

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

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The Vocabulary of the Righteous

by Rev. Dr. William H. Samuels

The wonderful 1950 church movement centered in Chicago had a powerful statement to announce to the world. There was going to be a group of congregations—some “white” and some “black” who were going to unite into a group which would come to be known as the International Council of Community Churches (ICCC). When these heroes met together and laid out plans for an intentional racial equality across the communion, including measuring how many, how long and what race, it was their vision to impute into our nation a model of what it means to be Christian. A Christian attitude that was not just nice words and ideas, but a sincere crossing over into the deeply imbedded attitudes of racism, white supremacy and institutional discrimination. Here was a chance to share differences in worship, leadership styles and behavior. Now, as we begin another year in pursuit of this glorious vision, we find ourselves, unwittingly, at the forefront of showing the world how this can be accomplished.



Through their vision of a group which might overcome a serious issue in American society, they may not have recognized how pervasive this malady had permeated the social, psychological and historical constructs of our nation.

In 1950, for example, when I was a “kid” in Chicago, I played “cowboys and Indians” with the rest of the children in my neighborhood. I identified with the “cowboys”, of course, because they represented the “good guys” or the righteous side of the conflict. The cowboys had guns—the “red skins” had arrows. Outside of this western confrontation there were villains in town such as “Black Bart” that wore black hats and black outfits signifying that they were wicked and evil while the righteous of the neighborhood wore white garments because they were pure and represented good—or the righteous. The 1950 dreamers had more social, psychological and historical hurdles to overcome on each side of the merger than they might have suspected.

It was very clear to me in those days of “I Love Lucy”, “Amos n’ Andy” and “The Ed Sullivan (really big) show”, that my place in life was well defined by the games that we played and the images around me.

Comedian Jack Benny had his “Rochester”, the Lone Ranger had his “Tonto” and Charlie Chan, the brilliant Chinese detective, had his own black butler who was always scared out of his wits by the circumstances in which he found himself. It was clear to me that the “axis mundi” of existence was somewhere in Europe. After all, did not Columbus “discover” America? Did not the great Kit

Continued on page 4



Executive Minister's Report

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Butler Murray
Executive Minister

One of the joys of being the new Executive Minister of the International Council of Community Churches is getting to know the churches and spiritual centers of our communion. In the past couple weeks, I preached at or worshipped with three of our churches: Palisades Community Church and Park Road Community Church in Washington, D.C., and Peoples Community Church in Detroit, Michigan. What strikes me is how different each of our churches are, how our common values as an ecumenical movement of reconciliation come to the fore. What it means to be part of the ICCC is different in each of these churches, and how that is lived within their worship, their community, even their liturgy is distinctive. I look forward to continuing to learn about the many member churches and communions of the ICCC, and already have enjoyed conversations across national boundaries to talk about the ICCC with members far outside the American origins of this movement.

Another side of this work is relating to churches which are going through difficult times, to see what sort of aid and friendship the ICCC can offer to such churches. This past weekend (at the time I write this), Hurricane Matthew unleashed tremendous destruction in Haiti, and continued to do so throughout Florida and the coastlines of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Over the weekend, I called each of our fifteen ICCC churches and member dioceses in that region to

let them know that they were not alone, that hundreds of churches throughout the ICCC held them in their prayers and that I would help to marshal whatever assistance we might be able to bring to them through the direct assistance of the ICCC and through wider mechanisms for aid such as Church World Service. Many of us watched on the news what became the living reality for communities along the coast, when twelve foot storm surges of ocean water submerged entire communities.

When people ask me what is the value of belonging to the ICCC, it is moments like these that come to mind. It is vital to know that you are not alone, that you have fellows near and far who are keeping you in their prayers and who are willing to offer assistance and sacrifice to bring you practical help. Yes, there are the day to day benefits of affiliating with the ICCC, but perhaps no other communion is so committed to its fellowship of believers and seekers, extending out along non-creedal branches that nonetheless find common roots in our fellowship together. This is a comfort not just for a pastor, but for an entire congregation, this integral knowledge that we are all in this together, whether you are on the coast or in the heartland. We commit ourselves to one another in this membership, something that goes far beyond mere affiliation, to know one another not anemically, but truly to be friends in Christ. And so whether we are battered by nature or confronted by

the pain of violence in our communities, we pledge to stand together, to pray and sing together, to preach a gospel of hope for the good news that tomorrow might bring.

