

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY



A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

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The Ostrich and the Bible!

by Harry Fooockle

VP for Conference Planning

The theme of our 2017 Annual Conference is "Living Faith in a World of Change." If you don't know that we live in a world surrounded by change you haven't stepped out the door lately or listened to the radio or turned on the TV. If you don't know that we live in a world surrounded by change then you missed an election. If you don't know we live in a world surrounded by change then you haven't looked under the hood of a new automobile. If you don't know we live in a world surrounded by change then you.....fill in the blanks from your life. If not I know another ostrich who's head is in the sand.



So, how do we handle all the change...this year you might try the ICCC Annual Conference in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. We will be meeting there on July the 17th – 20th. We will talk about Change. More importantly how our walk with the Lord can help us to not drown in a world of change.

Someone said to me the other day, "I've changed my plans so I could be in Cherry Hill at Conference in July." I was wondering...what do you say? By the way (or as we say in a world of change btw) Hebrews 13:8 offers us a firm grasp of hope to hold onto in our world of change..."Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." See you in July.

* * * * *



In hopes to create connectivity between generations who attend this year's conference we have intentionally designed an inter-generational activity that does just that. On Monday evening of the ICCC Conference 2017 we are having a Movie Night. The movie is **"To Save a Life"**.

Guardians, mentors, parents, grandparents, preachers, teachers, directors, leaders are invited to come and watch the movie too! This is not just for

the youth. Just before the movie we all will have a brief facilitated discussion regarding race relations, bullying, and other real life issues that challenge our ICCC vision/mission "that they all may be one". Parent supervision is needed for children under 10. Also, children between 10-12 attending unaccompanied will require a permission slip that parents, guardians or sponsors can fill out during conference registration.

cont'd. on page 5



President's Message

"For Whom the Bell Tolls"

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

Does a man from the 16th Century have any words to say about our country, our churches and our community? Does the wisdom of the past have any instructions for the situations in which we find ourselves in the 21st Century? In the case of John Donne of 16th Century England, and perhaps in the literature recorded throughout the emergence of what we call "civilized modernity," there is an underlying theme of progress, morality and ethics embedded in the words of its "agents of the Spirit."

"No man is an island," states Mr. Donne from the past. "Any man's death diminishes me," he meditates, "for I am a part of mankind...so "send not to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee." From poets to theologians from the past, there are statements of assurance which stem from an inner core of good will from which our idealized civilization has drawn hope. Martin Luther King, Jr., in particular, has reminded us of the great words and inspirational ideas from the past and how their applications to the injustices of racism, women's rights and the "other," have been the beacon lights of righteous application in our government. Dr. King has reminded us of the wise and instructional words and ideas of James Russell Lowell, William Cullen Bryant and philosophers such as G.F. Hegel, in unpacking the movement of God's hand in history.

Through the thoughts of these timeless thinkers come to us the triangle of love, power and justice. Russell invokes the idea of justice and truth in his understanding that "truth may be forever on

the scaffold and wrong may be forever on the throne—yet it is the scaffold that sways the future, for in the dim unknown standest **God** within the shadows keeping watch above his own." Bryant adds, "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again." The beloved community's foundation (**die ethische Gemeinschaft/sittlichkeit**) indicates ethical leadership, non-violent change and equitable sharing of resources (food, housing and job opportunity).

The focus of our attention in this article is the mix of political and religious ideas and whether the two issues should ever be discussed or implemented from the government side or even considered or given editorial space from the religious side. The idea and history of the Social Gospel directly addresses this issue and has continual reference to the separation of church and state with the understanding that it is the ethical-religious backdrop which should guide the consciousness of the country. The Biblical testimony is that of the political domination of Egypt, Babylon and Rome over Israel and its claim to be God's people and having certain religious-based benefits regardless of the political realities of their condition.

