

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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Executive Director's Message by Phil Tom

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). Matthew 1:23

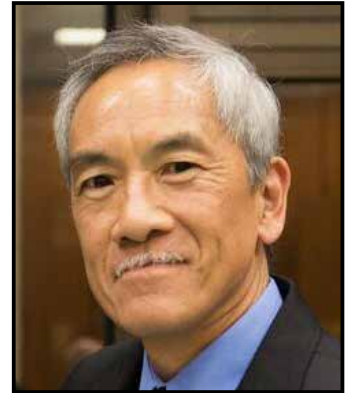
If you are a Star Trek fan, you know that at times when Captain Kirk would try to explain something in human terms to Dr. Spock, Dr. Spock would respond saying "this is not logical." Dr. Spock's thinking was built on a logic model, if this happens, then this should happen, e.g., if you add 1 plus 2, it should equal 3.

Sometimes we put God in a box, using the logic model. Well, if I pray hard enough or tithe, then God will answer my request, or "God, I did everything right according to your law, but then why is everything bad happening to me?"

As we move into the season of Advent, to prepare ourselves to celebrate the wonder of Christmas, the birth of the Christ Jesus, we are powerfully reminded that we cannot put God in a box. Who would have ever imagined that God would send us a savior, a savior to redeem and to reconcile us with God, a savior in the form of a baby? You might have thought that God would send a mighty warrior or ruler to do battle with the forces of evil but a baby! And, another illogical act by God, a child born of a virgin!

Sometimes our human faith and imagination are too limited! By our human frailty, we limit what God can do when we say, I/we can't do it. Nothing, nothing, nothing is impossible for God. In Matthew 17:20, Jesus said, "Because you have so little faith, truly I tell you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'move from here to there', and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

As we celebrate the season of Advent and Christmas, let us open our hands and hearts again to receive God's Holy Spirit into our lives, the life of our congregations and ICC, knowing and proclaiming that with the birth of the Christ child, that nothing is impossible for God! Immanuel – God is with us!



Phil

Attend to Reading! (1 Timothy 4:13)



Book SUGGESTIONS

By Rev. Kenneth N. Nelson

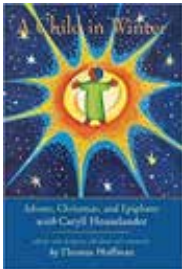


Best Advent Books, Best Books to Read in 2020, and Congregational Development

It is winter, and let's consider some books to enrich us for this season.

Best Advent Devotionals Suggested by Goodreads Readers

If you are looking for some excellent Advent reading for the season, then Goodreads, the world's largest site for readers and book recommendations, may be your source for Advent happiness. Here are some top sections and more choices can be found at their website (https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/45333.Best_Advent_Devotionals).



A Child in Winter: Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany with Caryl Houselander and Thomas Hoffman (Editor) (Sheed & Ward) \$19.38. Houselander offers thoughtful readings for the holiday season. Houselander shows the way to Christ with her imaginative thoughts about our Christian life. She begins to engage us with her thought: "We are only syllables of the perfect Word." In this phrasing,

Houselander compels us to be more connected with God. Then she takes us through the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany with words of more encouragement and hope. Imagine continuing your Advent with these words: "This Advent, choose some time for silence. Make space within yourself to grow large with the abundance of God's favor. Make this a time to fill your lungs deeply with God so that you can breathe Christ into the world." Or, for the Christmas season, "O GOD WHO RENEWS US THIS CHRISTMAS, help us keep track of the ordinary, even in the midst of celebration, so that our feet will never stumble in the way of peace." And finally, for Epiphany, "O GOD OF WISDOM, grow in us this Epiphany and fill our minds with truth and our hearts with the wonder of your great love." This is a great book to cherish the season of hope.

Best Books to Read in 2020

As we move to 2020, here are some current and anticipated books worth taking time to read. Good Housekeeping recommends a stimulating list of good books and let's look at one book that is rumored to be a great read (<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/uk/lifestyle/editors-choice-book-reviews/a29386564/best-books-to-read-2020/>).

The Water Dancer by Ta-Nehisi Coates (One World).

