if more than 300 were in church on a non-Easter Sunday, we would eat lunch on the roof. The day arrived! The local fire department hoisted us up to the roof, and we ate lunch. [*The Christian Century* ran an item criticizing our lack of piety (!)]

John's wife was afflicted with Parkinson's disease, so a Parkinson's Physical Therapy Center was created (It still is there, 45 years later.) I saw a man, unable to control his drool, unable to navigate steps, just six weeks later

climb a flight of stairs all by himself, and his drool was no more! We also worked together with the Nursery School / Day Care center, and the sheltered workshop for profoundly special needs adults.

The "traditional" work of the church also thrived, the two of us working together, though not always in harmony, but with long term mutual respect.

Since then we had gone our separate ways – me having ministry in Michigan, Illinois, and Ohio, with John serving where I met him for 22 years, and then serving churches in Virginia and Tennessee. We kept continual contact, each of us sharing the news of our families, latest developments in our ministries, and later, our retirements and our continuing activities at the churches we were attending or serving.

When I reflect on the things I believe I do reasonably well, much of it was influenced by John, for whom I always will be indebted.

Mentoring and influencing often is inadvertent and unknown. Repeatedly, we never know the influence we have had on others, and can be totally surprised. I know of another minister, who received a

telephone call from a woman who wanted him to perform her wedding. That is not unusual, but what was unusual was that when she was only 8 years old, sitting next to the minister during a Children's Sermon, she made the decision that when she got married, she wanted him to do the service. Now, 15 years later, and a graduate electrical engineer, she was following through on her plan.

All of us who read this message already have had profound influence on others, even if we were unaware, and will continue to mold the lives of numerous people in innumerable ways. And we will continue to influence others, hopefully positively (though we all will mess some things up) and be part of the growing and committed community 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.

In the spirit of unity without uniformity,

Dick

PS: I invite you to investigate the opportunities to be mentored and influenced by the worship, study, and workshop offerings described elsewhere in this issue of *The Christian Community*.



Time Warp
Don Ashmall
Council Minister

There were any number of things that made the decade of the 1950's a remarkable era. Church organizations were thriving. A U.S. President participated in the dedication of the Interchurch Center in New York, across the street from Riverside Church, aka Rockefeller Cathedral. Suburbia was growing, with tax breaks for mortgage holders making single home ownership more affordable. The Interstate Highway system was begun, and with its growth was a feeling that the nation was on the move.

But that wasn't the entire story. Many supposedly Christian groups refused to deal with persons of color other than perhaps as potential objects of charity. Real estate realities included redlining and block busting – tactics that provided profits for banks and businesses and in the process hurt minorities. The nation may have been on the move but many were forced to move at a slower speed than the majority.

Fast forward to the current decade. We have come a long way, or so we've told ourselves. When I began service to the I.C.C.C. at the beginning of 2011, I heard immediately from some in the Council that the fellowship no longer had a focus. In their view American society had moved so far that a 1950 merger seeking justice, reconciliation and Christian unity was fast becoming obsolete.

And then came the racially charged events of 2014. At first it seemed to many that we were in some sort of time warp. The years of the 1950's had suddenly thrust themselves into the second decade of the twenty-first century. This wasn't supposed to be happening, especially since we had moved so far as a society - hadn't we? Did some cosmic pancake flipper suddenly insert itself into human history, jumbling up the decades?

Of course nothing of the sort had happened. Instead, the dreary old story of bigotry and hatred was being told once again. If you think you have reason to doubt that, I urge you to

attend to the responses to the events in social media, in letters to the editor of your local newspaper, and in the conversations you can overhear in the checkout line at your nearby grocery store. Yes, there has been progress since the 1950's; and equally yes, we still have a very long way to go before racial and ethnic reconciliation become a full reality.

The I.C.C.C. emerged out of a conviction that as churches and ministry centers we can make a difference by our witness; that a fellowship committed to justice, reconciliation and Christian unity is needed in a divided age; that as churches and ministry centers we ought not try to "go it alone," but instead that we can find strength in and by what we do together.

We reach out to one another in Christian love, knowing that each of our ministries is partial; but that we can find fullness of vision together. We enter into pilgrimage together, not because we have a predetermined plan for every occasion, but because we seek the guidance of God's Holy Spirit in each new day. We strive toward unity, humbled by the enormity of the challenge but encouraged by the fact that our striving is in response to Jesus' prayer for His disciples "that they might all be one."