The story of Judeo-Christian thought, according to my reading, is the narrative of Exile: Exile in Egypt until being "delivered" by the Moses of the Pentateuch. Exile in Babylon and oppression in Israel by various inhabitants of the "Promised Land" as recorded in the books of Joshua, Judges, Chronicles, Kings and prophecy. The New Testament makes it clear that Rome and its government applied oppression over the Jews and Christians in Palestine. The narratives of oppression and exile are

always there among a people waiting on a change to come from a "deliverer" for the cause of liberation. The history of the "Oppressed" or "exiled" was always the story of victimization of injustice and liberated by truth.

The idea of speaking truth to power is the battle cry of many movements today. Politics, the warehouse of power in America, has divided the nation into the power of the rich over the poor, the black and the white, the gay and the straight, to right wingers and left wingers.

Could there be a better time for the powerful ideas of inclusiveness of the ICCC to come forward? Is the vision of Roy Burkhart and Joseph Evans simply a prophetic wish—or is it rooted in an idea of faith and spiritual power whose time has come? Shall we rally in New Jersey this summer armed with truth, prophecy and God's Spirit? Shall we communicate to our communities, our cities and our governments that the passage way to a new day has been found? Are we simply spectators in Rome watching hired gladiators battle—or is the battle not ours but the Lord's?

John Donne centuries ago gave us the words which should be our guide. The bells rang out in those days when great tragedy or death had occurred amidst the town folk. People inquired concerning the misfortune a fellow that they might know who faced the misfortune or death. Donne says it as clearly today as he did in the 16th Century. If we do not understand the crisis our country is in—"Send not to know for whom the bell tolls—it tolls for thee."





Quadragesima

Don Ashmall
Council Minister

“Quadragesima” is Latin for “fortieth” – and is also in that language the title for Lent. (Yes that’s a bit of irrelevant trivia, but I did want you to know I did the research.) In the unique and apparently arbitrary way that churches do things, the title is applied to a season that’s longer than forty days. But if we subtract Sundays from the total of days in the season we can arrive at the correct total.

The number forty isn’t totally arbitrary. The children of Israel spent forty years on their way to the promised land, and at the beginning of his ministry Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness. The number of days in the season likely was chosen to indicate that Lent is a time of preparation.

In some quarters in the ICCC and elsewhere, the preparation involves intentional absence or abstinence. “What are you giving up for Lent?” And giving up something that we weren’t going to enjoy anyway is cheating! For others Lent is a time for additional opportunities for corporate worship, or for organized Bible study, or for something else that brings Christians together to pray, to perform a spiritual inventory, and to prepare our spirits for the celebration of Easter. Some of our Council congregations have elaborate traditions for the season while others do very little. One of my favorite memories of Lent is of a “round robin” of midweek worship services during the season, held at churches of various communions around town. But I must confess that the best part of those events was the after worship gatherings, when the cooks at whichever church was hosting tried to out-do the rest who would be cooking and serving that season. (So much for giving up something for Lent!)

If I’ve ever had a problem with Lent, it was the unrelenting inward-looking that seemed to me to characterize the season. Part of that was just my restless personality. After all, it is more than appropriate that we (and especially I) take time to review our spiritual lives, and to reflect on what we have done and what we have failed to do. We all know that the world in which we live does not encourage such introspection – and that’s just one more reason why we need it.

But I’d like to suggest that introspection is not enough. Thomas Merton wrote “Lent is not just a time for squaring conscious accounts: but for realizing what we had perhaps not seen before.” We are all on pilgrimage. Though it’s certainly necessary for us to re-tread our spiritual sandals and to re-adjust our Biblical backpacks, it may be that a more challenging task awaits us during Lent. As we prepare for Easter, may I suggest that we need to look up, look down, and look around? Our pilgrimage is going somewhere. Are we on the best path? Are there shortcuts we should or should not be taking? Are there new roads to be explored? Or should we consider leaving the paved surfaces of our lives and striking out cross-country? Those are questions for individuals and for congregations too.