Love and compassion are not mere sentimentality. Love is an action. Love is extending yourself on behalf of others. Love leads to a concern for justice, for love without justice is mere sentimentality. Love that is meaningful is active. True spirituality does not mean that we turn our backs on the world but that we have a foundation and a center for our lives from which we can live more meaningfully, with greater awareness of life's joys and life's sorrows, and greater service to others. Spirituality and justice go together, and when we split them apart, we lose both.

In times such as these, it is important to remember that our love for one another needs to be a liberating love, one that frees one another when burdens become too hard to bear, one that seeks out justice and direction and safety for those who find themselves abandoned in a wilderness with no sense of where to go, one that rebuilds when catastrophe strikes and homes and churches literally are washed away in the maelstrom of the ocean.

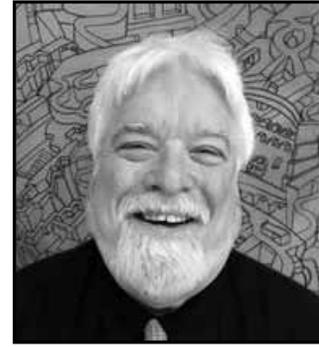
We are the International Council of Community Churches. We stand together.

Have You Read This?

REVIEWS By Stephen York

BLUE PASTURES

By Mary Oliver. Harcourt Brace, 1995.
Paperback, 120 pages. \$10.00



Does time “slip away” from you without getting some of the important tasks done in your day? Ask anyone. External and internal interruptions are a human reality. How to commit to uninterrupted time to concentrate on anything, especially reading or creative work, is a challenge for clergy and laity. Nationally-acclaimed poet and essayist Mary Oliver (1935—) has a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award among her numerous recognitions, demonstrating that it is possible to achieve one’s daily goals despite struggling with self-discipline. Mary Oliver speaks to her own experience in “Of Power and Time,” the first essay in **BLUE PASTURES**, a collection of essays and aphorisms. She writes:

“[C]reative work requires a loyalty as complete as the loyalty of water to the force of gravity. A person trudging through the wilderness of creation who does not know this—who does not swallow this—is lost.”

The New York Times described her as “far and away this country’s best-selling poet.” Nine years later, at the age of eighty, Mary Oliver still leads the way, with a new book poetry or essays published annually. Her latest collection of essays, *Upstream* (Penguin Press) will be released this month on October 11 and is available by pre-order on www.amazon.com. Previous collections of poetry and essays are also available from your local bookseller or online.

Readers would also be well served to dip into Mary Oliver’s poetry for reflection and spiritual growth. One of her poetry



collections, **Thirst**, (Beacon Press, 2006) is a volume that may be used for suggested contemporary readings for worship services or adult education spirituality groups. A couple of notable poems that have resonated with many readers include “The Vast Ocean Begins Just Outside Our Church: The Eucharist,” “Heavy,” and “The Winter Wood Arrives,” to name a few. In the title poem, “Thirst,” these words speak to the soul:

Another morning and I wake with thirst for the goodness I do not have. I walk out to the pond and all the way God has given us such beautiful lessons. Oh Lord, I was never a quick scholar but sulked and hunched over my books past the hour and bell; grant me, in your mercy, a little more time. Love for the earth and love for you are having such a long conversation in my heart. Who knows what will finally happen or where I will be sent, yet already I have given a great many things away, expecting to be told to pack nothing, except the prayers which, with this thirst, I am slowly learning.

BOOK BRIEFS—Leadership Resources

How do we effectively minister in a secular age? To begin we must understand it. I have found the following two volumes are essential reading for religious leaders in the twenty-first century.

- **A SECULAR AGE** by Charles Taylor (Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007) (There is an audio version of this book at www.audible.com).

Charles Taylor, retired philosophy professor at McGill University, offers in this volume an excellent historical and philosophical framework that lays the foundation enabling readers to more fully understand how we got to the present cultural reality of secularism which has led to churches dying or closing and denominations in decline. This, however, is more than that. It is a treatise that offers a way to recalibrate our own understanding and how to more effectively interpret and effectively minister in these times. It is most fortunate that this book is also available, as noted above, in audio format. This is a tome in every sense of the word. I am using the print and audio text to read this book.