Many of those who pronounced the Council's historic focus "obsolete" in 2011 have come to a different outlook, based on the events of 2014. As we enter into a new year, I offer these thoughts for our work together.

We have enormous resources for ministry in our midst. If we are truly to serve justice, we must redouble our efforts to empower one another through prayer, through the sharing of experiences and expertise, and through cooperation in building our practical skills.

If we truly seek reconciliation, we need to step beyond our individual and congregational comfort zones. New circumstances are always frightening. But if we open the circle to include all who share in our commitment

to justice, reconciliation and unity in Christ, I promise you that we will find that our anxiety is replaced by joy.

If we are to be heralds of Christian unity, we must continue to show that unity by the relationships we build among our congregations. Sister church relationships with overseas churches; shared fellowship among domestic congregations; inclusion of unaffiliated churches in our various events: each of these will build the deep relationships that are at the heart of Christian communion.

When the churches and ministry centers of the Council joined in a new fellowship in 1950, we were revolutionary. We still are. Contrary to some voices in 2011 we have a focus, and that focus is relevant. Our focus is justice, reconciliation and Christian unity. Given this, the best days of the Council are not in the past but in the future. We do not exist to defend some ancient heritage but to proclaim good news that is ever new.

Our Council President has urged our officers and board members to compose an "elevator speech": a brief explanation of who and what the Council is to be shared whenever there is an inquiry. Here's my elevator speech --

"The Council is a visionary gathering of congregations committed to justice, reconciliation and Christian unity, cooperating in Christian love rather than compulsion, respecting the integrity of every one of our members, and continually opening the circle of ministry and fellowship."

I invite you to compose an elevator speech of your own that begins to explain your enthusiasm for the Council. Share that elevator speech with others. Some of them will be amazed that a fellowship like the I.C.C.C. exists. Some will be frightened by the breadth of the vision. And some will want to know how their church can become a part of such a circle of hope and joy.

May God bless you in the New Year!

REVIEWS

Dr. Robert M. Puckett



THE FUTURE OF JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY: Back to the Future with the Apostle Paul; Tex Sample, Cascade Books, Eugene, Oregon, 2012, Paperback, 119 Pages.

Tex Sample was the inspiring Bible study leader for the annual Conference of the International Council of Community Churches in Omaha in July of 2014. He is professor emeritus of Church and Society at the Saint Paul School of Theology. Tex used his research for **THE FUTURE OF JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY** as the basis of his Bible study presentation to examine the influence of St. Paul on major theological issues that are important to theology in general.

My first experience of church when I was a child was in a Methodist Church which left me with a positive attitude toward Methodism. However, we moved to a new community when I was nine and I have never had occasion for mature reflection on Wesley's theology. I found Sample's reflection of the influence of Paul on Wesley's theology to be of interest for all theological discussion.

He suggests in this essay that Methodist "have tended to read Paul through Wesley: it is time for us in the future to read Wesley through Paul." (p. 105) I suspect that serious reflection on every theological issue would profit from that same process.

Sample observes a number of points in which Paul challenges the theology of Wesley to make it more effective in dealing with our situation in the twenty first century. One is in being aware of the difference between faith *in* Christ and the faith *of* Christ. The Greek words *pistis Christou* in the writings of Paul addresses the issue of whether these words should be translated as "Faith In Christ" or "Faith of Christ" or the faithfulness of Christ. Sample makes the case for the latter

which makes it central for salvation in Paul's writings. If that is indeed the case it becomes the appropriate response to a "blessing already given in Christ." (p. 19) This calls upon Christians to participate in the faithfulness of Christ as a new pattern of life. Hence, Galatians 2:16 should be translated "Even we (knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, *but by the faith of Jesus Christ*) have believed in Christ Jesus that we might be *justified by the faith of christ*, and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." (p. 20)

Paul's view of faith "makes primary God's rectifying action through the faith *of* Christ" and delivers humans from the powers that hold them captive. (p. 24) Paul's view involves an "apocalyptic deliverance from the captivities that enslave us." (p. 26) Paul's view of the powers is "an apocalyptic one where God has invaded the world and set right the relationship between Jew and Gentile." (p. 29) This is the basis of the new creation to which the church is called to give witness. The new creation is already present but not yet fully realized. Christians are called upon to live in the light of the new creation as a demonstration of its presence.