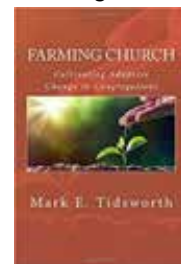


\$16.80. Ta-Nehisi Coates is one of America's greatest writers. From his critically acclaimed stories in *Washington Monthly*, *Time*; and *O, the Oprah Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, to name a few, to his National Book Award book *Between the World and Me* (2015), to his creative genius with Marvel's superhero Black Panther, Coates submits a unique perspective of our times and challenges readers to reconsider their perceptions about race and culture. In, *The Water Dancer*, Coates pens his first novel

and takes us on a disarming life story of a slave who aids the Underground Railroad with his supernatural skills. This is not another slave narrative, and one must stop and consider the nuances of Coates' writing. Several CBS/Oprah Book Club discussion questions forces us to take another look. Consider: (1) Why do you think Coates uses terms like "Tasked" and "Quality" instead of "slaves" and "masters"? What do you think the novel gains from this altered language? (2) Hiram says that the Tasked are "Blessed, for we do not bear the weight of pretending pure." How does Coates define morality in the novel? In what ways does Hiram's notion of morality differ from that of the Quality, or even Corinne? (3) How are the themes of "The Water Dancer" relevant to modern discussions of race, privilege, and power? <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-water-dancer-by-ta-nehisi-coates-readers-guide/>. The Water Dancer is an excellent read for any season.

Congregational Change.

Farming Church: Cultivating Adapting Church in Congregation



by Mark E. Tidsworth (Pinnacle Leadership Press). \$20. Mark E. Tidsworth draws on his unique ministry experience to offer ways for congregations to make change possible. Tidsworth states "the purpose of Farming Church is to guide congregational leaders toward increasing readiness for change in their congregations." Usually, some congregations and fellowships experience more

frustration than success in creating organizational revitalization. Tidsworth argues that congregations can be better when they are ready for change. Tidsworth observes that "...75% of the work involved in leading adaptive change takes place before the change itself is ever engaged." Tidsworth argues that his Farming Church Ministry Plan supports more change than other approaches. If this is the case, then readers can expect a more engaging and successful change process by drawing insights from *Farming Church*.

SHARE YOUR COMMENTS. Thank you for sharing your comments. There are encouraging to our discussion. Remember, please share your thoughts at ICCCNOW@sbcglobal.net by the end of the month. And let us know if we have your permission to quote or paraphrase your comments. Thank you.

Why I Support the ICCC

By Rev. Durrell Watkins, Sunshine Cathedral, Fort Lauderdale, FL

I am, by nature and experience, more ecumenical than denominational. I was baptized in an evangelical church, studied to become Roman Catholic, was confirmed in the Episcopal Church, attended a Pentecostal church for a while, was ordained in Metropolitan Community Churches, and earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from an Episcopal seminary. I have studied and prayed with Quakers and Jews, Eastern Christians and Swedenborgians, Universalists and mainline Protestants, Anabaptists and Restorationists. And the truth is, in every space, in every group, in every liturgy, and in every faithful path I have encountered the divine and experienced holiness.

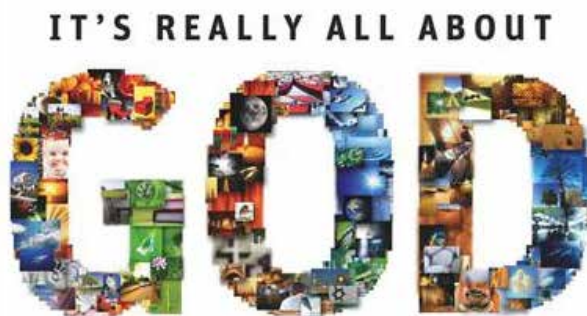


For someone as deeply ecumenical as I am, strict denominationalism just isn't an option. How marvelous it was when I found a "council" of community churches, autonomous congregations who come together for worship and learning, bound by relationship more than rules and who share values more than inherited traditions.

My first ICCC conference was in Cherry Hill, NJ. My second was in St. Louis and my third was in Jacksonville. At each conference the highlight for me was the conference bible study. Noted scholars sharing insights each morning makes the conference worth the trip for me. Of course the conference also provides good preaching, nice people, comfortable facilities, workshops, and business meetings. There are opportunities to explore the host city. Sometimes there are social events or concerts. But as great as all of that is, the bible study is what excites me the most about the conferences.