- Further, in order to fully appreciate and understand Charles Taylor’s book, I also recommend that you purchase **HOW (NOT) TO BE SECULAR--READING CHARLES TAYLOR** by James K. A. Smith (Eerdmans, 2014). (This is also available on Kindle). Professor Smith is a Pentecostal/Calvinist philosopher who teaches at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and an expert on interpreting Charles Taylor and the secular age. Both volumes may be ordered at your local bookstore or online.

NON-PRINT READING

I am also giving you the link to the accompanying news story which was published recently by the Religious News Service. <http://religiondispatches.org/theyre-not-coming-back-the-religiously-unaffiliated-and-the-post-religious-era/>. There is a further link there to the Pew Research Report, “Exodus.” Leaders, clergy and lay, would be well served to read and discuss the ramifications of this recent research.

The Vocabulary of the Righteous *cont'd. from p. 1*

Carson spread disease to his Indian friends by giving them contaminated blankets? Did not the righteous European settlers fool the naive Indians by paying only \$24 for Manhattan? Did I not come from Africa where, according to all of my teachers of those times, there were savages in the jungle with bones in their noses and were void of civilization? Even though Egypt was in Africa and had advanced cultural impact, why was it taught—and remains “sui generis”?

The idea of the righteous has now even mutated. Even more intriguing, the idea of “race” as an issue at first glance, seems to have been overcome by something as simple as age. Older people have become bad people. No longer venerated or respected because of their number of years, they have become despised because of their age. Not agile—they have become cumbersome; not quick to get into social media they have become ignorant; because time has taught them lessons of life, they have been labeled as Old-fashioned to the extent of disgust.

Attention to labels such as “millennials”, “baby boomers”, and “generation X” seems to have replaced race and national origins. What matters to Madison Avenue and political polls more is how old you are. These new designations have had more attention in the recent political debate than did race. Having a “right wing” political grounding or liberal understanding of the world seems to have replaced skin color implications. Feminism, lesbian, gay (LGBT) have emerged on to the scene leaving a big question mark—now just who are the “righteous?” Is righteousness centered in skin color? Sexual preference? Age? Net worth? Are our congregations now determined by race or by labels such as Evangelicals? Is Riverside church in New York defined by liberal vs. conservative rather than black or white? Has race become a “sub title” under the labels liberal and conservative? Are we of the same mind and convictions of our founders?

Further, political centeredness may now have been replaced by economic determinism—Where is the money and who has it? Follow the money. Where now is the place of churches, faith and the meaning of good to be placed in this modern frame work of “bottom line”, “the middle class” and the power and stature of “people of means”? Why do we have homelessness and boarded- up housing? Why do we have hunger with abundance of food everywhere? The answer is somewhere around the word economy.

Now the inquiry has come full circle. I feel closer to Doris Landis of Kansas City than I do with my millennial neighbors in Chicago. Somehow, what she says and represents resonates with my lifestyle more than my racial millennial look alike. Could the early fathers and mothers have seen this? Did we have to go through this to realize where we need to be? Our missions direct our attention to **hunger, community** and **Agape**. We may have to “impute” these other considerations as we pursue the nature of righteousness and what is the language of it.

ICCC Endowment Fund Status As of September 30, 2016	
<i>Gifts Goal by June 30, 2017:</i> \$25,000
<i>Gifts since 7/01/16:</i> \$14,950
<i>Help us meet our goal: Need</i> \$10,050
Current Fund Assets: \$303,051
Current Investment Mix: 52% stocks & 48% bonds

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.

Ecumenews

by Herman Harmelink III

ICCC VP for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

The Third Global Conference on World's Religions After September 11 was held in Montréal, Québec, in mid-September. Representatives of all of the World's major religions were present and active in presentations, panels, and discussions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhs. An outstanding group of speakers made presentations: Deepak Chopra, Harvey Cox, Karen Armstrong, and Charles Taylor among others. A little quote from Chopra; Einstein and Tagore were having a conversation. Einstein: Even if no one were there, the moon would still shine. Tagore: How do you know?



Chopra went on to speak of the mystery of the fundamental basis of everything we know, namely, consciousness.

