

# THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

*A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World*

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## *"Come to the Water"*

**The 65th Annual Conference of The International Council of Community Churches  
Columbus/Dublin, Ohio  
July 13-16, 2015**

*by Harry Foockle, Vice-President for Planning*

In the Gospel of John 7:37 Jesus says, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me." It is our hope that you will come to our 2015 Annual Conference and receive this "thirst quenching love" of Jesus our Christ.

We will gather at the Embassy Suites in Columbus/Dublin, Ohio. Awaiting you will be great rooms and great prices. In the Columbus area you can find "tons" of things to do, but the most important thing you can do is have your Spiritual thirst quenched.

That's not all – your friends, new and old, from our ICCC churches will be there to greet you, hug you and share a glass of God's redeeming water with you. It does not get any better than that.

You will also experience exciting children and youth ministry, outstanding preaching, powerful Bible studies, entertainment and great food. It is all there at our 2015 Annual Conference.

You will be hearing much more about Annual Conference, but you need to start making your plans today. If you are not there it will just not be the same. Listen let me share a word with you about this year's theme of "Come To The Water." I find that word in a wonderful Gospel song.

"There is a river that flows from deep within,  
There is a Fountain that frees the soul from sin.

Come to the Water there is a vast supply,  
There is a River that never shall run dry."

The Water is free and comes in a bottle called Grace. So "come to the water" and share with your ICCC friends. "Come to the water" and quench your thirst.

See you at The Fountain in the Embassy Suites.



## *2014 Conference Sponsors*

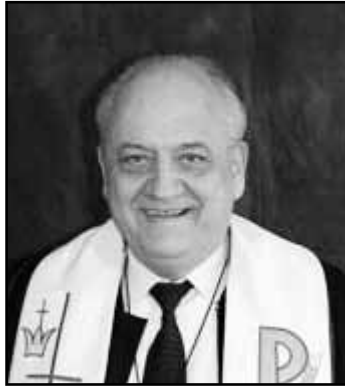
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## Leadership

*(By their fruits you shall know them)*

## President's Message

**Rev. Dr. Richard O. Griffith**

When I was interviewed for the position of Interim Minister at the church I currently serve, the Personnel Committee was aware that I had a responsibility with the International Council of Community Churches. I hold a dual clergy membership – in the large United Methodist Church, and the small ICC. The diversity of experience is both refreshing and challenging. Now, as President, along with the Directors and Trustees, we together have leadership responsibilities involving congregations, mostly in the USA, but also in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Canada.

What then, is “leadership?” Is it elevation? Is it encouragement? Is it influence? I believe the answer is “Yes.”

The reality is that as President, there are certain organizational realities – I preside over the Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees, and am an *ex officio* member of a number of committees, including the Personnel Committee and the Search Committee for a new Executive Director. Part of leadership is “elevation” – a role which gives one influence by virtue of office. It is important this influence be used collaboratively, carefully, and constructively.

More important than elevation is encouragement and influence. I believe in the long term a leader, especially

in voluntary organizations, cannot command, but must try to influence through encouragement. I believe that most of the time, most people want to do a good job, and want to be appreciated for what they do, and if unsuccessful, what they tried to do. Most of the time, by encouraging people, making suggestions, offering insights, articulating values, offering vision, encouraging accountability, leadership is able to influence people and the organization.

I believe these principles also can work for the Council. But in the long run, the ministry of the Council is not done primarily through the elected leaders, but by the people who are sent to Conference by their churches and ministry centers, along with the many with whom we worship every Sunday. As we all help, encourage, offer insights, values and vision, ministry is made effective.

One of the privileges of being our President is to represent the Council at various events. Recently, I attended the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of People's Community Church in Detroit. As they stated in their celebration brochure, “People's Community Church was organized and established as an interdenominational, inter-racial Community Church affiliated with the

International Council of Community Churches. (We) wanted to establish a church that was free of politics and would embrace all religious beliefs.”

And by their fruits they and their leaders have been known! Three Presidents of the Council (Rev. Carlyle Stewart, Rev. Darneau Stewart, Ms. Grace O'Neil) and one President of the Ministerium (Rev. Martin Bolton) have come from the congregation, and, along with countless others, have served us all with grace and distinction.

We are blessed with good people – people who provide the kind of leadership and ministry we will need for the years to come – people who are committed to “unity without uniformity, diversity without division, and communion without coercion.”

