

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

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A Word from the 2014 Chair of our Annual Conference

by Harry Fockle, Antioch Community Church, Conference Chair

I just experienced open heart surgery several weeks ago and am in the recovery process. Praise God and thank you for all who knew and prayed for me. It looks to be a successful surgery and I have a new heart valve.

I thought a lot about the surgery and the ICCC.

It seemed to me that in this past Annual Conference we voted to do surgery on our organization. We come together in Omaha this summer and put into motion all those areas we adopted. We are into preparation for a new day. We voted a new Vision program and new structure.

We are in the process of receiving nominations for those new positions. When we leave Omaha this summer it will be the same way I left the hospital with a new valve. It will not be the original way of doing things. It will be a new way and most importantly God's way.

I look forward to seeing all of you this summer at Annual Conference. I look forward with great anticipation. I see the International Council of Community Churches emerging with a new look and new lifeblood. It is an exciting time.

Will you do two things for me before Annual Conference? Will you pray for God's Holy Spirit to work in our midst as we renew the ICCC after "surgery" and will you meet me in this wonderful place called Omaha.



Women's Christian Fellowship

by Ella Clay, President and Elaine Richardson, Bazaar Chairperson

As we begin 2014, let's commit to continuing the success of the Bazaar we had last year. I thank you all for your support of the Jordan Scholarship Fund that provides for our college students. I am glad to be part of the Women's Christian Fellowship and enjoy working with each and every one of you. May God bless us as we begin a new year together. Please remember to join us for our prayer call line, every second Monday of each month. Call 1.712.432.0175-code 887889 and follow the prompts. Encourage others to join in and let's be blessed together.



President's Message

Rev. Dr. Bruce N. Merton

When my children, Bruce and Barbara, were small tikes they were quite happy to identify themselves as part of a larger family that included Mom and Dad. Proudly and passionately they let family take center stage. In family there was security, larger identity, and solid connectedness!

Family was central! Likes and dislikes were inseparable. Barbara would say, "Daddy and I like shopping." Sometimes she would say, "Mommy and I don't like messes!" Bruce would tell people, "Mommy and I like to make Jello." On other occasions he would let it be known, "Daddy and I don't like eggs!"

Being central to each other's lives is a pretty good description of a functional family – nuclear and extended!

As a teen in the 1960's I noticed that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. always seemed to respond to the constant stream of venomous remarks and heckling that came his way with patience, love and, quite frequently, words that were transcendent to the moment. It is reported that a segregationist hollered at him, "Mr. King! All you really want to do is marry my sister!"

With classic, unscripted and kind rhetoric, Dr. King replied, "I want to be the white man's brother, not his brother-in-law."

If we are really a functional, global family: if we sincerely believe that all have been created in the image of almighty God, then we must in true sincerity become central to one another's lives...so central that even our likes and dislikes seem inseparable.

If we are truly a global family shaped in the image of almighty God, we will hear ourselves saying:

"We and the Islamists want to live in peace."

"We, the Iraqis and the Israelites want our children to prosper."

"We and the Sudanese need sufficient food and shelter."

"We, all of us, dislike war and the price it exacts!"

"We and the Afghans do not like our schools and places of worship assaulted or destroyed."

"We and the Iranians want and will achieve nuclear peace."

Family? Will we choose to live for and with one another? Will we be central to each other's lives? Will we know our likes and dislikes as shared and inseparable?

I pray that we will all seek and work for family unity in the midst of familial diversity! I am encouraged in the journey by these words:

"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God... God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is perfected in us." (1 John 3:7-12)

Through Jesus, we are central to God and God is central to us – each and every one of us! We are family! We are inseparable – believe it or not! *"In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting our sins and trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us." (II Corinthians 5: 19)*

Dr. King also said, "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

I firmly believe that the "single garment of destiny" will be fully known when *"at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:10,11) Until that day I will live, work, serve and pray for that our "inescapable network of mutuality" will come to be known as "our human family!"



How did your church or worship center observe Martin Luther King Day? What other special events have you experienced? Do you have photos? Can you describe your special events in a paragraph or two? Share your news with the community church movement! Email your news and photos to iccc60423@sbcglobal.net, or send a postal note to Council House. Then look for your church's name and news in an upcoming issue of the Christian Community.

