

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

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Gateway to Glory

Psalm 24: 9-10

Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory.

The banner flies high with the theme "Gateway to Glory" for our Annual Conference gathering in St. Louis. Under the beauty of the Gateway to the West (St. Louis Arch) we will open the gates for the King of glory to come and fill us with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This will be a historic conference for St. Louis as we witness the Gospel truth of what an inclusive

movement is. We will gather, we will worship, we will study The Word, we will find hope and help with Conference workshops and God will Bless his faithful people called The International Council of Community Churches.

May we greet you in St. Louis?

Your 2018 Annual Conference Planning Committee.

The 68th Annual Conference of the International Council of Community Churches ~ July 16-19, 2018
St. Louis Center City Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri



President's Message

O Sweet Spontaneous Earth...

**Rev. Dr. William H. Samuels
(Rev. Bill)**

As much as I love poetry, musicals and good sermons, I feel a lot of comfort in the writings of E.E. Cummings because he fills me with a sense of empowerment whenever I read his works. Now let's get it clear, I haven't read all that much of the Harvard poet who may be the father of rap, or, at least a close relative, but for a while there he made poetry free and fun—much like rappers made music fun and different again. Just feel “rap” as it progressed and found a home in the mainstream, e.g. the musical “Hamilton.”

There is a great message in “Sweet Spontaneous Earth,” but the structure and discipline of the written word are simply ignored in his works of “free verse”—or is this the message? The explanations of the poem that I get—without tutoring—is that even though philosophers, theologians and scientists continue to tinker with an understanding of the earth, the beautiful planet merely answers with spring.

I have utilized this train of thought in a sermon or two myself—taking off on the theme that even though the weather man announces correctly a vicious storm, the planet answers with rainbows, silver linings and flowers; even though winters can be severe, the earth replies with the first of May. Further, in the face of problems which threaten our very life and health, God answers with a solution—a pavilion—covering the base of our being.

And now, apparently just in time, there is a call for help from the quiet, systematic and efficient earth. Nuclear weapons are spreading as earthlings cannot seem to find a way to curtail the proliferation outside of a devastating war. The leadership of our government seems to have changed its mind on health care, tax breaks and ethical behavior. Human sexual traffic, stolen children and sexual confusion seems to have won the day. We don't seem to know who we are, what we are or even where we stand.

As we approach the new year, we must be prayerful that we have another one. We must be careful that the wars which have been abroad for many years do not find their way unto

our shores and that the people who are “going mad shooting sparks into space” do not become the persons with which we bargain for civilization.

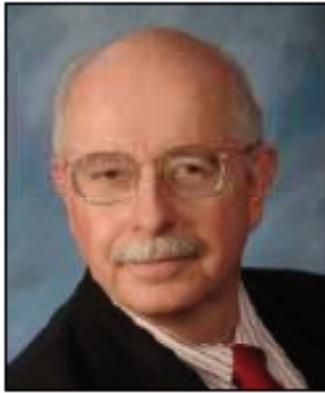
While we prepare for a continuation of our sweet earth and our hope for the future, I want to add one more poetic concept to the prayers and hopes for the new year. John Masefield wrote a poem he called “Cargoes” in which he traced the kind of ships which carry our civilization. He indicated that what we carry on our ships is symbolic of what we are as a people. Our Cargo, for example, used to be apes, peacocks, sandalwood, cedarwood and sweet white wine. The mode of transportation was a large and beautiful boat with rowers in rhythm finding the sunny shores of Palestine. As time went by, cargos were carried by “stately Spanish galleons” coming from the Isthmus dipping through the tropics—with diamonds, emeralds, amethysts and other precious things. Finally, he announces today's cargo:

Dirty British Coaster with a salt-caked, smoke stack
Butting through the channel in the mad March days
With a cargo of tyne coal, road rails, pig lead,
firewood, iron ware and cheap tin trays.

Masefield's romanticism is certainly utopian and nostalgic—but so refreshing alongside the atmosphere we presently are victimized by. Our cargo of lies, alternative truth, broken ethics, child molestation, and vulgarity has left us yearning for the meaning of our Christian identity.

Whereas the pantheistic “sweet spontaneous earth” may have been the poetic answer to programmed “in-mates” seeking rational answers in the symbolic free verse, our modern predicament demands, instead, the more traditional intervention of the *deus ex machina (the God who intervenes)*. Jesus!