For, indeed, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, slave or free (and may I add) black, white, pink, purple, gay, straight, young, old, liberal, conservative, angel or adversary* – we are all called to be one in Christ Jesus.

May we all listen, be encouraged, and focus on what we are called to do.

*Dick*



## *What a Fellowship*

**Don Ashmall**  
Council Minister

Just for a moment, imagine yourself back in 1949, the year before the formation of the International Council of Community Churches. More and more of the people in the pews as well as the preachers in the pulpits know that community churches need to draw together into closer fellowship. But how?

How will it be possible to organize without becoming organization-bound? Can we enter into covenant and still, somehow, avoid the result that connection turns into compulsion? How will we handle the diversity among us so that it does not become a cause of division? Is it possible to find unity without insisting on uniformity?

The result of all those thoughts and prayers was something quite novel in the history of the church: a fellowship “as comprehensive as the spirit and teachings of Christ and as inclusive as the love of God.” Now as in 1950, when a church or ministry center decides to join the Council, there is no gatekeeper to confirm that the new member meets somebody’s idea of theological elegance. There is nobody assigned to take attendance at the new church’s worship services or inquire after its finances. There is no demand that a new member church surrender any of its ability to govern itself or its property, program or priorities. There is no insistence that the

new church’s style of worship meet or match any particular liturgical pattern. All that we ask is that the new member church join with us in celebrating the fact that though we are diverse in our ministries, we are united in our central focus – to seek to “walk the walk” of Christian love together.

If you have spent any time talking about the Council with people who are accustomed only to traditional denominational patterns, you know how confusing all this is to them. “*Are you high-church or low-church?*” Both, and neither. “*Do you baptize by immersion or sprinkling or pouring?*” All three and more, depending on the congregation. “*Do you use drums or pipe organs or electronic music on Sunday mornings?*” Some of all and more, depending – and we’re not necessarily limited to Sunday mornings. “*In worship, do your clergy wear vestments or robes or sack suits?*” All of them, and dresses and pants-suits too because the very question would limit who God calls into pastoral ministry. “*Do you have denominational distinctives?*” We’re not a denomination; we’re a fellowship. And they’ll know we are Christians by our love.

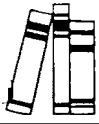
And then there’s the big question: *Who’s in charge of you people anyway?*” Operationally we’ve turned the typical power pyramid on its head. The churches elect

the boards and give them direction at the Annual Conference. The boards do the will of the churches and set priorities for the Council Minister. And the entire fellowship operates not by power but by what can only be seen as “pastoral care” in which all of us pray for each of us, and each of us prays for all of us. We are convinced that’s the only way Jesus can really be in charge of a fellowship like ours. And who better to be in charge than Jesus?

The logical final question is or ought to be: “*Are you then the future of Christianity?*” If somebody ever gets around to asking that question, I will have to answer yes. The golden age of denominationalism has passed, and we are entering a new age. Old requirements for bulbous bureaucracies, lock-step liturgies, and pre-cooked programming are increasingly irrelevant to the needs of the people God loves. Only a creative mix that involves and energizes inquirers and believers alike will carry us into tomorrow. Are we the future of Christianity? I dare to say that we are, so long as we never stop seeking for new inspiration and new guidance from the God Who loves us and Who loves the entire creation.

What a fellowship – and what a joy Divine to be a part of it!

# REVIEWS



**Dr. Robert M. Puckett**



**The Lost History of Christianity; The Thousand Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa and Asia – And How It Died**, Philip Jenkins, Harper One, 2008, paperback, 315 pages, \$15.00

Many of us naively assume that the history of Christianity has ever been one of expansion and what might be called success, from the first century to the present. Many of us also assume that as site of the Roman empire's government, Europe was the center from which Christianity expanded. Jenkins points out that the story of Christianity is much more complicated than that.

For the first millennium of the church's history, its "center of gravity" was not in Europe, but somewhere to the east of Jerusalem in an area within today's Iraq and Iran. Africa's Christianity was at least as vital as Europe's. Christianity trod the "silk road" through Asia and the faith was proclaimed in China long before all of Europe was Christianized. And the story of Christian history is not one of unrelenting expansion, but in many places of growth and collapse in varied places and for varied reasons.

