

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

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Sharing Joys:

- On Sunday, February 17th, **Covenant Community Church**, Indianapolis, IN held an installation service for their new Senior Pastor Rev. **Terrance Harper**. **Council Minister Don Ashmall** preached the blessed event.
- **Elder Glenn Clay**, **First Community Church Nashville**, celebrated his 7th year Pastoral Anniversary at the church on February 3rd. Rev. Gregory Hopkins of Anointed Life Fellowship Church was the guest speaker, and State Representative Brenda Gilmore emceed the program
- **Bishop Serge Theriault** of the **ICCC Canadian Chapter** helped celebrate World Religion Day in Gatineau, Sunday, January 20th. They are among the founders of the Interfaith Committee of the Outaouais. Rev. Willard Dionne, associate pastor of their Ottawa-Gatineau Church is their representative on the Committee.



- The late Rev. **William O'Donnell**, pastor of **Bethany Union Church** for 17 years before his unexpected



death last year, was memorialized on Jan. 27th with an honorary

street in his name. So see the full article, go to <http://www.beverlyreview.net/atf.php?sid=9191>.

- Regional Trustee **Roberta Smith** presented an ICCC stole to **Steven Winkler**, Senior Pastor of **Protestant Community Church**, Medford Lakes, NJ as he celebrated four decades of service to God last October. Pictured are **Rev. Virginia Leopold**, **Rev. Steven Winkler** and **ICCC Regional Trustee Roberta Smith**.



- **ICCC Central Zone Region A** will hold its spring mini-conference on April 27th from 10:00am - 3:00pm at **Speed Memorial Community Church** where Rev. **Michael Donahue** is Senior Pastor. The church is located at 328 US Highway 31, Speed, IN 47172. Call the church at 812-246-3262 if you'd like to attend. Lunch will be provided.

Our prayers are with:

- The family of Rev. **Tom Scarlett**, who passed into the presence of the Lord on Thursday, January 17th. His family was there with him and sang him home. Tom was part of the **ICCC Australian Chapter**, and a very good friend of **Kermit Long**, **Friendship House**.

President's Message

Rev. Dr. Bruce N. Merton

You will receive this newsletter somewhere in the midst of Lent, maybe even Holy Week. (If it comes that late, blame me because I was 'tardy' in my submission for this issue.) As a pastor with more than 40 years "under my belt", I am always looking for new meanings and insights into the Easter miracle. It seems that telling the old, old story in new, different and contemporaneously relevant terms is an increasing challenge. Nevertheless, it is a challenge that needs to be met!

On a return trip from visiting I.C.C.C. churches in COLD Ohio, I was talking to a man that was seated next to me on the plane to Fort Myers. We travelled many conversational paths. One led him to ask why I would have left Fort Myers to go to Ohio in the dead of winter. I told him that I was serving as the President of the I.C.C.C. In that capacity, I had gone north to participate in the installation service of the new pastor at New Covenant Community Church in Akron and to visit other churches in the area. He responded, in part, by saying that he once was very involved in church. "Now, I do not attend any church, but I still own the stories of the faith and their lessons."

I asked what he meant by "owning" the stories and he quickly, without hesitation, launched into his understanding of the "story" of Easter resurrection. Roy, not his real name so as to protect the innocent, told me that he had been raised in a church which taught "unswervingly" the miracle of Christ's bodily resurrection. He added that "they taught it as a fact of the past and did not live it as a transforming present moment."

Roy continued, "I don't believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. I can't! It is just too much of a leap for me. I do fully and appreciatively believe in the power of the resurrection story."

I asked, "How can you believe in the power of the resurrection story without believing the miracle behind it?"

He responded, "I treat it like a powerful fable or myth. The notion or possibility of resurrection has powerful potential even though it is not rooted in the factually proved resurrection of a body. The resurrection story speaks volumes to me about hope. It inspires me; encourages me. It moves me to face each day, no matter its contents, with a firm commitment to living life with a sense of purpose and renewing possibility."

Roy was beginning to sound like a preacher! (He was a professor.) I was hooked and simply said, "Tell me more."