What Color Are the Signs?

Don Ashmall

Council Minister, Emeritus

I cannot speak for the systems in other nations, but in the US and particularly on our Interstate road system, highway signs follow a consistent scheme of colors and arrangements.

Signs with a green or blue background are informational. Signs with a yellow or orange background are meant to warn. A white or red background sign tells of some regulation – some limit to drivers. The best signs have a brown background, for these let us know of some attractive place we’d like to experience.

Churches and people seem to live by such a system. Many live and work in an atmosphere of stupefying green-sign routine. Grinding along, they offer us a great deal of information but virtually no enthusiasm – to the point that we’re all awaiting the blue sign that tells us there’s a rest stop that will welcome us, as we’re about to fall asleep from all that dull repetition.

And then there are the people and churches of orange and yellow. They will warn us of the danger in venturing onto any new path. They will tell us how anything new will lead us down a highway to hell, or at least to financial ruin or public embarrassment. These would direct all of us to live out our days clad in the bright yellow hue of cowardice.

And then there are the people and churches of regulation, erecting red stop signs at every intersection and

demanding that we never stray from any of the laws, rules and directives that they invent for us. Such folk and congregations are ever ready to quote the Bible – in context or out – to justify the drab tomes of law they would prescribe for us.

With the jarring demands on our attention from the people and churches of all those colors, it could be easy for us to allow the brown-background signs to pass by without our notice. But of all the signs, these are the ones that can bring us to surprise, new vistas, and even to awe.

Some brown-background signs will bring us to still waters at a time when we need them most. Others will direct us to difficult paths that we must travel – and remind us that the paths have been marked by other pilgrims and that we do not walk alone. Some will bring us to a division of the ways, and help us discern which is the good direction. And some will just help us get to “the old swimming hole” where we can dive in and enjoy the fellowship.

Of course we’d all like to discover brown-sign people and congregations every day. And, at least most of us would like to think that we ourselves are brown-sign in our speaking, acting and living. But it’s not easy being the type of signage that leads others to new appreciation and new depth. Brown as we perceive it can easily fade into another color, be it red or green or yellow. What keeps the color true and does not let it fail is a color chart of a particular sort. That chart is created by an eternal Spirit whose hue transforms our own to more resemble that of the Christ.

2018 promises to be a colorful year. Signs and banners of every size and every color will line our roadsides. New directions and regulations and warnings will come at us from every direction. Discovering, and being, signs of God’s Holy Spirit – brown-sign people – will demand prayer, preparation, learning and (most especially) loving. Throughout this new year, may your life be a brown-sign witness to justice, reconciliation and Christian unity.



Sharing Joys:

- Rev. Dr. **Charlene Watkins**, Senior Pastor, **Second Community Church**, Columbus, OH has retired! A retirement event was held on December 17th in her honor. Congratulations!
- Chaplain **Wendy Childress** has been deployed until July 2018. She sends, "All is well. I am honored, humbled, and yes even challenged while serving here. But, God is definitely moving. Our Troops are coming out to service on Sundays, I use a Prayer Walk as another form for Soldiers to connect with God and pray for the issues and people that God has placed on their hearts. Looking forward to our Christmas Service. And, I will be doing a Watch Night Service on 31 Dec and expecting God to show up, show out, souls to be saved and lives changed! Our troops can always use morale boosters. So, if anyone would like to send cards or snacks they will definitely appreciate it. My mailing address is: Wendy Childress, HHB, 1-143rd FA, Box 509, APO AE 09898. Peace and blessings."
- The congregation of the New Covenant Community Church in Akron, Ohio voted to call the Rev. Tom Ulrich as their Senior Minister, Dec. 3rd. Tom came to Akron because his wife, Rev. Cathy Ulrich was elected to serve the Eastminster Presbytery as its State Clerk and General Presbyter. They moved last winter from Denver, Colorado. Prior to that they had served the First Presbyterian Church of Fort Smith, Arkansas as co-pastors for twenty years. Tom is a graduate of Louisiana Tech where he majored in mathematics and physical education. He also completed a Master's Degree in mathematics before moving on to Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia where he completed the masters of divinity degree. In addition to serving the local parish, Tom has also participated in mission trips to Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, and Haiti. He has served on the board of the Humane Society and Habitat for Humanity. He is involved in the work of Solar Under the Sun, a mission organization in the Synod of the Sun. This organization teaches individuals to install small solar panels in villages across the developing world. The congregation of New Covenant Community Church is excited to welcome Rev. Ulrich to be their new Senior Minister. As a multi-affiliated congregation, New Covenant, will introduce him and Cathy to the International Council and look forward to introducing him personally to their many friends at Annual Conference.



