

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

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Seasonal Game Face

by Rev. Dr. William H. Samuels

I learned some time ago to study faces. Perhaps the earliest read was my mother showing approval or displeasure with a smile or frown. Then there was further confirmation from my father whose frown was slightly more than displeasure—it had within it a threat. My behavior, however, for years could be regulated by the faces of brothers, sisters and friends, manipulating my mood with facial rearrangements and sometimes by that “sly—come hither stare.” DaVinci's Mona Lisa was, of course, at the graduate level of face reading while the growl and scowl of an opposing football foe were easily attempts at intimidation.

Later on in my career as a clergyman, I was challenged by the faces in my congregation. Blank stares, multiple yawns and heads bobbing and weaving for consciousness were sure signs that the sermon wasn't going anywhere and that it was certainly time for an attention grabber. Jokes, voice inflections and old favorite tunes could usually buy me another ten minutes of attention—but the face of the crowd remained at issue. Itching ears had become a problem for me that needed addressing.

Psychoanalytic practitioner Carl Jung had a name for the face we put toward the world. He called it the “persona.” By this name, he was exposing two worlds. My own world (eigenwelt) and the world I share with others (mitwelt). If I care so much about the “mitwelt” to the extent that it impacts and manipulates my own world, I become a They-self (Das Man).

What ?

A person who is controlled by what others think

Now, “to everything there is a season” sayest the Book of Ecclesiastes. Is there a face for everything under the sun? Is there a seasonal face?

My seasonal face begins about Halloween—you know, the night before “All Saints Day”— Little kids coming by threatening me unless I come up with some candy—and what strange little creatures come by. Even though I am reminded through strict historical readers that the 31st of October is the Witches' Sabbath, I begin my smile here.



Continued on page 4



Executive Minister's Report

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Butler Murray
Executive Minister

Here in the United States, where many of our ICCC churches are located, we are living in the aftermath of one of the most divisive political elections in American history. The result is the legitimate election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the United States by a decisive win in the Electoral College, even though he did not win the popular vote. In response to this situation, thousands of protesters have taken to the streets in the major cities of the United States. I think it is important to point out that they are not protesting that a Republican won, but that Mr. Trump himself is the President-elect.

This is not a protest against a political party's good fortunes, but a disavowal of an individual who comported himself throughout the election season in a way that embraced predatory sexism, racism, xenophobia, and a staggering allergy to the other. It is a concern that in the next four years we will employ nuclear weapons. It is a concern whether we will see the interruption of democracy by elections that are not held and in which not all citizens are empowered to vote. It is a concern for how far back the rights of women, African Americans, Hispanics, immigrants, and GLBT citizens will be thrown into the past, when America most certainly was not great for them.

It is important to know in our heart of hearts that supporting our country does not mean blindly going along with whatever the new

President represents. Indeed, William Sloane Coffin's definition of a patriot was one who was willing to have a lover's quarrel with your country. Whatever may be tomorrow, I love America, I am committed to America, but I also will not stand for America to live into a lesser, meaner version of itself. Hospitality, freedom, the practice of nurturing those whose lot is less than ours, these are the essentials of a society well run. These American essentials are what I will fight for. E pluribus unum was the de facto motto of the United States until Congress chose "In God We Trust" as our official motto in 1956. E pluribus unum, "Out of many, one," is deeper in our American bones, is the marrow of our country, that we are made stronger and richer because of our diversity and our chromatic hues and our intercultural textures.

Perhaps the most important thing right now is for us to be compassionate with one another. For those on the side that won, don't gloat. For those on the side that lost, don't demonize those who votes for your political opponents. We all have the right to vote according to our conscience, and just as I would not want someone else to rip into me for voting the way that I feel is right, I have no justification for demeaning someone else for voting for my political opponent. The United States is divided right now, and it is a mistake to pretend that isn't true, and it also is a mistake to label the opposing

side as un-American. Our freedom to believe differently is perhaps the most American quality of all.