He continued, "When I was in church, Easter would come. The sing-



ing was great. We would say, throughout the service, 'Christ the Lord is risen. He is risen, indeed!' The church would often be filled, but it hit me that while the church was filled the people were not. This Easter miracle was a thing of the past to be celebrated like a birthday or anniversary. It was not something that dramatically affected their lives on a day to day basis."

"So you stopped believing in the miracle of resurrection because of the witness of the people in your church?" I asked.

"No, I can't say I ever really believed in the miracle. However, I have always believed in the story of resurrection possibility."

I continued to prod him. "So how do you use the Easter story to find continuing hope and inspiration that makes a difference in your life?"

"I'll give you one example," he said. "Think about these two stories which feature stones; the myth of Sisyphus and the story or myth of Easter."

Being humbly proud of my decent education, I replied, "I am familiar with both stories."

Roy said, "What do you remember about Sisyphus?"

I began the retelling, "Sisyphus was a character in Greek mythology that was condemned by the gods to the arduous task of rolling a large stone up a mountain, only to see it roll back down again. He would then start the process over and over and over again. It is really a story that shows how empty, devoid of meaning and absurd life can be."

Roy was impressed. "I think you would make a good addition to my philosophy classes." He continued, "What about the stone in the Easter story?"

"Why, it was rolled away!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," Roy said with a bright smile and enthusiastic voice. "The sealed stone announced a final end, a point of no tomorrows. It was a reminder that life ultimately, in spite of all our efforts, ends in a dark grave with the only possibility being decay!"

Young Adult Mission

A new opportunity is available for young adults at the 2013 Annual Conference. Thanks to the initiative of Doris Marcisak and Rev. Forrest Parkinson, young adults may opt either for participation in all conference activities, or for participation in mission-oriented projects for part of each day of the Conference.

The missional track will include volunteering on construction sites of Habitat Grand Rapids, one of the largest Habitat affiliates in the US as well working at Habitat's ReStore, a construction recycling center. It will also include volunteering at "God's Kitchen," a nutritional outreach to Grand Rapids' homeless.

Doris and Forrest have organized three Habitat for Humanity Collegiate Challenge youth missions to Homestead, Florida; Biloxi, Mississippi; and Sea Island South Carolina. Doris is currently active with the Long Island, Nassau County Habitat for Humanity affiliate. Forrest is co-pastor of the Community Church of Little Neck, NY. Both leaders are bringing young adults to Conference.

Thanks to the generosity of Roser Community Church, Anna Maria FL, Rev. Gary Batey Pastor, a limited number of scholarships are available to assist young adults in attending Annual Conference. For details contact Council House. Plan to make 2013 the year of the young adult at ICCA Annual Conference!

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Why Bring Your Kids To Church?

by Don Ashmall
Council Minister



There are all sorts of reasons why children should be brought up in the fellowship of the church, but many of those reasons are unconvincing to adults who have little or no connection with any (more or less) "organized" religion. So for the benefit of those who may find themselves in conversation with their separated sisters and brothers, here are a few non-religious reasons to bring kids to church on a regular basis.

Churched kids are socialized earlier. My own children were each inside a church building on a Sunday morning when less than a week old. As infants they got passed around amongst the elderly ladies of the congregation like shared trophies, and as they grew they encountered a variety of children and adults in church settings. Contrary to the cautions of some, they caught no more or less ailments than kids who weren't so exposed. More important, because of their exposure my kids never went through a painful (to the child) and irritating (to adults) "shy" stage. Why should they be shy? They'd been around crowds all their lives.

Churched kids gain literary skills earlier. The patience of Job, the perverse personality of a Jezebel, and a long list of other biblical references make obvious sense to a youngster who has been exposed to the scriptures. Those who haven't received the benefit of such teaching are left struggling to attain understanding. Such children are also left puzzling over the pronunciation of Biblically based names and terms that churched kids already know and take for granted.

Churched kids gain cultural skills earlier. Church worship services are about the only places left where groups of adults and children sing together on a regular basis. Group singing requires cooperation, at least some amount of patience with other singers, and a degree of attention to detail. Singing from a hymnal teaches kids how to read music, including choral music. Since the average congregation's repertoire contains tunes sung in a variety of styles, musical keys and tempos, singers are exposed to a musical range that extends far beyond that found in any given week's "top 40" hits. Parents may also be interested in the research that shows kids who learn to read music early have an easier time with foreign languages later. Evidently, the skills learned in "decoding" musical notation are transferable.