What those new paths might be is a serious question, because God sometimes calls individuals and congregations to new and challenging (perhaps even dangerous) places. An individual who had never considered such a thing is sometimes summoned to a life of servant-leadership as a congregation’s pastor. Sometimes a Christian who is secure in her/his employment is called to develop a new entrepreneurial enterprise that will provide a serv-



ice to the community and a livelihood for others. And sometimes a person of faith is called upon to begin or renew a personal ministry of radical mercy and holy hospitality.

As for churches and ministry centers: a congregation that had never envisioned such a mission is sometimes called to a ministry to strangers and to strange circumstances. Sometimes these new missions are in the back yard, and sometimes they are thousands of miles away. It may be that a church or ministry center is called to invigorated ministry: something that the congregation has pursued with little energy or even that has been abandoned, and now is challenged to re-imagination and renewal. Or perhaps the summons is to an outreach that’s totally novel to the fellowship and that demands the development of new skill sets within the congregation.

The thing is – what we are called to as individuals and as congregations is never predictable in advance, at least by us. From this perspective our Lenten observances hold the potential for excitement and even an experience of awe. Behind it all is the enduring lesson of Lent and the goal of the pilgrimage: resurrection. May God bless your Lenten journey.

Have You Read This?

REVIEWS

By Stephen York



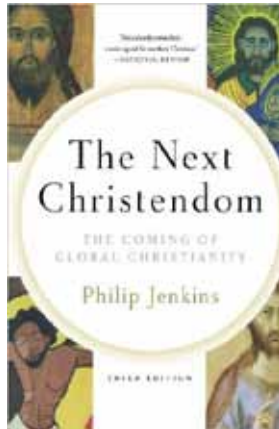
The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity (Third Edition)

By Philip Jenkins

New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011

(\$16.00 paperback; Kindle \$8.36; Audiobook \$21.95)

The Christian Revolution captured this reader's imagination on many levels, leading me to highly recommend that readers of this column purchase this volume. It is well worth the purchase price. Author Philip Jenkins is Emeritus Edwin Earle Sparks Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University and has written numerous books, including two others in *The Future of Christianity Trilogy*



of which this book is the first in the series. Subsequent Trilogy titles are *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South and God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis*. Dr. Jenkins is now Professor of History, Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University.

When the author wrote the first edition of this book in 2002 he was motivated by his observations "in response to what seemed ... a critically important historical development, namely, that the worldwide geography of Christianity had shifted fundamentally, and that this change had enormous implications for politics and culture, no less than for religious life." Further, he revised the book for the third edition due to the rapid and significant changes that occurred in the world since September 11, 2001.

What is striking is the author's point-of-view that Global Christianity is robust, growing, and will remain so in projections for the year 2050. Jenkins quickly acknowledges [as does Phyllis Tickle] that we are "living through one of the transforming moments in the history of religion worldwide," and asserting that "over the last century, however, the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted away from Europe [and European-derived

civilizations] southward, to Africa and Latin America, and eastward, toward Asia."

Jenkins takes issue with some statements made by Samuel P. Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, by observing:

Even Huntington, though, understated the rising force of Christianity. He argued that the relative Christian share of global population will fall steeply as the twenty-

first century progresses, and that this religion will be supplanted by Islam: 'In the long run ... Muhammed wins out.'

Jenkins counters Huntington's assertion by stating:

But far from Islam being the world's largest religion by 2020 or so, as Huntington suggested, Christianity should still have a substantial lead into the foreseeable future. By 2050, some 34 percent of the world's people will be Christian, roughly what the figure was at the height of European world hegemony in 1900.

Jenkins projects that there will be a Christian population explosion alongside the Muslim one, citing specifically Christian countries in Africa as an example. He does not accept Huntington's prevailing thought that Christianity grows through conversion while Muslims grow by birth rate.