Paul's view is one in which the powers have been decisively defeated. "The good news of Paul's gospel is one of such encompassing deliverance from the captivities of human enslavement that our word *freedom* is too abstract and our word *liberty is too frivolous.*" (p. 32) This Pauline version of the Gospel can enable **THE FUTURE OF JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY** to effectively deal with the difficult issues we face in the twenty first

century. It can also be a sound biblical foundation for the International Council of Community Churches and its churches and centers to advance its commitment to being as inclusive as the love of God. It could help Christians of every persuasion to contribute to a justice of the common good!

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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Are There Any Christians in Ferguson, Missouri?

by Rev. Dr. William H. Samuels,
Commonwealth Community Church, Chicago
and ICCC Ministerium President

The real tragedy of the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is that generations to follow would not hear from the prophet except through “sound bites”, excerpts and tainted biographies. The issues confronting us today and publically dividing the country once again are the four chronic monsters of racism, ethics, economics and justice.



Christianity, as taught by Dr. King, resolves these issues through his pragmatic approach of “thinking through” the four monsters of the 60s and the resulting “interposition and nullification” inflicted upon the downtrodden by authority of a callous, law and order majority. He taught that the goal for the modern Christian should be reconciliation and forgiveness and the method non-violent direct action. The women’s movement learned it, the gay movement learned it and movements all over the country have bought into the idea of the “Sittlichkeit” (The Ethical Community) or Dr. King’s understanding of the Christian philosopher Hegel and what has become known as the Beloved Community.

Since his ethical, religious and philosophical meditations are not available on twitter, facebook or instagram—the shorthand symbols of meaning are not available to address the ideas of justice, ethics and volition. So we are left with the alternatives of “burn the mother down!”, “shoot ‘em in the head”; “grab the T.V.”—these fit well in the language of modern social media.

Now, as far a resolution is concerned, we must look at the idea of justice, ethics and the “common good.” Other variables such as jobs (46% of black men in Ferguson are unemployed), racism—(Darryl Wilson is a white policeman—Michael Brown is black defiant teenager—with his hands up) the Grand Jury (6 white men, 3 white women, 2 black women and 1 black man. Finally, the issue of freedom—freedom to/freedom from/freedom for are certainly problems whose ugly consequences come as no surprise to store owners in Ferguson who boarded up their establishments in advance of the decision.

Paul Tillich’s theology, one of Dr. King’s objects of dissertation, found that the combination of Love, Power and Justice must be meditated upon and reconciled for a properly ordered society. These concepts cannot be “twtited” but must become ideas for study—where-in lies the problem. Are there any more Christians in Ferguson—or America—who think beyond social media and public opinion?

Sharing Joys:

- **Saint Nicholas Mission**, Chelsea, MA welcomes The **Rev. Ms. Rebecca Sommer-Petersen** and The **Rev. Mr. Robert J. Lefebvre, Jr.** who are now “attached” to The Mission for the duration of their diaconates. The Rev. Mr. Lefebvre will be working with Bishop and Senior Clergy **David Dismas** to establish their daughter mission--Holy Family Mission--in the Greater Rochester (NH) area. The Rev. Ms. Sommer-Petersen will be working with their Joachim and Anna Ministry to the Elderly and Housebound.
- The Christian Catholic Church in the Capital Area, Ottawa-Gatineau celebrated their 38th anniversary on December 25th at a mass with Mgr. **Serge A. Theriault** as the Celebrant. For more news from the **Canadian Chapter**, visit the ICCC’s facebook page!



Our prayers are with:

- **Pastor Emeritus Judson Souers, Church at Litchfield Park, AZ** and his wife **Betty** as she recovers from orthopedic surgery. She broke her hip in July and just recently fell and cracked her femur where the nail and screws are just above her knee. Pray for the Souers to keep up their spirits and resiliency.