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**A Voice for
Ecumenical Congregations
(ISSN - 0145-3297)**

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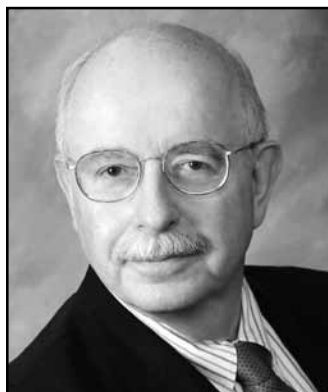
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**ANNUAL CONFERENCE
CONFEREES WANT TO SEE
YOU IN 2014**



“State of the Council” 2014

Don Ashmall
Council Minister

What Is Our Present Situation?

Since the year 2000 we have weathered a “perfect storm.” We began the millennium with years of shrinking Council membership. We saw the resignation of an Executive Director. An elected Council President died in office. We experienced the most severe worldwide economic conditions since the Great Depression. In most of Christendom the quest for Christian unity seemed to have gone “out of style,” with a large number of local church leaders asking only “what’s in it for me and my congregation” rather than inquiring as to what might be the mind of Christ.

In spite of all of this, the Council survived. We are more than simply alive. We are starting to grow again. We’ve come through a period when most non-profit corporations like ours would have surrendered and died. We didn’t, because at heart we are not a corporation. We are a movement: a people with a purpose. This most recent era of our common life should have demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that the community church movement is in the will of God. If the last 1½ decades or so hasn’t killed us, nothing will! Since past experience has proved our viability and sustainability, the future must demonstrate our potential and our progress in service to our common Lord.

Where Are We Going?

The Vision 2020 initiative adopted by the delegates in Annual Conference is an outline for our progress during the next seven years. There are a number of background factors that will help ensure the success of the initiatives if each of us is willing to act on the various parts of the initiative.

First, the “denominational model” is in a process of slow disintegration. Internal denominational conflicts over doctrine and social ethics have turned (as they

always do) into contests over “who’s in charge around here?” The conflicts are tending toward schism if not total collapse. Second, the idea of a voluntary association of congregations is gaining surprising headway. Cooperation without coercion is increasingly attractive, particularly to younger believers whose “ownership” of sectarian labels is weak or non-existent. Third, at the moment the wider culture is enamored of “horizontal” structures that rely on collegiality and collaboration. While this last item could change at any time and while conforming to societal fads is generally a bad idea for Christian fellowships, the fact that the wider culture is endorsing the organizing concept of the Council is giving us an advantage that should not be ignored.

With all of these factors working for us, a communion that celebrates unity without uniformity and diversity without division is a much easier “sell” than it might have been just a few years ago. If we are willing to follow through on our Vision 2020 initiative with honest effort during each and every one of the next seven years, we may find ourselves not just meeting but exceeding the initiative’s goals for growth.

So: prospects are good for the growth of the Council’s membership. That said we still need to ask “why?” Why do we seek the growth? What are our purposes anyway? Why bother to make the effort?

Why Are We Making the Effort?

We are not an organization centered on survival. We are a movement grounded in faith. We believe that Jesus’ prayer for his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane “that they might all be one” was a prayer not for the moment but for the ages. We take Jesus seriously, and so we take the quest for Christian unity as a Divine mandate. As a Council we began by reaching

REVIEWS

Dr. Robert M. Puckett

RED LETTER CHRISTIANS, A Citizen's Guide to Faith & Politics;
 Tony Campolo, Regal, Ventura, California, 2008, 225 pages, \$19.99.

Tony Campolo is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Eastern University who challenges the popular image of evangelicals in American culture. While maintaining an evangelical theological perspective, he rejects being a part of the Religious Right. He also refuses to believe that Jesus is either a Democrat or a Republican. Believing that Jesus transcends partisan politics Campolo encourages us all to view political issues through the eyes of Jesus. This book is not about how Christians should vote on Election day but how they should vote every single day.

Brian McLaren comments that *Red Letter Christians* "prods, challenges, questions, invites and instructs us to be people who love and live the words of Jesus."

Evangelicals are often viewed as "those Christians who are anti-gay, anti-feminist, anti- environmentalists, anti-gun-control, pro-war, right-wing, ideologues." (p. 15) There are, however, many Christians who simply wish to take seriously what Jesus said in editions of the Bible that print all of his sayings in red. They are committed to living out the things that Jesus taught.