Our prayers are with:

- **Clint Cook**, **Antioch Community Church**, **Harry** Foockle Senior Pastor. Clint's sister, **Carrie (Cynthia Carrie Matthes)**, passed away Dec. 3rd, peacefully at home.
- **The Federation of Christian Ministries** and the family of **Virginia Graf**, who passed away November 22nd. Ginny was an ICCC member through FCM and resided in Charles Town, WV.
- **RC Fleeman**, who suffered a mild heart attack November 30th. He underwent a heart procedure where doctors found a blocked artery, to which stints were installed. RC is Senior Pastor at **Peace Community Church**, Ft. Myers, FL.



2018 Annual Conference Program Book/Church Directory Ad Space

Indicate below the ad size you will submit.

<u>HEIGHT</u>	<u>WIDTH</u>	<u>PAGE SIZE</u>	<u>COST</u>
_____	8" x 11"	Full.....	\$200.00
_____	8" x 5.5"	One Half	110.00
_____	4" x 5"	One Quarter	60.00

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Organization: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

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Mail this completed form along with your ad and payment to:

**INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL
OF COMMUNITY CHURCHES
21116 Washington Parkway
Frankfort, Illinois 60423-3112**

OR email to ICCC60423@sbcglobal.net (must be paid by credit/debit card)

Check or Money Order made payable to ICCC

Visa Mastercard American Express Discover

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Exp. Date _____ CVV: _____

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DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: MAY 31, 2018.

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

**THE COUNCIL CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR
DESIGNING ADS.**

68th Annual Conference July 16-19, 2018 - St. Louis, MO

Hotel Information

The 2018 Annual Conference will be held at the St. Louis City Center Hotel, 400 S. 14th St., St. Louis, MO 63103. Phone: 314-231-5007

Conveniently located just 20 minutes from Lambert International Airport, across from the Scottrade Center and MetroLink Light Rail Station. A short distance to local attractions via MetroLink, such as the Gateway Arch, Busch Stadium and the Ballpark Village, MO Botanical Gardens, City Museum, St. Louis Zoo and more.



Hotel Dining

Bistro 14 restaurant has American-style entrees as well as local specialties. The chef's daily lunch special options allow for tasty and healthy dining. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served. A breakfast buffet is available as well.

Columns, the lobby lounge, offers a relaxed space where guests can enjoy a signature cocktail or a featured draught beer, connect before and after events, and grab a bite to eat. With several televisions in a cozy living room atmosphere, you can watch a game, weather, or news.

Room Service is also available, along with many eating options within walking distance of the hotel.

Hotel Reservations

For those conferees planning on attending the conference you will need to call the Crowne Plaza Hotel to reserve your room at **855-537-4770**. Inform the reservations clerk that you are attending the 2018 ICCA Annual Conference to get the special rate of \$119.00 + tax per night. **The cut-off date for hotel reservations is June 20, 2018.** After this date, normal hotel rates will be in effect and space may no longer be available. **Please note:** *the special rate of \$119 + tax is negotiated only for conferees. Discounted guestroom rates apply 3 days prior and 3 days post based on availability. Those utilizing this special rate are expected to register for the conference. Thank you for your cooperation.*

Check-in: 3:00pm

Check-Out: 11:00am

Transportation To and From the Hotel

Airport Transportation from STL:

For transportation options visit: <https://www.flystl.com/parking-and-transport/transportation>

Self-parking is available at the hotel, if you are driving or renting a car. The discounted cost is \$6.00 a day for overnight self parking. Daily event parking is complimentary for attendees.

The **MetroLink Light Rail** Civic Center Station is across from the hotel. Please visit <https://www.metrostlouis.org/metrolink/> for travel information.

ICCC Registration Form 2018 Annual Conference: July 16-19 "Gateway to Glory" St. Louis, Missouri

Name (as you would like it on badge) _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone (_____) _____ E-mail Address: _____

Emergency Contact Name _____ Phone (_____) _____

Church (member of) _____

Gender: Male Female

First Conference: Yes No

Status: Clergy Laity

➤ ➤ ➤ **FOR THE ELEMENTARY, TWEEN AND YOUTH PROGRAMS ONLY!** ◀ ◀ ◀

- Age (on 7-1-2018) _____ Grade completed by (7-1-2018) _____
- If **under 18**, an adult who is registered for the Conference and who will serve as a sponsor and assume responsibility for said young person must sign below.