**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!



Ecumeneews

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

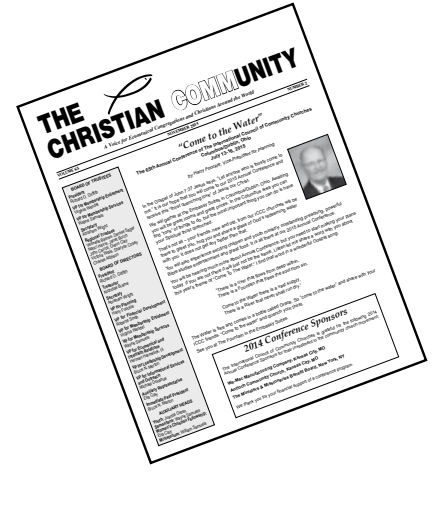
Pope Francis' visit to Turkey has elicited a lot of attention and comment. The most remarkable aspect of the trip was his visit to the Orthodox Patriarch, Bartholemew I. The Patriarch is the titular head of the Orthodox communion throughout the world, with roughly 300,000,000 members, largely in Eastern Europe, Russia, and the Middle East. The division between eastern and western Christianity was finalized in 1054 AD, nearly a millennium ago. At the time the Patriarch excommunicated the Pope and his followers, and the Pope excommunicated the Patriarch and his followers. The late Pope Paul VI and the then Patriarch removed the excommunications in the mid-20th century, but full communion has not been established between the two church families. So it was truly impressive to see the Pope ask the Patriarch for his blessing, and to see the Patriarch, in giving it, kiss the Pope on the top of his head. All who long for greater visible unity must thank God for this significant advance.



The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA is beginning to see some fruits from its recent reorganization.. For the first time in quite a few years, the Council has balanced its budget, under the leadership of James Winkler, a United Methodist minister. It is also hiring two new staff people, after a decade of dismissals because of budgetary constraints. One will be a sorely needed person in charge of communications for the Council. Also significant is the fact that a number of non-member communions have indicated an interest in becoming members. The 37 present member communions (Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox) will certainly look forward with interest towards augmented membership in the Council. Don Ashmall and I serve on the Ecclesial Relations Committee, which considers all applications for membership.

The Churches Uniting in Christ are having a meeting of their steering committee in December, which will consider the possibility of a Plenary Council meeting sometime in 2015 or 2016. These conversations have been going on since the early 1960s, and some people have grown weary of them, and expect little to come from this extended dialogue. Others, however, recognize that ecumenical progress is often a slow-moving thing (see first item above), and the goal of achieving full communion between the ten member communions may be nearer than we think. If achieved, this too would be a significant advance towards the goal of making visible the unity of Christ's Church, and for which he prayed.

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."

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.

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".

February 9, 2015

Scripture Focus—"The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out." (Proverbs 20:5)

Prayer Focus—Matters of our hearts

Sis. Shyreece Pompey
 ICCCWCF Spiritual Leader and the
 NEW ICCCWCF Vice-President for Regional
 Relationships. Congratulations
 Shyreece!



Seeking a Senior Minister

Emmanuel Baptist Church of Ridgewood, NJ has an opening for a Senior Minister. We are a progressive church which emphasizes inclusiveness and social justice as our understanding of Christianity. We are interested in pastoral candidates who are supportive of this philosophy and theology.

The community of Ridgewood is known for its excellent schools, community services, transportation facilities to NY City, the arts, and quality of life. Our church is a member of the American Baptist Churches, and maintains affiliation with the International Council of Community Churches and the Center for Progressive Christianity.

Please contact search committee chair Brent Saardema at 973-427-7310 or profbrent@juno.com with expressions of interest.

Seeking a Senior Pastor

"I am come that they might have life and that they may have it more abundantly." – John 10:10

People's Community Church is a Singing, Praying, Tithing, Serving and Loving congregation, seeking a spiritual and energetic pastor. People's Community Church was organized in 1954 and is a charter member of the International Council of Community Churches. In response to God's call and through the Power of the Holy Spirit, it is the mission of People's Community Church to be a Community of Faith through which the Kingdom of God might be revealed. The Pastoral Search Committee request your resume along with a video, CD or recording of a recent sermon.

The candidate must be an ordained minister, a graduate of a university and an accredited theological seminary with a divinity degree or its equivalence.

He/she must also have actively pastored for at least three years in a congregation that is recognized by the International Council of Community Churches. Must have the love of the gospel; demonstrating qualities of strong leadership in the areas of preaching, teaching, administration, community relations and be able to relate to all generations of the congregation. He/she must demonstrate the ability to stimulate positive church growth in the inter-city area of Detroit.

Interested candidates may submit requested documents to the attention of the Search Committee for Pastoral Leadership, People's Community Church, 8601 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI 48202 – Carolyn Ford, Chairperson. Initial interest may also communicate via email at personaltouch_22@att.net.