Campolo points out evangelicals of the past who addressed social issues from a prophetic social perspective. *Red Letter Christians* follows their example with a deep concern for the poor. They take seriously the challenge of Matthew 5:31 - 46 to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for aliens, and deliver captives.

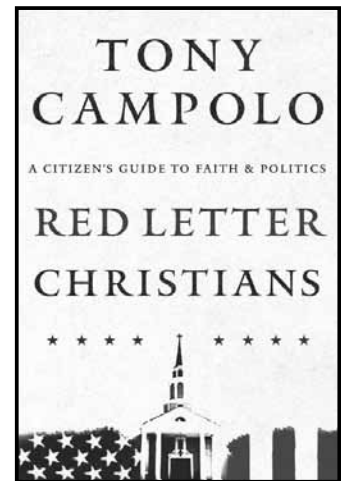
This book addresses many important issues such as the environment, war and peace, the aids pandemic, gay rights, gun control, education, abortion, immigration, economics, etc. *Red Letter Christians* are convinced that working for the "common good" with those both inside and outside the Christian community can provide guidance in dealing with all of these issues. They believe that "Christ is at work outside the Church as well as in it, and that we are called to participate with those in the world through whom God's will is being done. We are ready to join with people of goodwill outside the Church who work through the government and by other means to help the poor. When we do so, we believe we are joining Christ where He is bringing His Kingdom to earth, a Kingdom where 'the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.'" (Matthew 11:5) (p. 157)

Red Letter Christians believe that it is important for Christians to be good citizens and be involved in politics. But being a born again Christian is not enough. We must also be guided by the insights of the prophets and the teaching of Jesus as we deal with important political issues. The book ends with this challenge. "It is irresponsible to not be involved in politics. This is a primary arena wherein we have the opportunity to work out our understanding of biblical principles, testing our faith and causing our minds to struggle with the ambiguities of the real world." (p. 210)

Mission Statement



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



ICCC GENERAL FUND JAN. – DEC., 2013

Total Income year to date
 as of December 31:..... \$203,961.57

Total Expenses year to date
 as of December 31:..... \$222,608.84

Total Cash Balance as of
 December 31, 2013:..... \$ 51,882.39

State of the Council *cont'd from pg 3*

across the barriers of race and clan. We continue by inviting all Christians of every label to join with us in our mission to be an answer to Jesus' prayer.

On a personal level, the mandate is to continue to expand the circle of fellowship. As individuals, do we take Jesus seriously? If we do, the course is clear. We must share the vision of Christian unity without uniformity. We must witness to the truth that diversity without division is not only possible for Christians; it is demanded by Jesus' prayer. We must invite other clergy, laity and congregations to join us in the quest and enlist them into the movement. As I write these words, we have six months left to complete the task of growing the movement by one church start and ten existing congregations to meet this year's Vision 2020 goals. **You** are the person who will make the difference. Will you do it? Will you make a phone call; take the initiative to make a personal visit; extend an invitation? If you will, the state of the Council will move from good to great. If you will, the movement – which is Jesus' movement and not ours – will continue to grow. Please don't just say you're in favor of it. Do something about it this week!

May God bless you in your witness to Jesus' prayer and its mandate for all Christians.

Tex Sample Returns for Bible Study!

We are pleased to welcome back **Tex Sample** as our Bible Study Leader at the 2014 Annual Conference in Omaha, Nebraska. He is a specialist in church and society, a storyteller, author, and the Robert B. and Kathleen Rogers Professor Emeritus of Church and Society at the St. Paul School of Theology, a United Methodist seminary in Kansas City, MO where he taught from 1967–1999. One of his specialties is working-class people and he has published four books in this field.



Born in Brookhaven, MS, Sample received a BA from Millsaps College, an MDiv and PhD from Boston University, and a DD from Coe College. A former cab driver, laborer, and oil field roustabout, he is currently a freelance speaker and consultant and lives in Goodyear, AZ. A much sought-after lecturer, storyteller, workshop leader and consultant, Tex is a contributor to many of the DVD programs in the Living the Questions series.^[1] His two most recent books are *Earthy Mysticism* (2008) and *The Future of John Wesley's Theology* (2012).

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 February 14th.