ICCC offers a newsletter, a journal, an annual conference, the freedom to be self-governing, an opportunity to be involved in ecumenical endeavors

with various national and global groups, and it asks so little in return. Autonomy, Ecumenism. Scholarship. Community. I couldn't ask for more, and ICCC offers it all (as well as a commitment to social justice and diversity). I can't think of a denomination that offers what I get from ICCC. ICCC isn't a hierarchical institution with which one must comply, but is a community where ministry can be resourced, encouraged, and allowed to flourish in its own context. That's what I love about it, and that's why I support the ICCC.



THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A Voice for
Ecumenical Congregations
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Facebook page to see
many great things
happening at the ICCC Churches!
www.facebook.com/ICCCNOW



International Council of Community Churches

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

What's Your ROI

By Jerry Brown, VP Conference Planning

Anyone who is investing or saving for retirement is looking for a good place to put their savings; somewhere that their money is secure and their investment will grow. They want a good Return On Investment.

If you put so much effort into your retirement so that you can be comfortable after you stop working full-time, shouldn't you put at least that much effort into your eternal retirement so that you can be comfortable after you stop inhaling full-time?



On a serious note, we on the Planning Committee realize that you invest a week of your time, as well as a significant financial resources, in order to attend our annual conference. We take seriously our responsibility to prepare and provide you a great conference worthy of your investment. We spend a lot of time seeking out great speakers, coordinating informative workshops, and obtaining the best venue. And next summer is a perfect example.

We have wonderful workshops lined-up for you. We are confirming an outstanding Bible Study leader. In the past we've had requests for a mission opportunity that everyone can share. Wait until you see the group mission opportunity that we have planned for you next summer, one in which everyone can participate. It will be fun, fulfilling, and functional; right there in the hotel. We don't want you to miss a minute of inspiration or an opportunity to grow in your faith

And you couldn't ask for a better bargain than our hotel. Every room is a two-room suite, so you can bring the whole family (or even better, bring a friend to share this experience with you). And the full breakfast every morning is a great way to start each day. At conferences in years past, I've paid \$25 for a comparable breakfast. In reviewing last year's evaluation forms, I read a comment from a first-time attendee. They wrote, "I wish we could bottle the all-encompassing sense of love and acceptance and unity, for us to pour over all we meet!" What a great compliment for our conference, what an insightful evaluation of our Council, and what an inspirational invitation to join us in Dublin, OH.

We want you to leave the conference in Dublin next July convinced that you received a good Return On Investment; your time and money were well-spent.

What's your Eternal ROI? Shouldn't the next ICCC Annual Conference be in your Heavenly Investment Portfolio?

HEAVEN...
THE ULTIMATE
RETURN ON INVESTMENT

'Tis the Season

Submitted by Dr. Connie Fitch-Blanks
ICCC WCF President

Christmas is fast approaching. As we prepare to celebrate the anniversary of the birthday our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, let us give first of ourselves as God did. His gift of love is the ultimate token of kindness that has since not been measured. Of course, many will also extend and welcome a more tangible show of your love. It is along that thought that I make this small appeal for a token of kindness for those needing a little love at this time of the year.



I ask that you join the Woman's Christian Fellowship of the ICCC as we collect small denomination (\$5, \$10, \$20) gift cards to be distributed to a local Women/children shelter in the Dublin, Ohio area during our July 2020 conference. Research has documented that showing others kindness is as good for the givers body as it is for their soul. Enjoy a mini-spa moment as you enjoying giving a token of love and kindness this holiday season. Merry Christmas to all!

Gift cards can be forwarded to the ICCC office in care of the Women's Christian Fellowship.



Sharing Joys with:

- **ICCC Executive Director Phil Tom** had the wonderful opportunity Nov. 2nd to participate with **Speed Memorial Church's** 51st annual pre-Thanksgiving Community Turkey Dinner that fed 600 folks, and to worship on Sunday with the **Rev. Dr. Mike Donahue** and the Speed Memorial Church Family, Speed, IN.