Churched kids gain group skills earlier. Whether it's performing in a Christmas pageant, singing in the cherub choir, sitting in a Sunday school class or taking part in a church youth group, a churched kid can't help but learn about both self and groups. The first of these lessons is that the universe does not organize itself around her/him. That's painful to discover, but not everybody can be Mary or Joseph in this year's pageant. We take turns. We cooperate. Ego has to be balanced against achieving the group objective.

Those of us within the church know that these are the least of the benefits churches have for kids. Socialization is good; Christian fellowship is better. Knowing that Job had patience is nice; discovering God's help in gaining patience is a blessing. Singing tunefully is useful; singing God's praise is glorious. Managing one's ego is helpful; serving God before self is saintly. But, we need to start where children's parents are. If mom and dad just want their kids to learn how to sing, what better way to teach them, than with "the songs of Zion?"

May God bless you in your ministries with parents and children.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY CHURCHES OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

President: Bruce Merton

Vice Presidents: Richard Griffith, Charlene Watkins

Treasurer: Nicholas Brame; **Secretary,** Abraham Wright

Immediate Past President: Sandra Nelson

Trustees: Roberta Smith, Winifred R. West, Nanci Harris, William Samuels, Glenn Clay, Ted Fielland, Denise Sager, Vermelle Barnes, Charles Addison

Auxiliary Heads: Women's Christian Fellowship, Eloise Crenshaw; Samaritans, Wayne Sanuels; Youth, Sarah Wells; Ministerium, Ina Brooks

President's Message cont'd from page 1

The sealed stone was a 'Sisyphus reminder'. But, the Easter story words, 'They saw that the stone was rolled away.' is the announcement that our lives are not meaningless or absurd. Life does have meaning in the present, in death and life's impact has eternal possibility."

I was thinking to myself, "Now, this will preach!"

Roy continued, "The big problem I see with most of the people who treat Easter as a miracle and not a story is this: 'They are more into living the Sisyphus experience than the miracle they call Easter!'"

"Ouch!" my inner spirit cried. And I thought, "Now, this will preach, but not with any popularity or large acceptance. However, it is a word that needs to be heard because we do live in a Sisyphus world and the true miracle of Easter may still be locked within us!"

May your stone, and mine, be rolled away!

I wish you the MIRACLE of resurrection in the here and now!

REVIEWS



Dr. Robert M. Puckett

POWER OF PARABLE: How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction about Jesus; John Dominic Crossan, HarperCollins, New York 2012, Hard Back, \$25.99, 259 pp.

Biblical scholar John Dominic Crossan reads the Bible more carefully than most of us and in the process uncovers a deeper and more inspiring understanding of it than most of us do. Christians everywhere know and love the parables that Jesus used in his teaching. Crossan's study of them makes us aware of a deeper and more powerful meaning in them than we have perhaps experienced before.

He defines parable as "a fictional story with a theological message," "a story that never happens but always does" (as in the Emmaus story where the two disciples meet a stranger walking along side them, invite him into their home, share a meal and recognize Jesus as present in the encounter.) This is a parable about loving a stranger as yourself and finding Jesus in the encounter. Crossan goes on to say, "Emmaus never happened. Emmaus always happens." It is another definition of a parable as "a story that never happened but always does—or at least should." (p. 4-5)

Among the parables told by Jesus are the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Unjust Steward, all of which are probably fictional stories. Some parables found in the Bible are about fictional events and fictional characters. Others are about people and events that may or may not have some historical connection. Crossan points to the Old Testament books of Ruth, Jonah, and Job as longer parables. He then goes on to treat each of the four gospels as longer parables addressing issues affecting the time and place in which they were written. Viewing the gospels in this way accounts for the differences in many of the stories they told. It also opens up new and deeper meanings for the stories.