The National Council of Churches and the "Uniform Series"

"What good are those ecumenical agencies anyway?" That's a question we hear on a perennial basis. While the quest for greater unity among Christians is the primary goal of all ecumenical efforts, agencies like the National Council of Churches also provide direct services to churches. The "Uniform Series" is one of those services.

The Uniform Series is an ecumenical collaboration unlike any other project, serving the 37 member communions of the National Council of Churches. The Uniform Series is based on the Revised Standard Version and the New Revised Standard Version translations of the Bible. A committee of scholars and teachers gathered by the NCC produces instructional outlines used by communions and independent publishers for use in Sunday Schools and other Christian Education programs.

The Uniform Series actually pre-dates the NCC. For more than 140 years, dedicated Christian leaders have gathered to select a course of Bible lessons, with an objective of "general study of the whole Bible ... and to publish a list of lessons," that will guide faith formation and Christian discipleship.

Ultimately, the mission of the Uniform Series and its committee is to assist and support the communication, faith formation, and character development of Christians, building enduring understandings of faith and life in Jesus Christ.

ICCC support for all ecumenical agencies comes directly from individuals, churches and ministry centers through designated gifts. The Council's budget has no "line item" for this support. Please include notes specifying any designations along with your checks to the Council.

ICCC Registration Form
2014 Annual Conference: July 14-17
"God is doing a new thing..."
Omaha, Nebraska

Name (as you would like it on badge) _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone (_____) _____ E-mail Address: _____

Church (member of) _____

Gender: Male Female **First Conference:** Yes No

Status: Clergy Laity Infant Child Elementary Youth Young Adult Adult

Name and Telephone number of a person to be notified in an emergency (_____) _____

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

- Age (on 7-1-2014) _____ Grade completed by (7-1-2014) _____
- If **18 years or under**, an adult who is registered for the Conference and who will serve as a sponsor and assume responsibility for said young person and 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 (Completed Grade K through Grade 6)	\$ 60.00	\$
Youth (Completed Grade 7 through Grade 12)	\$145.00	\$
Young Adult (Ages 18-23)	\$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, 2014	\$ 35.00	\$
CC	TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$

A Banquet ticket is included in your registration fee. This meal includes: Spinach Salad with Strawberries, Almond Pepper Confetti, Orange Vinaigrette, Crown Roast Pork, with Sweet Potatoes, Seasonal Vegetables, Rolls & Butter, Classic Tiramisu Cake, Regular and Decaf Coffee, Iced Tea and Water. Beef Option: Roasted Strip Loin, Pinot Noir Sauce, Red Duchess Potatoes, Seasonal Vegetables. Vegetarian Option: Bowtie Pasta, Capers, Tomato, Black Olives, Red Onions, Spinach, Parmesan and a Champagne Cream Sauce. Kid's Meal Option: Chicken Strips and French Fries.

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

Crown Roast Pork Beef 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: _____

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.



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY CHURCHES

Advancing love of God and humanity; diversity and inclusiveness; ecumenical and interfaith life and work

This is your opportunity to have a significant positive impact on the future of the International Council of Community Churches. The Transition Nominating Committee is asking you to identify from your congregation one or more talented and highly qualified candidates to serve as officers on its reorganized Board of Directors approved at last summer’s Annual Conference. That includes congregation members who may not be presently involved with the ICCC but who are blessed with specific leadership and management skills.

You can view a portion of the Council’s new bylaws pertaining to the recently restructured Board of Directors on our website www.icccusa.com or contact the Council Office to have them sent to you. These describe the job responsibilities that would be handled by qualified candidates for these positions. Your help is needed to secure names of these candidates for the Board’s open positions, including those of new vice president offices, each with different functional responsibilities. We encourage you to submit 1 – 2 names of candidates who can fill these vital roles for the Council.

Please submit candidate names to Nominating Committee Chair, Roberta Smith by no later than Monday, March 31, 2014. Include a copy of the enclosed nomination form that includes a brief bio to tell why a person is qualified for the position for which they are being recommended and a list of references. Interested candidates may nominate themselves or be nominated by another. If you have any questions, you can contact Roberta 908-419-8860 RobertaICCC@aol.com. Mail: 1105 Park Terrace, Plainfield, NJ 07062

Please consider me as a CANDIDATE for the office of:

NAME – _____

ADDRESS – _____

PHONE NUMBER(S) – _____

And best times to reach - _____ **EMAIL –** _____

ICCC Affiliation - _____

IN ONE OR MORE SHORT PARAGRAPHS, PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THIS POSITION AND SHARE WHAT EXPERIENCE AND/OR EXPERTISE YOU WOULD BRING TO MEETING ITS REQUIREMENTS – use an additional sheet if necessary.