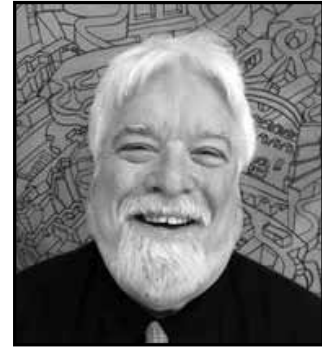
I know that my initial reaction of outright sadness for what I believe is the deliberate self-harm chosen in our presidential election was tempered considerably not by Mr. Trump's acceptance speech which called us to bind our wounds and come together, because I know from his days as a candidate that such statements can have a shelf life of about twelve hours until the next tweet. Rather, I was assuaged by President Barack Obama himself, who I believe had about the same estimation that I did for Trump's suitability for the presidency of the United States. And yet, in the aftermath, President Obama acknowledged that while there are wide differences between himself and Donald Trump, so too eight years ago there were wide differences between George W. Bush and himself. And yet, Obama stated, Bush and his administration did everything possible to create a smooth and graceful transition of power to Obama and his administration, and that this peaceful transition of power is the hallmark of the American presidency, passed from one to the other now 44 times without bloodshed and with the sincere hope for the success of the next person to occupy this office.

There is something, though, that we need to pay attention to, and that is the

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Have You Read This?

REVIEWS By Stephen York



GETTING INVOLVED WITH GOD: REDISCOVERING THE OLD TESTAMENT

By Ellen F. Best; Cowley Publications, 2001.
Paperback, 222 pages. \$15.00; Kindle \$9.99

GETTING INVOLVED WITH GOD: REDISCOVERING THE OLD TESTAMENT

Duke Divinity School Professor Ellen F. Best (Bible and Practical Theology) invites the reader to move beyond reactionary responses to the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) to experience God by “turning [its] pages slowly.” The author advocates for an essential practice (like *Lectio Divina*) which leads to an experiential, holistic Christian spirituality and an appreciation for the entire canon of the Scriptures, not just the New Testament (Christian Scriptures). Dr. Best invites us, throughout this book, to “*get and stay involved with God.*” She believes that the God of the Old Testament is one with whom a person of faith in the twenty-first century may be intimately involved and that sustaining such involvement is desirable and beneficial to both God and people.



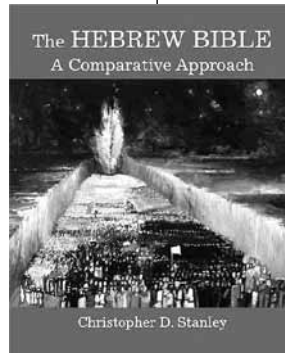
Brueggemann states, “Readers will dip in at any point in this book and be invited to thinking and praying again and obeying differently and freely.”

For those who are looking for an Advent resource to enhance times of solitude and spiritual devotion during the frenetic activities that accompany Christmas and the New Year,

this book will give you food for thought and for the soul.

THE HEBREW BIBLE: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

Does reading the Old Testament seem comparable to attempting to put together a large puzzle, with pieces scattered everywhere, and no big box picture to help bring the multiple pieces together? Do you tend to avoid reading most of the Old Testament



in favor of reading the New Testament? Would you like a reader-friendly textbook that will provide foundational information thereby enhancing your reading? Dr. Christopher D. Stanley is Professor of Theology at St. Bonaventure University in Allegany, New York, near Buffalo. Throughout this volume, he provides readers with an excellent resource for understanding the often unread thirty-nine books of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Dr. Stanley’s introduction is divided into three primary sections. In Part One, he responds to the question, “*What is the Hebrew Bible?*” which is followed in

Part Two with “*The World of the Hebrew Bible,*” and concludes with Part Three, “*The Religion of the Hebrew Bible.*” The beauty of this work is that it is a *comparative study* that references the three major branches of Abrahamic faith, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in their respective understandings of a text qualifying to be considered as *Scripture*. He also presents the Jewish perspective of the Hebrew Bible and contrasts it with Protestant and Catholic understandings. The question of *scriptural authority*, which is a highly contentious issue between many expressions of Protestant churches,

is addressed with skill.