_____ Sponsor Signature _____ Print Sponsor Name _____

CONFERENCE FEES

Fill in Dollar Amount for this
Registration

Infants (not occupying chair at banquet)	\$ 0.00	\$
Child (Ages 1-5)	\$ 35.00	\$
Elementary (entering kindergarten - entering 6th grade)	\$ 60.00	\$
Youth (completed 6th grade - entering 12 grade)	\$145.00	\$
Young Adult (completed 12th grade - age 23)	\$170.00	\$
Adult	\$195.00	\$
Continuing Education Certificate (for Clergy only)	\$ 10.00	\$
Daily Registrants Circle Day(s) M T W Th	\$ 35.00/day	\$
Late Fee - Add After June 20, 2018	\$ 35.00	\$
CC	TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$

A Banquet ticket is included in your registration fee. This meal includes: Baby Romaine and Tomato Salad: Baby Hearts with Red and Yellow Tomatoes, Julienned Red Onions and Herb Vinaigrette, Slow Roasted Pork Tenderloin Medallions with Apple Cranberry Chutney, Rolls & Butter, Pound Cake with Fresh Berries, Iced Tea, Coffee and Hot Teas. Vegetarian Option: Grilled Farm Raised Salmon with a Citrus Orange Gastrique. Kid's Meal Option: Chicken Tenders, Mac & Cheese, Cookie and Lemonade

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

Roasted Pork (Default Option)

Vegetarian Option

Kid's Meal Option

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

Check or Money Order made payable to ICCC

VISA MASTERCARD AMERICAN EXPRESS DISCOVER

Acct. #: _____ Exp. Date: _____ CVV: _____

Print name as it appears on card: _____ Signature _____

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

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

ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSIONS WILL BE VIDEOTAPED. I agree the ICCC may use my image, name, voice and story in any medium or format, throughout the world forever, free-of-charge, and for any reasonable purpose in furtherance of its mission

What has the ICCC Ever Done for Us?

Bill Schnell

You may have heard that question when it came time to include the ICCC in the church's annual budget. They say there is no such thing as a bad question, but this comes close. A better question would be, "What have we done for the Lord through the Larger Church?" Having said that, I would like to address the original question with a story that may resonate with your experience.



Bill will retire on Feb. 13th, on his 65th birthday, after a 22 year tenure as Senior Pastor of The Church in Aurora.

This is who we have been, this is who we are and this is who we shall remain. Then I have belabored the fact by tracing this stream of independent Christianity back to the author and perfecter of our faith who had no problem interpreting the sacred scriptures according to the dictates of his own conscience as opposed to the dictates of religious "authorities." But I digress.

Community Churches are notorious for having their historic identity challenged. No one would go into a Baptist Church and suggest an infant sprinkling. Neither would a Catholic suggest doing away with the pope. It is who they are and who they have been. Trying to change a church's historic identity is a recipe for contention and strife. But because Community Churches are so respectful of the great variety of religious expression, they sometimes welcome members who want to change them into something they are not and never have been—usually something much more narrowly defined in terms of who's in and who's out.

As a Community Church pastor, I have had to contend with the latter a time or two in times past. I'll bet I am not the only one. In the great debate over what kind of church we will be I have been blessed, grateful and pleased to present literature from the ICCC and to quote articulate passages describing the nature of a Community Church. To that I have added such interesting facts as these: "One of the early presidents of the ICCC was our senior pastor at the time. One of the first female presidents was a member of our congregation."

Empowered by the congregation's ties with the ICCC the former's historic identity has been preserved time and again, along with the purity and peace so desired by any family of faith. This has been worth the price of admission alone. If that was all the ICCC has ever done for us it would be more than sufficient. But wait, there's more. I am going to leave it to others to tell you about that, although I could go on and on about how I have been personally supported and encouraged in my ministry by fellow pastors attending the Annual Conference.

But, again, a much better question is this: What have we done for Jesus by our membership in the larger church? Maybe it is composing an article like this one. Maybe it is reaching out to a fellow delegate to Annual Conference who has recently lost a loved one. Maybe it is furthering the good work of a committee or auxiliary group. In all our giving and doing let us remember the words of the Master and how he said: "Give and it will be given to you"—and then in a surpassing way.