The author cites African and Asian theologians such as Kosuke Koyama (*Water-Buffalo Theology*) and John Mbiti (*Bible and Theology in African Christianity*) along with the recently-published nine volume series of Cambridge History of Christianity, as he builds a case for evidence of a vibrant Global South

Christianity. For example, Jenkins avers that in the year 1900 the overwhelming majority of Christians (83 percent) lived in Europe and North America. He projects that by the year 2050 some (72 percent) will live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This is a huge shift in a 150-year period. The author also notes that in 1900 that the overwhelming majority of Christians were non-Latino whites and by 2050 this demographic will be a small subset of Global Christians.

One of the most important statements that the author makes is, "There is no single Southern Christianity, and more than there is such thing as European or North American Christianity: each of these terms involves numerous components, some strongly at odds with others." His emphasis on the indigenous adaptation of Christianity is very much like the thinking of Kosuke Koyama in *Water Buffalo Theology*. Koyama states:

At the time of writing *Water Buffalo Theology* I realized the danger of speaking of 'Asian theology,' and opted for the expression 'theology in Asia,' following the apostolic example of 'Churches in Galatia' and 'the saints in Rome.'

Jenkins' work includes helpful definition of terms, early on, including his interpretation of "Third World" versus "Global South" and "Christendom." Although his work is academic, it is also accessible to a wider popular readership. Positive reviews and book blurbs from *The New York Times*, *The National Review*, *Baptist Times*, and *Crisis* indicate a vast audience.

This book was thought-provoking to this reader and has expanded a broader world view of the changing face of Global Christianity. As stated earlier, further studies in Jenkins' work in this book and in his subsequent volumes in this trilogy offers further, fruitful exploration.

Under the ICCC Bylaws, the Board of Directors acts as the Nominating Committee for the Council. Terms of office begin at the close of Annual Conference. If you have suggestions for nominees or if you wish to be considered as a nominee for an office, please respond no later than MAY 30, 2017. Some offices are occupied by incumbents who are eligible for re-election. Nominations will be presented to the Annual Conference business sessions, at which additional nominations from the floor are in order.

Available Positions

Trustees

All Trustees serve a single term of five years.

Trustee for Eastern Zone, Region C (FL, GA, SC)

Officers

President. The President serves for a term of one year, and may serve two consecutive terms (two years). The other two officers, Secretary and Treasurer, are both serving the first year of a 2-year term.

Board of Directors

All Vice Presidents are members of the Board of Directors. Each serves for a term of two years, with a maximum of three consecutive terms. All the Vice Presidents are currently serving the first year of a two-year term. There are no available Vice President positions on the ICCC Board of Directors up for election at this time.

Endowment Fund Trustees

Endowment Fund Trustees serve for a term of three years, with a maximum of two terms (six years total). There are three Endowment Fund Trustee positions are to be filled this year. Two are for 3-year terms to replace incumbents who have served full terms. One position, currently filled by an appointee, is to complete the final two years of a 3-year term due to the passing of the initial incumbent, Rev. Dr. Bill Grossman.

Action Requested:

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. Thank you.

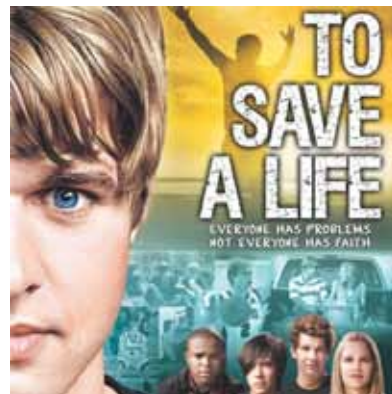
Mail to: Bob Harris, Nominating Committee Chair
International Council of Community Churches
21116 Washington Parkway
Frankfort, IL 60423-3112

Or email to: BobUS1963@gmail.com

Seeking a Pastor

A longstanding community church of 95 years is looking for one pastor with a heart for God. We are seeking an educated candidate to continue what our church has built, and lead us toward God's will for our future. Our church offers a traditional and a contemporary morning worship service as well as weekly Bible/prayer study. Family oriented would be a good description of our congregation. Our church is located in a small Mid-Michigan community near the Saginaw Bay, and minutes to stores, a mall, and other cities. A parsonage is available on the church grounds. Interested candidates please send your resume to Kawkawlin Community Church Pulpit Committee P.O. Box 627 Kawkawlin, MI 48631 or email kccpulpit@hotmail.com

Movie Night *cont'd. from p. 1*



Watching the movie with all generations together will allow the entire ICCC family to break down some of these invisible generational walls. Also, we'll intentionally glean positive strategies to continue working toward removing social barriers that threatens our oneness and more importantly help 'save a life' for the cause of Jesus Christ.