Dr. Stanley’s presentation of “*The World of the Hebrew Bible,*” which includes the importance of geography, everyday life, and narrative history, will broaden and deepen the reader’s understanding, overall. The author’s emphasis on the

impact of the Babylonian exile and the post-exilic era clarifies how the Hebrew Scriptures came to be and how the books were organized. This text provides an excellent backdrop to the world in which Jesus the Christ was born. One interesting point which Dr. Stanley makes is regarding the low literacy rate of people who lived in those times. Only powerful, wealthy males were literate and that fact significantly impacted the creation and writing of sacred texts, including the Hebrew Scriptures. The author also

Seasonal Game Face *cont'd. from p. 1*

Before I can eat my last “candy corn”, here come pilgrims and Indians smiling at each other and sharing a meal. The weather is so temperate that many are pictured as eating outside—I choose the idea of weather rather than hospitality or the idea of not letting heathen in the house. The great Black Elk in his book Black Elk Speaks has much to say about the new guests to his land. Black Elk’s face has a frown on it. I smile widely because I am thankful to God.

But the season isn’t over yet. “Hark, how the bells, sweet silver bells all seem to say, throw cares away, Christmas is here, bringing good cheer, to young and old—Meek and the bold.”

Talk about a facial expression. It didn’t get any better than this. My face now had become a great big grin. But only for a moment did the grin last. “What are you celebrating about you pagan!,” say the learned. Don’t you know about Constantine? Holly leaves? Mistletoe? Bringing in trees? Don’t you know it was spring not winter? Wipe that grin off your face—you heathen! (sayest Das Man).

I remember the innocent smiles of the past. The smell of turkey and dressing-- brown paper packages tied up with string. I remember celebrating snowflakes, chestnuts (at least the line in the song), Jack Frost and the rest of those “seasonal characters” that the legendary Virginia asked about.

And, because I cannot distinguish nostalgia from hope (or, are they the same?), I simply put on my seasonal game face.

Wm H S

Seeking a Senior Pastor

The Havenscourt Community Church membership of Oakland California is prayerfully seeking an experienced full-time Pastor with Theological and formal academic training to Shepard full time an interdenominational Community Church congregation. A benefit package will be offered to the successful candidate.

The pastor applicant must be called by God and equipped to effectively preach and teach His Word. Our next pastor must be responsible for the biblical and spiritual obligations as outlined in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and also be a man after God’s own heart (I Samuel 13:14)...We are seeking a visionary with strong leadership skills who preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ, teaches sound Christian Doctrine, engages in pastoral care, directs Christian growth and development and promotes missions and the Great Commission for increasing the Kingdom of God...

The Pastor is responsible to the church:


- Set as a guideline of personal behavior the standard required in I Timothy 3:1-7 and I Peter 5:1-4.
- Provide administrative leadership for the total church program.
- Maintain a regular program of study to enable himself to plan and conduct meaningful worship services.
- Prepare for and conduct worship services; lead in the observance of the ordinances; and, lead the church in proclaiming the gospel to the church and community.
- Visit members and prospects and lead the membership in a visitation program.
- Supervise other members of the church staff according to staff organization.
- Conduct premarital, vocational, family, bereavement, counseling sessions, etc., as needed. Advise other professional help when necessary.
- Perform wedding ceremonies and conduct funeral services.
- Work with deacons, church officers, and committees in performing assigned responsibilities. Be available for and lead in training as needed.
- Cooperate with and lead the church in cooperating with associational, state, and denominational leaders. Keep the church informed of developments within the denomination.
- Serve as a representative of the church in civic matters.
- Act as moderator for church business meetings, if the bylaws require it.

Send resume to: Pastor Search Committee, 1444 Havenscourt Blvd, Oakland, CA 94621, or FAX to 510 638-8858 or E-mail address havenscourt@sbcglobal.net.



Like us on **Facebook**

Be sure to visit our Facebook page to see many great things happening at ICCC Churches!
www.facebook.com/intlcouncilof.commchurches



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GIVE THANKS.

During this special time of year, we pause to reflect on all that we have to be thankful for. Family, friends, faith ...

We are pleased to announce that the ICCC has recently been accepted into the Thrivent Choice program.