- November 9th, **Phil Tom** spent time worshipping and breaking bread with ICCC members from Maryland and D.C. for its annual banquet! Thanks to **Rev. Elizabeth Hagan** and members of the **Palisades Community Church** (D.C.) for hosting our gathering and providing a great meal!



Beth McKinney and Connie VanMarter from Palisades Community Church



- Back in October, **Phil Tom** joined ICCC Eastern Zone Region A for a fellowship meal. Thanks to ICCC Regional Trustee **Doris Marcisak** for organizing such a great event.



- In September, Phil Tom joined the Central Zone Region A Fall Meeting held at The Center, Palos Park, IL. Thanks to ICCC Regional Trustee **Sharyon Cosey** for getting everyone to gather.

Our prayers are with:

- The family of **Dorothy Bascom, Douglas Memorial Community Church**. Dorothy was the wife of the late Rev. Marion Bascom, and has served in many ICCC capacities, the latest being the ICCC Community Church Press Editorial Board. Dorothy passed away on October 31st. Her services were held on November 9th.



- Jerry O'Sullivan and family. Jerry's wife **Donna O'Sullivan** passed away Nov. 4th. Donna had been the ICCC Administrator for many years. Her services were held on Nov. 8th in Frankfort, IL.

REMEMBERING A LIFE OF LOVE, SERVICE TO OTHERS AND TO GOD

by Ardana Foxx, Historian
Historic First Community Church



Michael Livingston, Glenn Clay and Don Fair, Greendale People's Church, MA





Former ICCC Executive Director Michael Livingston, Pastor Ella Clay and Elder Glenn Clay.

A true man and servant of God, Elder Glenn V. Clay will be profoundly missed by the lives he touched for over 13 years as Pastor of Historic First Community Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He taught, preached, challenged, and guided the congregation of Historic First Community Church in Godly living that resulted in many families and community members fulfilling the biblical promise of «*Releasing the Generational Blessings.*» He led many to give their lives to Christ, baptized many family members and community who accepted Christ as their personal Savior. His spiritual mission was to empower the congregation and all he touched with the Word of God and pave the way for present as well as future generations to realize the blessings of living a Godly life. He remained true to the historic mission of the church and as a community activist, served on the health board committee for the Nashville NAACP and was actively involved with the International Council of Community Churches, where he served as financial secretary, and regional trustee for the southeastern region of the IC.C.C. for eight years. He was an active member of the NAACP serving in several capacities. Further fulfilling his concern for injustice and oppression, he led HFCC in hosting the first National Prison Reform Summit in Nashville. He encouraged members, friends and all he met to courageously discover and live God's purpose for their lives. In line with his role as educator, he served eleven years as a Metropolitan Nashville Public School Teacher and most recently served as an Academic Advisor for Tennessee State University's TRIO programs where he worked for the educational talent search program.


Pastor Clay with HFCC and community organizations and sponsors presented a «*Nashville Youth Speaks Forum*» for MNPS students and families. The church family will remember his bright, steady spirit, cheerful heart and he certainly had a knack for bringing the scriptures alive with humorous demonstrations which often involved participation from the congregation. «*Putting on the Armour of God*» was a favorite. We will be forever grateful for his loving spirit and the special relationships he formed with family and friends.


Pastor Clay embraced the all-forgiving presence of God and strove to exhibit these same qualities of compassion throughout his life. We will remember his generous spirit and many kindnesses, Pastor Clay's legacy of faith and service will continue to inspire his loved ones and every member of the congregation.

A Blessed Thanksgiving. 

Black Friday. 

Small Business Saturday. 

Sunday... a day of rest. 

Cyber Monday. 

#GIVINGTUESDAY

Tuesday, December 3, 2019

GivingTuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. Over the past seven years, this idea has grown into a global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate and celebrate generosity.

GivingTuesday is a global generosity movement unleashing the power of people and organizations to transform their communities and the world.

GivingTuesday strives to build a world in which the catalytic power of generosity is at the heart of the society we build together, unlocking dignity, opportunity, and equity around the globe.

So much attention is given to what makes us different. Generosity is what brings people of all races, faiths, and political views together. Generosity is our individual power to make a positive change in the lives of others and is a fundamental value we can all act on.