Numerous kinds of parables are examined in this book. They include: riddle parables, example parables, challenge parables, attack parables, Metaphorical parables, etc. Crossan considers the Prodigal Son parable along with Ruth, Jonah and Job as challenge parables which challenge listeners to think about their social prejudices, cultural presumptions and religious traditions. He concludes that

"Job is actually a multi challenge parable and, as such, it is the most powerful parable in the entire biblical tradition." (p. 80) The parables of Ruth, Jonah and Job challenge Israel's absolutes and exclusivities. "They were challenges to the Bible, from the Bible, by the bible, in the Bible. Moabites, Ninevites, and Edomites were generally thought by the Israelites to be bad but Ruth, Jonah, and Job turn out to be the good people whom God loves as He does the good Samaritan whom the Israelites hated.

Jesus' parable about the Kingdom of God challenges popular expectations, ancient and modern, that God will clean up the mess human beings have made of their world. Parables of the kingdom tell us, "you have been waiting for God...while God has been waiting for you. No wonder nothing is happening. You want God's intervention...while God wants your collaboration. God's kingdom is here, but only insofar as you accept it, enter it, live it, and thereby establish it....The Great Divine Cleanup will not happen without God, but neither will it happen without us. It is about a divine-and-human collaboration and not about a divine-only intervention." (p. 127) Parables of the kingdom teach us the kingdom of God is not "an act of unilateral intervention by divinity, but an act of bilateral cooperation between divinity and humanity (Desmond Tutu: 'God without us, will not, as we, without God cannot.'" (p. 245)

"The power of Jesus' parables challenged and enabled his followers to co-create with God a world of justice, peace, and nonviolence. The power of Jesus' historical life challenged his followers by proving at least one human being could cooperate fully with God. And if one, why not others? If some, why not all." That is the challenge Jesus gave his disciples and it is also the challenge he gives to us!!!

Marcus Borg comments about THE POWER OF PARABLE, "A remarkable and important book for all who seek to understand the Bible better—Crossan combines his customary literary and historical brilliance with fresh insights that illuminate not only the parables of Jesus but much of the Bible as a whole."

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2013 Annual Conference Destination: Crowne Plaza

Hotel Fact Sheet

- Check-In time: 4:00 p.m.
- Check-Out Time: 12:00 p.m.
- Minimum check-in age: 21 (children and youth must be accompanied by an adult)
- Late checkout available

Internet Options

Rooms & Public Space

- High-speed Internet Access
- Wireless Data Connection

Business Center

- High-speed Internet Access
- Wireless Data Connection
- PC

Facility

- Hotel renovated in 2010
- 5 Floor(s)
- 110 Single-Bedded Room(s)
- 205 Double-Bedded Room(s)
- 320 Non-Smoking Room(s)

Hotel Information

5700 E. 28th Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
Front Desk: 1-616-957-1770
Fax: 1-616-957-0629

Credit cards accepted

- American Express
- Carte Blanche
- Diners club
- Discover
- JCB
- Master Card
- Visa

What's Nearby

- Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park
- John Ball Zoo

Driving Directions

Located on 28th Street in Cascade Township 1/4 Mile East of I-196 Exit 43b Near the corner of 28th Street and Kraft. Enter Hotel by turning on Foremost Drive and then left into the Hotel.

Mission Statement

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

ICCC Permanent Endowment Fund Status Update

Prepared for *The Christian Community*

January 2013

The ICCC Permanent Endowment Fund's (The Fund) assets are invested with the Presbyterian Foundation's New Covenant Trust which is considered to be among the best-managed funds of any Protestant denomination. New Covenant only invests in socially responsible enterprises and its' expense fee ratio is 1.1%, a competitive rate for an actively managed fund. The Council's six Endowment Fund Trustees convene quarterly via teleconference to determine how conservative the investments within New Covenant should be, given market conditions and outlook.

2011 – 2012 Investment Year (July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012) was challenging but the ICCC Fund assets continued to increase. Despite the extremely choppy times in the market and the considerable uncertainty because of the Euro crisis, mounting U.S. debt, the downgrading of our nation's credit rating, political gridlock, high unemployment, divisiveness in the run-up to the presidential election and a slow-down in the growth of emerging markets such as China, we are pleased to share good news.

The Fund's asset base increased significantly thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor who made a gift of stock exceeding \$14,000 and to the generous donations made by others during the year. These gifts and marginal market gains contributed to movement of the Fund balance from \$188,000 to \$205,000 and also helped to offset the disbursement of \$9,383 made to the Council's General Fund from the previous Investment Year's appreciation. Disbursements are only made when the Fund's appreciation exceeds the cost of living index for a given investment year to ensure the principal donations are not diminished by inflation.