One way eligible Thrivent Financial members can show their thanks is by directing Choice Dollars to the ICCC. If you’re a Thrivent member who has designated Choice Dollars®, please take this opportunity to recommend where Thrivent distributes some of its charitable grant funds by directing them to the ICCC. Thrivent Choice grant funding will be used for Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations, and for our three missions: Agape, Creating Community, and Feeding the Hungry.

To learn more about Thrivent Choice, visit Thrivent.com/thriventchoice. Or call Thrivent at 800-847-4836 and say “Thrivent Choice” when prompted.

Ecumenews

by Herman Harmelink III

VP for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Many Protestants and other Christians were delighted to learn that Pope Francis would journey to Sweden to participate in the commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, which comes in 2017. At the recent meeting of the North American Academy of Ecumenists, meeting at Emory University in Atlanta, we heard representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches discuss the prospects for the observance of this year-long anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany.



A proposal was made, back in 2005, by the World Lutheran Federation that planning begin for the celebration of the 500th Anniversary, and that Roman Catholics be invited to participate. My friend Msgr. John Radano, then of the Vatican, rightly observed that the Roman Catholic Church could not celebrate the great division of the Western church. So it came to pass that instead of celebration, we now have commemoration, with full participation of Catholics around the world.

Much has been achieved through fifty years of dialogue between Lutheran and Catholic churches. Some of the impetus undoubtedly came from the wartime experience. In Germany where many Protestants and Catholics together resisted Hitler's effort to corrupt and pervert the churches. One of my relatives was involved in the Una Sancta movement which brought members of the two churches together. One result was that after the war my Protestant professor relative was offered the Church History chair at the University of Munich.

The Lutheran-Catholic dialogue has produced an excellent study guide for the anniversary, called "From Conflict to Communion." The history of relations between the two churches, often hostile during the first four centuries, is reviewed, along with thoughts about how to observe the anniversary in our ecumenical age. I encourage you to read it, and to see it in the broader context of Protestant-Catholic relations. For those of us who are not Lutheran, we can share in the commemoration on behalf of the wider Protestant family, and all could profit from local discussions with Catholics, our fellow Christians, in seeking ways to reveal to the world our fundamental unity in Christ, so that the world may believe.

Seeking a Pastor

Established 350 member church on Clearwater Beach is seeking a dynamic new **Pastor**. Our Pastor is retiring and this full-time position will start in **July 2017**. Chapel by the Sea (www.chapelbythesea.net) is a thriving, theologically progressive, non-denominational community church founded in 1949. The members, though they come from diverse religious backgrounds, share a fellowship experience that is informal and accepting. We are actively involved in our community focusing on outreach and social justice. We are a member of the International Council of Community Churches (ICCC). Our congregation includes a mix of local residents and families, snowbirds and visiting tourists.

Ideal candidate is an energetic, caring individual, who will become involved in our community, and who will challenge and inspire us to grow our church and programs. You must have an M.Div or academic equivalent from an accredited seminary and share our vision of inclusion and openness. We are located on Clearwater Beach on the Gulf of Mexico; the West Coast of Florida. The Tampa Bay area (Clearwater, St. Petersburg and Tampa) offers sports, culture, and an extensive variety of leisure opportunities for you to enjoy. To be considered for this exciting opportunity, please send your resume to: chapelbysea@gmail.com. No phone calls please.

Text to Give

Do you need an easy, modern way to make contributions or respond to the November 2016 Appeal? Give by Text is a powerful tool that allows you to contribute in a matter of seconds.

In less time than it takes to write a check, you can contribute by simply sending a text message from your smartphone.

It takes just minutes to sign up and support the ICCC. Visit our website link <http://www.iccnw.org/donate> and begin simplifying your life today!



Mission Statement



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

Sharing Joys:

• The Eastern Zone Region A, Trustee **Doris Marcisak**, gathered at Maggie's Kroked Cafe in Tannersville, NY (near Hunter Mountain) on Saturday, October 29, 2016. They enjoyed each other's company and had a delicious brunch. Afterwards, they took a walk in the woods and saw the spectacular Kaaterskill Falls. They all had a wonderful time reconnecting since our conference in Kentucky!



• Congratulations to Pastor Emeritus **Bruce Merton, Peace Community Church**, Ft. Myers, FL and granddaughter Emily, who as a freshmen in high school, captured conference and district breaststroke championships for Jacksonville and Northeast Florida area.