Please remember the *International Council of Community Churches* Tuesday, December 3rd, in your giving plans. 

<https://www.icccnow.org/donate/>



Pastor

Annisquam Village Church <https://annisquamvillagechurch.org>, a nearly 300 year old independent interdenominational church in Gloucester, MA. is seeking a full time pastor. We are a congregation with many theological understandings, bound by our devotion to the timeless teachings of Christ. "Connecting a Spiritually Diverse Community to God and to the World" is our vision and purpose.

We seek an experienced pastor with divinity degree credentials who recognizes the value that different perspectives and cultures bring to our church. Our pastor will embrace the unique character of this faith community, the Annisquam Village community, and greater Gloucester, and must bring a message of hope to help navigate these changing times. With a sense of enthusiasm and energy our pastor will take on opportunities to bolster the success of AVC, and paint a compelling picture of our vision as a faith community so that we continue to grow spiritually, numerically, and in relevance.

The AVC Pastor will be responsible for weekly worship services, providing pastoral care and counseling for the congregation and Annisquam Village Community. Our pastor will be a facilitator for connecting the church to the larger community of Cape Ann and will have a leadership role in increasing membership. Our pastor will be responsible for managing the church including staff (administrator, sexton, music director, children's minister, nursery leader), creating a climate where all are motivated to do their best. Our pastor will be a resource for programs and mission activities, develop and oversee annual budget with the treasurer, and direct the annual meeting and monthly board meetings.

For more information or to submit your resume, please contact the Annisquam Village Church Search Committee at avcsearch-group@gmail.com.

Senior Pastor

Park Road Community Church, 1019 Park Road, NW, Washington, DC, is in need of a senior pastor. Prefers a graduate of an accredited seminary or school of theology. Will consider candidates with equivalent training or experience, or with a concrete plan for completion of seminary training.

Candidates should have experience as a pastor or experience performing the seven primary pastoral responsibilities with a willingness to spend an average of at least 20 hours weekly attending to the needs of the church.

A commitment to abide by the Community Church concept as outlined by the International Council of Community Churches is a must.

Salary range: \$30,000 - \$40,000. For more information visit the church's website: www.parkroadcommunitychurch.org.

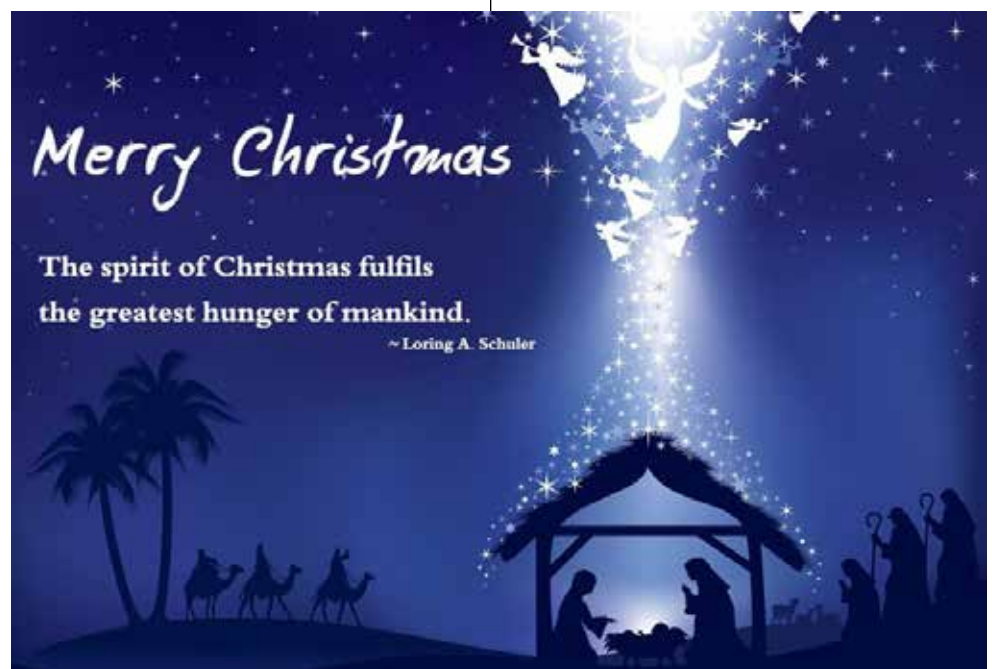
Resumes should be forwarded to the Search Committee, Park Road Community Church, PO Box 29523, Washington, DC 20017.