2012 – 2013 Investment Year Outlook: The Fund's current Investment Year outlook which concludes on June 30, 2013, got off to a fast start due to another generous donation. Nancy and Jim MacVicar sponsored a \$5,000 dollar-for-dollar matching grant that was announced during the 2012 Annual ICCC Conference. That grant was fully subscribed and contributed just over \$6,500 into the Endowment Fund. Total gifts to the Fund this year are in excess of \$10,000. The goal is to further increase the Fund's assets principally through market appreciation of the current balance to \$225,000 (+ 7.8% year-to-year).

The first priority for those supporting the Council must be funding the Council's operating and mission budget. The Endowment Trustees graciously accept your gifts to the Endowment Fund that are above and beyond your regular gifts to the Council's operating budget. For further information or to make an Endowment Fund gift, please contact DeAnn at the Council's office (815-464-5690; email- ICCDC@sbglobal.net).

The **Nominating Committee** is seeking suggestions for individuals to be considered for Council leadership. If you have suggestions or would like to be considered yourself, please submit names no later than May 15, 2013. The listing of names of incumbents is meant to give tribute for their past service and is not an indication whether the individual has or has not yet indicated willingness to serve another term.

Available Positions

Officers:

The following officer positions, each for a one year term, are up for election. The President, First Vice President and Second Vice President are eligible to be re-elected once to serve not more than two consecutive years. Nominations of new candidates are also in order.

President: Incumbent Bruce Merton is eligible for re-election to this position.

First Vice President: Incumbent Richard Griffith is eligible for re-election to this position.

Second Vice President: Incumbent Charlene Watkins is eligible for re-election to this position.

Secretary: Incumbent Abraham Wright is eligible for re-election to this position.

Treasurer: Nicholas Brame is eligible for re-election to this position.

Trustees:

Central Zone, Region A (IL, IW, IN, WI, MN, Missouri): Incumbent William Samuels is not eligible for re-election. Position is **OPEN**.

Central Zone Region B (Michigan, MI, OH, Western NY and PA): Position is **OPEN**.

Western Zone, Region B (Southern California, AZ): Incumbent Nanci Harris is eligible for re-election.

The following Commissions have 3-year term positions that are up for election. Incumbents may be re-elected. Job description: Commissions are to implement the programs and policies of the Council in regard to matters concerning faith and order, churches, clergy, laity, ecumenical relations, social concerns, information sharing and other area.

Clergy Relations: 2 persons for the Class of 2016. Class of 2013, term ending: Brian Merritt and Elaine Richardson.

Job description: Provide direction for the ministerial Effectiveness Training program and funding.

Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations: 2 persons for Class of 2016. Class of 2013, term ending: Abraham Wright and Gary Batey.

Job description: Make recommendations to the Board of Trustees and help provide representation in relation to the various ecumenical movements and activities.

Faith, Justice and Mission: 2 persons for Class of 2016. Class of 2013, Matthew Stephens and Class of 2014, Loretta Jordan.

Job description: Shall reflect upon ideas and principles inherent in the Community Church movement. Shall develop systemic ways to share these reflections with the development of the wider church.

Laity and Church Relations: 2 persons for Class of 2016. Class of 2013, term ending: Lenard McClain and Toni Harris.

Job description: Will be involved with matters related to the needs of laity and local churches, Ministry centers and other ministries. Will seek to recruit, inform and support at least one Key Layperson in each member church.

Endowment Fund Committee: 2 persons for Class of 2016. Class of 2013, term ending: Myrtis Brame and Carolyn Ford. Incumbents are not eligible for re-election.

Please attach a brief profile of each person recommended and the position(s) indicated. Include information detailing activities in Church/Center, Community and the ICCC.

Mail to:

Carolyn Ford, Nominating Committee Chairperson
ICCC, 21116 Washington Parkway, Frankfort, IL 60423-3112
or email Carolyn at: personaltouch_22@att.net

Do You "Like" the ICCC?



If you are a Facebook user, you'll want to "like" the Council.