• **Peace Community Church**, Ft. Myers, FL shares that their meeting place, the Masonic Lodge, has gotten a face lift. The church has participated with both volunteer labor and financial assistance including outside renovation and inside electrical repairs.



• **Emmanuel Baptist Church**, Ridgewood, NJ, Senior Pastor **Ken Gill**, celebrated their 125th church anniversary the weekend of Nov. 12th, with a concert, reception, Saturday night supper, worship, a catered luncheon, and more. They gathered items for a Time Capsule buried shortly after the celebration. Pictured are members who helped open the church's capsule from 1999 that the church opened on Sept. 25th. Visit the church's website to see all the celebrations, and more. ebcridgewood.org



• The Fall Area Meeting for the MI Fellowship was held October 8th in South Haven, MI. The theme "Never Changing God" was captured throughout the day with scripture, worship, presentations of past, present and future, and great fellowship.



Pictured are pastors **Andrew Holloway, Covert Community Church, Douglas Pompey, Emmanuel Community Church, Bernice Thomas, Greater Faith Community Church, Bill Samuels, Commonwealth Community Church, Charles Clark, People's Community Church, Layperson Shyreece Pompey, ICCC VP from Emmanuel Community Church and Pastor Ron Sinclair, Bridgeport Community Church.**

- **Peace Community Church**, Ft. Myers, "Celebrated the 90's" Nov. 13th. Honorees were all those turning or already 90+ years of age. Fellowship meal was shared, along with their stories and interviews. Congratulations!



Our prayers are with:

- Rev. **Jeffrey Parker, Church of All Faiths**, Oakland, CA, Senior Pastor, who lost his wife, **Princess**, on October 14th. Our prayers are with you and your family.
- **Bob and Nancy Steele, Peace Community Church**, Ft. Myers, FL, Senior Pastor **RC Fleeman**, who lost a granddaughter mid October. Please pray for this family and all others who have been affected by this tragedy.
- The Grossman Family. Rev. Dr. **Bill Grossman, Harvey Memorial Community Church** pastor and a man of many hats for the ICCC, passed away after complications from cardiac surgery Oct. 22nd. His children are grateful they were able to visit with him shortly before, and are there to comfort his wife **Allene**, along with her children.
- **Barbara Ratliff** and the family of **Mattie Austin**, member of **Commonwealth Community Church**, Rev. Dr. **Bill Samuels**, Senior Pastor. Mattie passed away Oct. 27th and was Barbara's cousin. She attended Annual Conference many years, until her health disabled her.
- Rev. **Shirley Cooper**, Senior Pastor of **Park Road Community Church**, Washington, DC, whose only daughter, **Diane Bendow**, passed away Nov. 3rd. Please keep her and her family in your prayers.

Have You Read This? *cont'd. from p. 3*

clearly informs on source criticism: namely, how did these books originate and come to be placed in the canon? It also makes clearer why there are so many variations within contemporary hermeneutics by which people interpret the Bible. Part Three offers a most helpful section to enable readers to understand "The Religion of the Hebrew Bible." It, too, is well worth reading because it is so informative and well written.

Anyone who puts large puzzles together will most likely agree that doing it with others makes the whole process more enjoyable and interesting. Unpacking the information in this material would provide an excellent opportunity for building community while learning. It could be used for adult religious education curriculum, small study groups, and beneficial to individuals, as well. This introductory book is presented in a reader friendly manner. It is accessible, understandable, and logical. It also improves the odds of increasing biblical literacy, not only for its information, but also for the possibilities of spiritual transformation.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Our book reviewer, **The Reverend Stephen York**, is the ICCC Vice President for Leadership Development. He formerly owned an independent bookstore and is in his eighth year of ministry as the pastor of the Stonington (Maine) United Methodist Church. Currently a full-time doctoral student at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, New York, Stephen earned his BA from Norwich University and M.Div. from Starr King School for the Ministry. He has served in pastoral ministry since 1972. Stephen may be found on Facebook or may be reached via email at StpYo@aol.com.

Attention Young Adults!