Harvey Cox spoke on the theme of his latest book, *The Market God*. The world religions are getting beyond the polemical stage, but all should be speaking out against the latest new religion, *The Market*. Everything is measured in market terms, and the market makes no mistakes. The religions should join in declaring this to be a misplaced faith, and a false religion.

Manjit Singh, a Sikh, stressed that fanaticism and fundamentalism are two sides of the same coin, and can be found in all religions. He pointed out, sadly, that fundamentalist attitudes can also infect liberals!

Karen Armstrong, after reminding us that all the major religions have some version of the Golden Rule in their tradition, said we seem to have set it aside when it comes to the plight of refugees, and particularly Syrian refugees. Is it so difficult for us to imagine what we would hope the world would do for us if we were forced into becoming refugees?

The most significant action of the World's Religions was the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions. This is not intended to be a substitute for, but rather a complement to, the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The text may be found at www.worldsreligions2016.org.

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 **June 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

As part of our electronic giving program, we offer a powerful tool designed for today's smartphone users. In less time than it takes to write a check, you can make contributions or respond to special appeals by simply sending a text message from your smartphone.

It takes just minutes to sign up and support the ICCC. So, we hope you'll try this easy, modern way to give. Visit our website link <http://www.iccnw.org/donate/> 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:

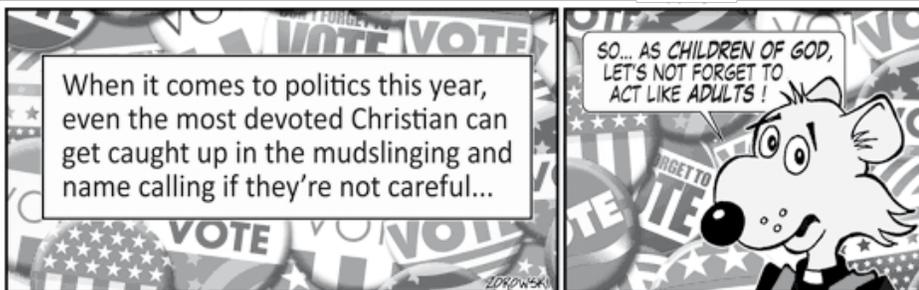
- **Emmanuel Baptist Church**, Ridgewood, NJ, **Ken Gill** Senior Pastor, will celebrate their 125th Church Anniversary November 12th & 13th! There will be a chapel dedication, Peace lounge dedication, tree planting and dedication, a concert, a reception and of course, worship! "Like" their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/EBCRidgewood/> to follow.
- **St. Timothy Community Church**, Gary, IN, celebrated their 90th Church Anniversary of worship and service. Beginning this past January through September, members recognized the history of their church through a variety of worship and fellowship experiences that ended with a grand celebration Anniversary Banquet, and worship service highlighting the accomplishments and future goals of the church, with a musical tribute by the Sanctuary Choir the last weekend of September.
- **Bishop Serge Theriault**, Senior Pastor, **Christian Catholic Rite of Community Churches**, Ottawa, Canada shares that their priest **Ray Henson** in TN recently had an article on suicide published in the *Journal of the Military Chaplains Association*, Fall 2016. Check it out: https://mca-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/TMC_Fall-2016_web.pdf



Our prayers are with:

- **Ms. Winifred West**, **People's Community Church**, Berea, OH, who lost her father, **Dudley Washington Edgar Taylor, October 4th**. Mr. Taylor was 98 years old! If you visit Winnie's Facebook page you can read the obituary of a very interesting life led by Mr. Taylor. [Facebook.com/winniewest?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/winniewest?fref=ts)
- **Seneca Community Church**, Germantown, MD, Senior Pastor, **Ken Nelson**, and the family of **Paul S. Young, Sr.**, who passed away September 16th. Paul and his wife Mary, attended and were very active participants in the Annual Conferences and Eastern Region Area Meetings. Seneca and the ICCC are grateful for his dedicated service and support.
- **People's Community Church**, Berea, OH, **Leroy McCreary** Senior Pastor and the family of **Clyde Albergottie** who passed away September 19th at the age of 85. Better known to the ICCC as "AL", he attended ICCC Annual Conferences and was once the President of the Samaritans Men's group.

A Time to Laugh



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.

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