- ❖ It's the fastest way to learn about breaking news in the community church movement.
- ❖ Others are posting events, news, tips and resources that you can adapt and use in your own congregation.
- ❖ It's an on-line opportunity to connect with others in the movement – without postage or long-distance costs.
- ❖ Each month more of your friends are there.

“Croportunities”

Creative Opportunities from ICCC member churches

“On the Road” with Saint Nicholas Mission (ICCC) of Chelsea, MA, which celebrated the second anniversary of their outreach to Atria Maplewood Place Senior Living on Christmas Morning. Currently, the members of The Mission bring their Sunday service to Maplewood Place on the first, third and fifth Sundays of the month as well as on select “Holy Days” – Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, and Thanksgiving Eve. While, this outreach is coordinated by their parish treasurer and “Head Elf” Lee Spatafore, their parish nurse Peg Bailey, and their pastor, David Dismas, most members have involved themselves in some way either by attending or offering prayer support. While this outreach was originally planned to benefit those at the Center who are no longer able to get out to church, we found that it has had a unifying effect overall on our small church ... those who participate regularly find that they are often blessed by the interaction with the “larger body.” [The Maplewood Place congregation, pictured at right, with Pastor David Dismas, is truly ecumenical with representatives for the spectrum of Christian denominations.]



Commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr. and the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, Rev. Jim Granger (ICCC Clergy in Special Standing) was listening to our 57th President’s inaugural speech.

“I too ‘...have a Dream’ being realized, as I respond to your expressed interest in this most urgent ministry. Thank you in advance for inviting me to write you a few words about Thanks and Praise Services (TAPS). I thought it might be helpful if I shared the genesis of TAPS that is based on my experience with homeless Veterans.

I am an ordained minister, who was once a Probation Officer and is now a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a clinical supervisor of a Mental Health Service Act- MHSa funded full-service partnership program for homeless individuals with severe mental disorders.

One of my clients was a Vietnam veteran and he slowly disclosed a need for housing since the rains were coming. He knew the flood channel would inevitably overflow and his few valued possessions he managed including his Purple Heart were at risk of being carried away.

Over a number of years and through intensive case management, Mr. Jones managed his Post-Traumatic symptoms with fewer psychiatric hospitalizations. Mr. Jones obtained his entitlements and he collected his SSI check monthly from his post office box. Mr. Jones refused permanent housing since his preference was to live beneath a tarp in isolated areas where there was lots of open space with his trustworthy dog. Mr. Jones’ self-medicating behaviors exasperated his overall health. Mr. Jones made extensive efforts to reconnect with his younger half-brother, who lived in Hawaii but without success. In fact, this homeless soldier was saving money to make a trip to visit his brother but regretfully he died before he achieved his one and only remaining dream. This Veteran was very proud of his service to our Country and he verbally expressed his desire to be buried beneath the American flag. Mr. Jones refused to sign advanced directives regarding the disposal of his remains since he did not trust “the system.” Mr. Jones clearly verbalized his desire to “Sound Taps” on behalf of a Grateful Nation. The hospital Social Worker tried to contact his next of kin but was unsuccessful. Ten days later the remains of this brave soldier was placed in a “pauper’s grave.” Three weeks later, his half-brother telephoned the hospital and he was informed the remains of his brother were unceremoniously disposed of the County morgue.

The mission of TAPS is to leave no soldier behind. Our goal is to develop partnerships with agencies and faith-based organizations to ensure Veterans, who were honorably discharged from the Armed Services have equitable access to dignified internment and inurnment services with military honors. To learn more about how my wedding ministry funds TAPS, please visit www.youridealwedding.com and from there you will be able to click your way into www.freetaps.com. My email address for TAPS is soundtaps@earthlink.net. Both sites are informative and if deemed worthy of further attention, photos from these sites may be utilized to encourage other patriotic ministers like myself, to join me in this most honorable ministry.”

In Panama, Rev. Canon Robert E. Smith (Free Episcopal Church USA, Inc) and others have been working with a girl’s orphanage known as Hogar de Ninas (house of girls) for the past 5 years. At our recent visit, one of the workers informed us that there was another orphanage where she worked; turns out that it has always been there right under our noses. I guess the Lord wanted us now to be directed to this new mission. The new Casa Hogar Beatriz is for unwed mothers where the girls come to live during pregnancy and after delivery for an average of three months. While we were visiting we noticed that there was sadness on many of the young mothers faces. Obviously we have our work laid out for us.