The Young Adults Program is back and better than ever! During this upcoming conference the young adults will be going on multiple engaging service trips, participating in faith discussions, and making unforgettable memories. Individuals make friendships that will last a lifetime. Please encourage your young adults to join us!

Brian Januzzi & Doris Marcisak, Young Adults Program Leaders

**young
Adult**

Tell Us About Your Church's Hunger Relief Program

Each issue of *The Christian Community* the new ICCC Hunger Relief Mission is featuring an article on an ICCC member church or center that is doing great works in providing hunger relief for the needy in their community.

Let us know what you're doing and we'll help you write a feature article that can inspire other churches to follow your lead. Just email Bob Harris at raharris@windstream.net.

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A Voice for

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Executive Minister's Report cont'd. from p. 2

increase in hate crimes in the United States in the week since the election. On November 12th, Andrew Marantz wrote an excellent piece in The New Yorker, which I quote in the next two paragraphs.

“One of the political science cliches that hasn't been rendered obsolete by this election is that of the Overton window. In 1994, Joseph Overton, a think-tank analyst, described the epistemic range of public debate: ideas that fall within the window are acceptable; those outside it are unthinkable. The range of acceptable ideas does not always bend toward justice, but it does change over time. The alt-right rages against political correctness in the name of the First Amendment, but this is a canard. No alt-right dissident has been jailed for thought crimes. One of the innumerable ironies of this campaign was that the only credible threats to the free press - “If I become President, oh, do they have problems” - were uttered by Trump himself.

In August of last year, Ann Coulter, a forerunner of the alt-right who once seemed like a punchline and now seems like a prophet, introduced Trump at a rally in Iowa. Coulter's position on immigration - white nationalism, essentially - was then outside the Overton window, and Trump was the only candidate who embraced it. “The Republican Party's typical position is to preemptively surrender whenever liberals start yelling, “Ooh, that's mean, you can't use that word,” she told the crowd. “Well, they found something new with Donald Trump.” She denounced elites as “speech Nazis,” for which she received a round of applause. Then she added a sentiment that everyone could agree with. “Since Donald Trump has announced that he's running for President, I feel like I'm dreaming,” she said. “I can't believe I turn on the TV, and on prime-time TV every night they're talking about anchor babies, they're talking about sanctuary cities, they're talking about Mexican rapists.” Someone in the audience shouted, “Build the wall!” For much of the general election, the polls suggested that Iowa would go to Hillary Clinton. Trump won the state by ten points.”

It is not that candidate Trump invented racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamaphobia and introduced these qualities into the United States population at large, but that the rhetoric of his campaign fundamentally shifted what is acceptable in mainstream America. What was two years ago seen as a socially abhorrent opinion that one would never voice in public became then merely noxious and then morphed again into something that one can say today without consequence. We

are now, today, a lesser and more cruel society than we were before.

I will say it again: The protesters would not be out there if random Republican X were president-elect. They are out there because of what Donald Trump himself represented throughout his campaign. Their nonviolent protest of what they see as unacceptable positions and perspectives is as American as a nonviolent election and as American as a nonviolent presidential transition of power and as American as apple pie.

The patriotic right to speak and write and fight nonviolently is essential for the preservation and hope of a better America, a more compassionate America, an America that loves every person of every gender and color and ethnicity and culture and religion and nationality and ability and disability, an America that refuses the malignant and malicious, that refuses the lie of white American supremacy.

And so let me end with this: We must commit ourselves to those whose rights will be trampled. We must refuse to allow an increasing allergy to the other erode our intercultural and beautifully multi chromatic nation. Communities that refute splintering are how we will stay strong, how we will carry the memory of an imperfect but kinder America into the future so that we might rally and fight for the rights of all, service for and the betterment of those less fortunate, an openness to the world that does not fear the other because they are other.

We must choose a better nation than the one we seem to have chosen on election Tuesday.



ICCC Endowment Fund Status As of November 30, 2016	
Gifts Goal by June 30, 2017: \$25,000
Gifts since 7/01/16: \$16,325
Help us meet our goal: Need \$8,675
Current Fund Assets: \$299,716
Current Investment Mix: 60% stocks & 40% bonds