References:

NAME

RELATIONSHIP

NUMBER TO CONTACT

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Sharing Joys:

- **Emmanuel Baptist Church**, Ridgewood, NJ where **Kelly Grimsley** is the Interim Pastor, publishes an occasional listing of community-wide and church-related resources for senior citizens that is very helpful to their congregation. If you'd like to see a copy of the December 2013 Senior Resources, and receive future listings, please contact the church at ebc1@verizon.net.



Our Prayers are With:

- **Debra Bell, Metropolitan Community Church**, Birmingham, AL where **Rev. Harold Salter** is the Senior Pastor. Sis Bell's husband, **James Bell**, passed away in December 2013. Homegoing service was held on December 14th with **Minister Eloise Crenshaw** officiating.

Engaging Young Adults

The Right Question

Leaders do not need answers. Leaders must have the right questions.

Gerald W. Keucher offers a question useful for church leaders when a congregation is making changes to facilities; but it would serve well for all decisions. He encourages use of this "successor test" question:

Will our successors thank us for doing this project this way?

Or will they mutter, "What were they thinking?"

For this and more great articles on Young Adult involvement, visit <http://www.churchleadership.com/leadingideas/issues/2013issues/131023.html>.

Seeking a Senior Minister

Emmanuel Baptist Church of Ridgewood, NJ has an opening for a Senior Minister. We are a progressive church which emphasizes inclusiveness and social justice as our understanding of Christianity. We are interested in pastoral candidates who are supportive of this philosophy and theology.

The community of Ridgewood is known for its excellent schools, community services, transportation facilities to NY City, the arts, and quality of life. Our church is a member of the American Baptist Churches, and maintains affiliation with the International Council of Community Churches and the Center for Progressive Christianity.

Please contact search committee chair Brent Saardema at 973-427-7310 or profbrent@juno.com with expressions of interest.

Seeking a Senior Pastor

Emmanuel Community Church is seeking a Senior Pastor who must be able to lead church in providing sound Christian education for youth and adults; preach in a style that sticks to scripture and is practical for everyday living; and help all auxiliary officers use their gifts and talents to function effectively in building God's Kingdom.

All interested candidates should mail resume and cover letter to Emmanuel Community Church, 322 Elkenburg St, South Haven, MI 49090. Attention to Pulpit Search Committee.

Seeking a Senior Pastor

"I am come that they might have life and that they may have it more abundantly." – John 10:10

People's Community Church is a Singing, Praying, Tithing, Serving and Loving congregation, seeking a spiritual and energetic pastor. People's Community Church was organized in 1954 and is a charter member of the International Council of Community Churches. In response to God's call and through the Power of the Holy Spirit, it is the mission of People's Community Church to be a Community of Faith through which the Kingdom of God might be revealed. The Pastoral Search Committee request your resume along with a video, CD or recording of a recent sermon.

The candidate must be an ordained minister, a graduate of a university and an accredited theological seminary with a divinity degree or its equivalence.

He/she must also have actively pastored for at least three years in a congregation that is recognized by the International Council of Community Churches. Must have the love of the gospel; demonstrating qualities of strong leadership in the areas of preaching, teaching, administration, community relations and be able to relate to all generations of the congregation. He/she must demonstrate the ability to stimulate positive church growth in the inter-city area of Detroit.

Interested candidates may submit requested documents to the attention of the Search Committee for Pastoral Leadership, People's Community Church, 8601 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI 48202 – Carolyn Ford, Chairperson. Initial interest may also communicate via email at personaltouch_22@att.net.

Non-Denominational Church Seeks Full-Time Pastor

Roser Community Church (www.roserchurch.com) is a Lay-Led 400 member church. We seek an energetic Pastor with post-graduate congregational experience. Ability to work within our traditional worship format along with the skills to build on our youth and adult Christian education programs. Applicants must be a graduate of a divinity school recognized by the American Association of Theological Schools and an ordained Christian minister of the Gospel. If interested send resume, salary requirements and recent sermon to Search Committee - Roser Community Church, P.O. Box 2141, Anna Maria, FL 34216.