In both locations there is a need for educational internet. The first hogar we have it in place and support the internet service. We will now be arranging for the new hogar to obtain internet. Each hogar has an average of 25 girls. At this writing the new hogar has 4-new babies. Our goal is to provide internet- at least 3 computers; reading material, games, puzzles, etc. Things that could help lift their spirits. There is also need for baby care items which we will explore.

Our prayers to all and ask for your thoughts and prayers to go out for these young girls and their new babies.

Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, “let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of heaven belongs.”

Pastor and Associate Professor of Communication Rev. Bruce H. Joffe, Ph.D. (ICCC Clergy in Special Standing), has taught no-nonsense public relations, media, marketing, and gender studies courses at The American University, George Mason University, Carthage College, Cardinal St. Ignace University, and Kaplan College ... in addition to his > 10-year affiliation with Mary Baldwin College. As president and creative director of a “boutique” public relations firm in the metropolitan Washington, DC, area, Dr. Joffe helped to manage the reputation of his clients for more than 20 years. He created promotional materials and metrics for large corporations and local businesses to use in their “branding” efforts, while positioning non-profits to raise the bar on the resources and awareness they need to make a real difference. Joffe’s most recent focus has been on gender studies, particularly how they impact the church in liturgies and relationships.

Ordained by the Progressive Alliance, “Pastor Bruce” just returned to Staunton from Jacksonville, Florida, where he served as pastor at an interdenominational church, and helped to establish a new church based on Koinonia principles. While working to “plant” a New Covenant church based on the spiritual principles of love, compassion, inclusion, and affirmation in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, Bruce realized that, thanks to today’s God-given technologies, love isn’t restricted by place or distance. So, those of who still consider “Pastor Bruce” their pastor and spiritual mentor ... as well as those who can’t join the church he’s planting now for whatever reason (distance, family or commitments to another church, disdain for the “institutional” church with its creeds and claims on your life), seek to remain in covenant with Pastor Bruce as their Facebook pastor.

Check out his ministry and mission field at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/FB-Pastor/189030771215027>. Meanwhile, the pastor and professor is working on his newest book, *The Gospel According to Facebook: Social Media and the Good News*.

The best way Rev. Mary Ann Geoffrey can sum up her ministry service is by calling it a “Total Presence” Ministry. She considers herself a world server called to minister wherever she is needed. This includes prayers for others, healing work, a kind word, holistic education, weddings and helping others to heal and recognize their wholeness through the dying and funeral process. She feels blessed to create and provide a spiritual/meaningful ritual/service for those who do not have access or choose to be part of a formal congregation.

Sharing Creativity

by Rev. Donald H. Ashmall, Council Minister

Grace and peace to you:

What’s working? What exciting/innovative/”outside the box” - or tried, tested and still successful things you and your congregation are doing in ministries to and with:

- Children, Youth, Adults, Seniors, Women, Men
- Your City/Town/Borough/Village/Neighborhood?
- Evangelism, Community Outreach
- Prayer and Meditation, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- Leadership Development, Stewardship
- Your Building and Grounds, Other?

Do you ever take your weekly worship “on the road,” and if so how often and where? Do you participate in interfaith or ecumenical worship experiences, and if so, when and who’s involved? Does your church participate in local festivals, and if so what kind? Does your church participate in a local parade, and if so on what occasion (and do you have a photo of your church’s float or marching unit)? Have you had a recent retreat, revival, rededication service? Tell the community church movement about it!

Will you share your creativity with the community church movement? Let’s hear from YOU! Email the [Christian Community](mailto:iccc60423@sbcglobal.net) at iccc60423@sbcglobal.net. Your description of your ministry can be just a sentence or paragraph, or tell us more (try to keep it under 500 words, please.) This is NOT a one-time request. ANY time, ANY program, ANY new development - please share the good news about your church.

In ministry programs, plagiarism is the sincerest form of flattery. Prepared to be flattered as others adapt your ideas to their local situations.