Christianity began in the Middle East, and those of us in the U.S. who know anything about its history know that the apostle Paul was either headed in the direction of Rome or already there when he wrote the last of his epistles. What our texts tend to ignore is the fact that the faith was carried south to Ethiopia, and east to the Persian empire and other realms in Asia. (There's a hint about southern expansion in the New Testament account of the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch, but as far as we know neither he nor those to whom he carried the gospel wrote anything that might have been considered for inclusion in the New Testament.)

Among the factors that has made these eastern and southern Christian communities less known to us is that some of them were among the losers in the arguments that dominated the ecumenical councils of the third and fourth centuries. Thereafter as heretics, they were ignored by those whose views had been declared orthodox. No mention of them would be made in the western documents to which we have easiest access. Another factor is

that western Christianity used Greek and at a latter date Latin, as first languages. Most Eastern churches used Semitic languages – which in reality were closer to the Aramaic that Jesus most likely spoke, but were still unintelligible to those in the west.

Eastern churches were particularly successful in their evangelism during the first centuries of Christianity. Organizing themselves under metropolitans and archbishops, Eastern churches established parishes and bishoprics across western Asia, north to Tbilisi and Trebizond, and east to Tashkent and Samarkand. By 550 we learn of Christian monks smuggling silkworms out of China to the Byzantine Empire, and we find that India had an indigenous church at the same time. (In comparison the last holdouts of paganism in Europe were not converted until the 1400's.)

With all of that early success, why aren't there strong Christian communities now throughout Asia and in Africa north of the Sahara? Jenkins records several reasons.

The first reason was invasion and war. We know that in Britain and northern Europe, Christian churches with their sacramental vessels of precious metals were among the first targets of Norsemen (Vikings). It's not surprising then that in Asia and Africa, invaders targeted churches whenever they entered a new territory. Clergy, who naturally would have objected to the thievery, were the first to suffer when invaders killed any leaders who might foment a rebellion; took the women and children of high rank as slaves; and carried off much of value.

The second reason was a competing faith. After an invasion, the conquerors usually stayed to rule, and did their best to impose their own faith on what was left of the native population. After the 600's A.D., the competing faith most often was Islam. Periods of what might be called tolerance (albeit with special taxes assessed against non-Muslims) alternated with times of severe persecution including genocidal actions that decimated entire regions.

Short periods of persecution can inspire stories of heroic martyrdom that end up strengthening the commitment of follow-on generations. Decades or even centuries of persecution leave only a remnant of the faithful, if even that.

The third reason for a lack of continuing Christian presence was one of Christian "penetration" of a society. When Islamic invaders conquered North Africa, Egyptian Copts endured – even to this day. In Libya and elsewhere in North Africa, Christianity collapsed within a generation. In Egypt, Christian faith was present in the villages away from urban centers. In Libya, Christianity was the religion of the elite and for the most part common people had no depth of commitment to the faith.

The fourth reason was the way in which the church was organized. When the apparatus of church governance was seen as non-negotiable and absolutely essential to the existence of Christianity, the disruption of organized church life meant the end of faith within a generation. Where the faith and the apparatus were less closely linked, Christianity could survive even in a hostile environment. There were still "secret Christians" in Japan over 400 years after the suppression of foreign missions.

There have been times when lost territory and the souls therein once claimed by the church have been regained. The Spanish "Reconquista" is one example that illustrates the ways in which Christians as well as followers of other faiths have used a variety of tactics to evangelize – including the use of violence. Any fair look at history reveals that coercive tactics are a part of every religion's history.

The volume ends with some cautions for the present day. Christians and Muslims are in conflict in Africa; there, both sides are recapitulating ancient modes of behavior. Christianity and other faiths are unavoidably in contact in western nations including the U.S. We can deal realistically and appropriately with the present situation only if we understand what is in the past of our own faith and that of others.

## Ecumenews

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



I have just returned from the annual meeting of the North American Academy of Ecumenists, held this year at the Armenian (Orthodox) Cathedral in Burbank, California. The Academy is composed of theologians, ecumenists, and other parties interested in furthering the visible unity of the Christian Church. We believe that there is "one holy, catholic and apostolic church," so that the unity of all Christians is in one sense already an established fact. But the existence of thousands of denominations around the world tells us that there is still a long road to travel on the way to visible Christian unity.