WCF Information

Submitted by Carol Nichols
cs83nick@aol.com

Hello Ladies,
It is good to greet you! It is my Prayer that everyone had a good holiday season!



It is not too late to make your New Year's resolutions. One that I advocate is to plan to participate in your WCF programming. There are ample opportunities for you to contribute.

The WCF is sponsoring the Prayer Breakfast and continuing to prepare the programs for our meetings. Again, the invitation is open to you to join us, make suggestions and participate. Also, ladies please remember to bring items for the bazaar.

The board members of the WCF wish you, your families, and the ICCC a very Happy, Healthy, and prosperous New Year and May God continue to Bless us one and all.

Remember this song? "I need you, you need me, we are all a part of God's body."

A Time to Laugh



"Well, yes, I am happy, but I could be happier."

Seeking Full-Time Pastor

Founded in 1973, People’s Community Church (PCC) is a non-denominational church located in Berea, Ohio, approximately 25 miles south west of Cleveland, Ohio. We are blessed to be a diverse, all-inclusive, and family oriented church with an active membership of approximately 100. PCC is an active affiliate of the International Council of Community Churches and Ohio Fellowship of Community Churches.

The qualified candidate shall: Be an ordained and licensed minister; Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to teach the Holy Bible; Be an empowering educator with strong skills in discipleship, homiletics, stewardship, pastoral care and community building; Demonstrate godly character and integrity; Share our church’s vision of equipping Christians in the mission of Christ; Have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university; Have attended an accredited seminary (seminary degree preferred); Have a minimum 3 years of experience in preaching and church leadership; Have experience working with church leadership teams and church employees; Demonstrate excellent verbal, written, and presentation skills; Demonstrate excellent leadership, organizational, strategic planning and time management skills.

Job Description: Pastor will be responsible for preaching, teaching, conducting funerals and special worship services and programs; Oversees pastoral care to sick and shut in and to those in personal crisis through visitation, counseling and prayer; Administers the ordinances of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism; Officiates weddings as agreed upon with couples as defined by Holy Scripture; Coordinates and leads church business meetings; Adheres to PCC Bylaws and Constitution; Maintains affiliation and supports of International Council of Community Churches and Ohio Fellowship of Community Churches; Actively engages in community sponsored events; Other duties as required

If you have been led by the Holy Spirit to seek the position as Pastor of People’s Community Church, please submit your cover letter and resume to peoplescommunitychurch631@gmail.com .

Candidates may also learn more about our church and its ministries via our Facebook page. You can also download our church app: the echurch’s app, PeoplesCC, at the Apple or Google Play stores.

Final candidates will be subject to a background check and drug test.

Seeking a Director of Music

The Church at Litchfield Park is seeking a Director of Music to oversee the music program of a historic growing and dynamic interdenominational community church in Litchfield Park, AZ. The director will be responsible for leading and rehearsing the 30+ member Chancel Choir for two Sunday worship services, leading and rehearsing a “blended” choir for a third service, and oversee the directors of the bell and children’s choirs. Qualified candidates should have a demonstrated ability as a director and work well with musicians, pastors and staff. The position is half-time and compensation will be based on qualifications and experience. Interested applicants should send a cover letter, resume, and list of references electronically to info@clp.church.



Seeking a Music Director

Norris Religious Fellowship (Norris, TN) is seeking a Music Director. Salaried, part-time position. The Music Director works in initiating programs, rehearsals, special music, etc.; provides piano and/or organ accompaniment for the hymns. Ability to lead a choir and congregation, directing and inspiring others through a ministry of music. Excellent vocal skills a plus. Please provide a resume and cover letter along with recording demonstrating your skill set via audio CD, DVD, or link to digital materials online (YouTube, Vimeo, professional website). Submit via email to norrisreligiousfellowship@comcast.net. More information about NRF www.NorrisRF.org.



ICCC Endowment Fund Status As of December 18, 2017	
Gifts Goal by 30 June '18:	\$15,000
Gifts since 7/01/17:	\$4,992
Help us meet our goal, need:	\$10,008
Total Endowment Gifts to ICCC since inception:	\$46,373
Current Fund Assets:	\$329,560
Current Investment Mix: 50% stocks, 47% bonds, 3% Cash	