The Children's, Youth, and Young Adult Program will be working together this year with different activities to help bridge the generational gap. More information on these activities will be available on our website and in upcoming issues of the Christian Community.

Sharing Joys:

- Congratulations to Rev. **Herb Freitag**, Senior Pastor at **Chapel By The Sea**, Clearwater, FL as he celebrates his retirement! He will preach at the church until the end of May, but since many of his congregation travel north for the summer, they are having a retirement party March 26th. Enjoy!
- Bishop **Serge Theriault**, **Christian Catholic Rite of Community Churches**, Ottawa, Canada, celebrated *World Religion Day* on January 22, acknowledged by the United Nations in a spirit of peace and unity. The theme was *Fostering an Inclusive Society*.



Our prayers are with:

- The **Woodruff Family** and **Wilson Memorial Union Church**, Watchung, NJ. Dr. **H. Boyd Woodruff** died peacefully at his home at age 99 on January 19th. He served as the congregation president. He was a man of many talents, much knowledge and an inspiration to many. To read about his accomplishments, please visit legacy.com for Dr. H. Boyd Woodruff's obituary.
- Chaplain **Brad Walgren** and his family, **Church at Litchfield Park**, AZ. Brad's father, Dr. **Harold N. Walgren** passed away Feb. 5th. Hal Walgren lived a life devoted to his wife, his family, his church, his practice and the community and nation he loved. He was a firm believer in life-long learning, higher education and the pursuit of excellence.

The CLS Food Ministry and the ICCC's March to a Million Meals

by Tom and Ann Bare

Did you ever wonder how many meals your church's food ministry program provides to those in need? At the Church of the Loving Shepherd (CLS) in Westtown, PA we recently calculated an approximate number of meals enabled as part of the ICCC's "March To A Million Meals" program.

During the ICCC's 2015 Annual Conference, voting delegates approved hunger relief as a major Council mission. At the 2016 Annual Conference, the "March to a Million Meals" was launched by Rev. Dr. Bruce Merton. The program's goal is to have ICCC member churches "join together to provide the equivalent of one million meals to hungry persons across the globe". The March started in July of 2016 and will continue through June 2017.

The CLS Food Ministry became aware of this program in October 2016 and, with Rev. John Woodcock's encouragement, decided to join with other member ICCC churches to reach the million meals goal. The ICCC provided a number of different methods to determine meals enabled. We decided to use a formula based on the pounds of food distributed. It's used by a number of food banks to realistically estimate the number of meals they enable.

Using this formula we had a total of 43,095 meals enabled by the CLS food ministry program from July through December 2016. Not bad for a church with fewer than 100 active members! This number includes both the 235 turkeys in our Thanksgiving Basket program and the regular twice-a-month food ministry programs.

To date, CLS has supplied more than half of 74,077 meals reported so far in the Council's "March to a Million Meals" campaign. The ICCC has quite a distance to go to reach its million meals goal. But CLS can certainly be proud of its contribution to the effort.

What has your church done to help meet the ICCC's "Million Meals" goal?

None of these meals would be possible without the extreme generosity of our congregation as well as hundreds of CLS volunteer hours together with support from many local organizations. The Chester County Food Bank brought our Food Ministry many tons of food including 75% of the fresh produce and non-perishable foods we distribute. Twice monthly Entenmann's Bakery Outlet donates all the bread we need. During the summer, QVC's "Q-Gardens" donates hundreds of pounds of hand-picked organic produce. Wegmans' gave us a large monetary donation.