The theme of this year's meeting was "The Church--Towards a Common Vision." This is the title of a new consensus document of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. In its eighty years of existence the Commission has issued only two consensus statements, the other one being "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (BEM), issued in 1982. BEM was a remarkably influential document, illustrating the significant agreements that have been reached in the WCC member churches between themselves and also with the Roman Catholic Church. BEM indicated that there is now widespread acknowledgment and acceptance of other churches' baptism, and also amazing growth in the establishment of full communion between a variety of churches. But BEM also indicated areas of remaining disagreement, particularly in ministry between those churches which have a particular belief in apostolic succession and those who hold to apostolic faith but do not see it dependent upon a continuous historical succession of bishops.

The new document, which is available from the World Council of Churches, both online and in print, tries to move the discussion forward over the past 30 years. It indicates new areas of agreement, and areas in need of further discussion before consensus is achieved. The World Council is calling its member communions to respond to the document, indicating where it speaks to a given church's situation and beliefs, and where it is lacking, or inconclusive, or needs further explication. Our International Council is expected to respond, and your Ecumenical Relations committee hopes that you as congregations and individuals will "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" what this statement is saying to the churches in our time. The most effective study will be done in groups that are inclusive of multiple Christian traditions, so it is an ideal resource for members of ecumenical groups across the country. It could well be part of Lenten study in 2015. We are asked to respond by the fall of 2015, so we would welcome your responses by May 31, 2015, so that we can prepare a consensus response from ICCC by the fall deadline. We thank you in advance for your participation, whether as individuals, congregations, or ecumenical groups, in this important work in furthering the visible unity of Christ's Church.

### 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!



### THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A Voice for  
Ecumenical Congregations  
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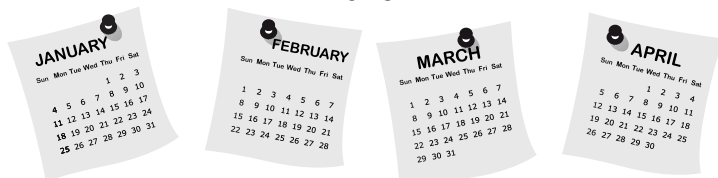
[ICCC60423@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ICCC60423@sbcglobal.net)  
or 815-464-5690

# Planning Ahead

Many casual attendees at local churches don't know that in their planning churches are a bit like department stores: they are always a few months ahead. In November pastors are already assuring themselves that at the Christmas eve candle-light service there will be enough candles for all – and enough “bobeches” too. (Those are the paper donut-like circles to catch stray drippings of candle wax before they hit your hand.) As an aid to the planners, and recognizing that our observances are as diverse as our fellowship, here are a few coming events in early 2015. As possible, take photos of your observances and celebrations, and send them to the ICCC for inclusion on the website, Facebook group page and [Christian Community](#).

- January 6** Epiphany
- January 18 – 25** Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- January 19** Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday
- February 13** Valentine's Day
- February 18** Ash Wednesday
- February 22** First Sunday in Lent
- March 8** Daylight Savings Time begins in many parts of the US
- March 29** Palm Sunday
- April 3** Good Friday
- April 5** Easter

– 2015 –



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e-mail [revcarla@greendalepeopleschurch.org](mailto:revcarla@greendalepeopleschurch.org)



### Sharing Joys:

Please join the Council Office in welcoming new members **Holy Celtic Church**, located in Switzerland, and **Old Catholic Church in Europe**, located



in the United Kingdom! Pictured here from left to right are Holy Celtic Church's Senior Clergy **Alistair Bate**, Other Clergy **Angelo Casali & Bruno Pedrini**. Visit the ICCC website [www.iccusa.com](http://www.iccusa.com) for their contact information.

- Congratulations to **Bill Grossman**, former Senior Pastor at DeWitt Community Church, Dewitt, NY, who was honored in September at the Marcellus First Presbyterian Church with a reception after Bill's final service. He and his wife Allene are finishing six years there and will be retiring to Bradenton, FL in October. Bill has been and remains very active as ICCC leadership. Best wishes!
- **The Faith Clinic Community Church**, Columbus OH, **Vince Monden** Senior Pastor, shared updates with us. In April they had their first official Members Meeting and began their quest to find a permanent building for worship services. In July, they welcomed **Daniel Farlough** who became their permanent worship service musician. In September, Word Explosion Bible Study resumed. The church also held "Pack-a-Pew-Sunday" and welcomed more than 80 visitors for morning worship. Please plan to visit the church while in Dublin for the 2015 Annual Conference! Thank you KeyLayperson **Christina Johnson** for keeping us updated!
- Congratulations to **Rev. Virginia Leopold** who was made Pastor Emerita of the **Protestant Community Church** in Medford Lakes, NJ, **Rev. Steven Winkler** Senior Pastor, on October 12.
- We celebrate with **Dr. Charlene Watkins**, Senior Pastor at **Second Community Church**, Columbus, OH as she marked her 18th year anniversary with the church on Oct. 5.

### Sharing concerns

- Our prayers go out to **Rev. Dr. Judson Souers**, Pastor Emeritus, **Church at Litchfield Park, AZ** with the passing of his daughter, **Kelly Amos**, on Oct. 22nd. "... as the Sun was beginning its descent into the Western Sky, our dear daughter Kelly Amos was surrounded by her family as we lifted her in love to the love of God....no more pain, no more struggle with cancer, no more tears, no more bad days. One by one we told her how much we loved her and how special she was to us and now we released her....there were no medical answers for Kelly... her only healing was to go to the peace and love of God." - Jud Souers. A Memorial Service is scheduled for November 1st at **The Church at Litchfield Park, Dale Hopely, Senior Pastor**.
- Our thoughts and prayers are with our churches in Canada following the shootings at Parliament. **Bishop Serge Theriault**, Senior Pastor **Christian Catholic Rite of Community Churches**, reports that the members of his Ottawa church are all well, for which we give thanks.

## Bible Study Leader for Dublin/Columbus

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.

Craigo-Snell earned degrees (PhD, MPhil, MA, and MDiv) at Yale University and Yale Divinity School. From 2001 to 2011 she taught in the Religious Studies department at Yale University, where she also earned several Yale fellowships and professional research grants. Her students have included undergraduates with diverse religious backgrounds in the secular context of the University; denominationally diverse Divinity School students; and doctoral students in religious studies. These varied contexts have been part of her formation as a constructive theologian.

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.

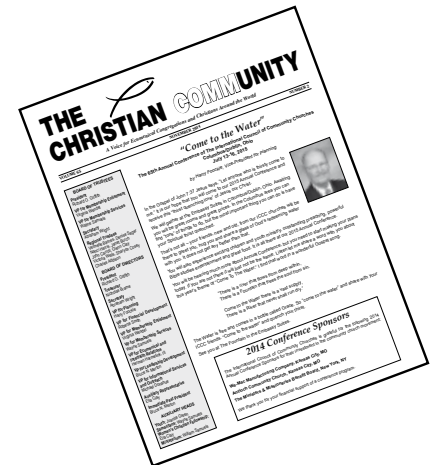
*"My own calling is to be a theologian of, in, and for the church," she states. "I am called to teach and write in service to the church, thus I am excited about teaching in the seminary setting. Louisville Seminary is a place where I can bring the interdisciplinary scholarship and attention to religious diversity that I have honed in the university into the work of preparing Christians for ministry."*

Her writing spans a similar scope of interdisciplinary diversity. In addition to several articles for journals such as *The Ecumenist*, *Quaker Religious Thought*, *Jump Cut and Modern Theology*, she has written *The Empty Church: Theater, Theology, and Bodily Hope* (Oxford University Press, 2014); *Silence, Love, and Death: Saying Yes to God in the Theology of Karl Rahner* (Marquette University Press, 2008); and *Living Christianity: A Pastoral Theology for Today* (Fortress, 2009) with Shawnthea Monroe.

Craigo-Snell is the coordinator of the Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Religion, a \$100,000 annual prize given jointly by Louisville Seminary and the University of Louisville for creative ideas that best illuminate the relationship between human beings and the divine.

We look forward to Dr. Snell's teachings come July and hope all of you will begin making plans to attend the 2015 Annual Conference!

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](http://www.tellicochurch.com) and post resume to [search@tellicochurch.org](mailto: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.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:personaltouch_22@att.net).

## Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a word that appears before the word Thanksgiving Day and after thanksgiver in the Mirriam-Webster Dictionary online. One of the definitions of the word is "a prayer expressing gratitude". The first use of the word dates all the way back to 1533. The Old English word from which it is derived is "pancian" (to give thanks).

One of the beautiful things about the Thanksgiving holiday is that it gives us a specific time to reflect on the wonderful blessings we all enjoy. While we may not have as many things as other people have, we can all be thankful for friends and family who love us and the life God has given us.

"For each new morning with its light, For rest and shelter of the night, For health and food, For love and friends, For everything Thy goodness sends." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

May you be blessed this holiday season!

*In everything  
Give  
Thanks  
1 Thes. 5:18*