We encourage other ICCC congregations, large and small, to contact Rev. Bruce Merton at mertonbn@aol.com about reporting their total hunger relief meals provided.

Pictured: Representing about half the regular volunteers, are (starting from the left): David Tschachler, Margaret Kramaric, Doris Blandy, Jim Aubry, Pat Aubry, Renny Wood, Ann Bare, Tom Bare, and Nick Popov from the Chester County Food Bank.



THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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Ecumenews

by Herman Harmelink III
VP for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations



During the year 2016 the National Park Service celebrated its One Hundredth Anniversary. The National Parks have sometimes been called "America's Best Idea." And I agree. Vast areas across the nation have been kept from being ruined by commercial exploitation, and preserved not only for us but for future generations to enjoy. One cannot see the Grand Canyon, or the Giant Redwoods, or the Natural Arches, or the geysers and boiling mud-pots of Yellowstone without being thankful to those forward-looking leaders of the late 19th and early 20th century who saw to it that these wonderful places were saved. And most of us would also say a word of thanks to nature and nature's God for giving us these good things to enjoy.

But you might say: What has this to do with ecumenism? I had the privilege, as a seminarian, to work one summer in Sequoia National Park in the Sierra Nevadas of California. I was working under a programme called Christian Ministry in the National Parks. The programme was begun by a Presbyterian minister, Warren Ost, and was quickly adopted by the National Council of Churches. I worked in the meat market of a grocery store in Giant Forest during the week to earn my keep. On the weekends we assisted at worship in an outdoor theatre, surrounded by the giant Sequoias, some of whom were born before Jesus. We also had after-hours Bible studies for employees, many of whom were fellow students. Under Warren Ost's leadership community churches were established in some parks (they would be good candidates for ICCC membership). In 1971 the programme was spun off from the NCC into an independent entity, but it continues to this day, to provide worship opportunities for tourists and employees alike in our national parks.

If national parks are our greatest idea, perhaps Christian Ministry in the National Parks is the second-greatest!

Laity Nominations

Each year the Council recognizes two laypeople for service to the Council and to their local congregations. The Laywoman and Layman awards are designed to express our appreciation to individuals who:

1. Shared the open, welcoming, joyful spirit of the Council as well as items of Council news with their local congregations;
2. Shared events, joys and concerns of their congregations with the wider fellowship of the Council.
3. Acted as advocate and interpreter of the Council within their local congregations.
4. Participated in area and regional events as well as attending Annual Conference.

You may nominate a candidate for Laywoman and/or Layman of the year. Please include in your nomination:

- A. Your name and contact information.
- B. The name and contact information of your nominee.
- C. A short biographical sketch of your nominee.
- D. Specifics on how the nominee has fulfilled the expectations for the award listed above.

Submit your nominations by email to iccc60423@sbcglobal.net, or by postal mail to ICCC, 21116 Washington Parkway, Frankfort, IL 60423. Deadline for nominations is April 15th.

ICCC Endowment Fund Status As of February 9, 2017

Gifts Goal by June 30, 2017: \$25,000

Gifts since 7/01/16: \$19,120

Help us meet our goal, need: \$5,880

Current Fund Assets: \$311,862

Current Investment Mix:
61% stocks & 39% bonds



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

Mission Statement



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

A Time to Laugh



I THINK I NEED TO SET UP A SPAM FILTER TO CATCH LOTTERY PRAYER REQUESTS

2017 Annual Conference Program Book/Church Directory Ad Space

Indicate below the ad size you will submit.

Table with columns: HEIGHT, WIDTH, PAGE SIZE, COST. Rows: Full (8x11), One Half (8x5.5), One Quarter (4x5).

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Organization: _____

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Phone: () _____ Fax: () _____

E-mail: _____

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 ICC60423@sbcglobal.net (must be paid by credit/debit card)

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[] Visa [] Mastercard [] American Express [] Discover

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DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: MAY 31, 2017.

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

THE COUNCIL CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DESIGNING ADS.