Senior Minister

The Historic People's Community Church (PCC) fosters a tradition of being a singing, praying, tithing, teaching, serving, and loving church, and is guided by one of its golden text 'I am come that they might have life and that they may have it more abundantly.' – John 10:10.

This Historic Church, a member of the International Council of Community Churches (ICCC) and located in the vibrant city of Detroit, Michigan is currently seeking an experienced Senior Minister to be the Spiritual Leader of its Congregation. The Senior Minister is responsible for leading and moving the Congregation toward the fulfillment of God's mission for PCC. The Senior Minister will have an unwavering faith and a firm relationship with Jesus Christ and is dedicated to cultivating others in Christ.

For complete information visit <http://www.icccnow.org/careers/> or contact People's Community Church office (313) 871-4676.



Have we lost our sense of awe?
 Has technology moved us into a fast lane?
 Is our church a fast lane of technocratic pulpits where local control
 Has been abandoned?
 The buttons we push,
 Computer terminals,
 Remote controls,
 Cell phones.
 Leave us sterile
 With a roentgen of false radiation security
 It says move, move, move!

But, we don't know how to move.
 No one has told us how.

Get & Go, PDQ, Pronto. Quick Trip.
 Get in and Get out. Fast Food and service.
 A check out girl/boy in a tiny glass room says "\$7.50. Right?"
 Not "Good Morning"
 Not "How are the kids?"
 "What happened to your arm?"
 "Sorry to hear about your hard luck."

Not personal!
 Just, move, move, move!
 Make a dollar
 Production
 Get up
 Go to work
 Go home
 Make a dollar!

The change was so fast and so subtle
 No one prepared us.
 No one told us how often to change the oil
 No one told us how to check the oil
 No one told us to rotate the tires
 Or how to check the air.
 Are the wiper blades okay?
 What about the hoses?
 Who cleans the windshield?
 Who ask about the kids,
 The wife
 The husband?

Half a person behind a glass counter
 Inside a glass booth
 Says, "\$7.50. Right!"

Do you hear me?

And the church.
 Old First Church
 The neighborhood Church
 The new Church
 The Community Church
 The International Council of Community Churches
 Struggle to make decisions
 Struggle to manage
 Struggle to compute in a new world.

No one told us how.

Can we make our church alive in today's world?
 Can we speak todayspeak?

And issues – important issues need decisive action.
 Must we be so slow?
 Can we be democratic and decisive?
 How long will we debate race, gender, sexual orientation?
 How long will we let violence run amok?
 Issues left unresolved – how long, O' Lord how long?

Do you hear me?

In the meantime,
 All those who push buttons
 Who live on the couch,
 Who put gasoline in their own cars
 Who take the money for the gasoline
 Who choose the fast lane
 Who choose to minister
 Who move, move, move,
 All those people are people.

People...
 Who need someone to relate too,
 Someone to hold their hand,
 Someone to give them a hug.
 Someone to say, "I'm sorry" when the doctor
 Says, "It's malignant."

Someone to cry when it's over,
 Someone to laugh when it begins,
 Someone to pick up the pieces
 Of shattered dreams
 Death
 Divorce
 Loss of job
 Failure at school
 And on and on and on and....



*by Harry Fooockle.
 November, 2019*



Do you hear me?

And all those people...
 Who are in the change
 Bothered by the change
 Who refuse to change
 Those people, you people, me people...

Need to hear again and again and again
 "God loved the world so much..." (John 3:16)
 They need to hear,
 "The Lord is my shepherd
 I shall not want...
 He leads me...
 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow
 Of death, thou art with me..." (Psalm 23)

They need to hear,
 "I lift up my eyes to the hill...
 My help comes from the Lord..." (Psalm 121)

If they do not hear,
 The church will remain sick
 It will continue to dissolve until
 It becomes a church of memories past...

Do you hear me?

Those people, you people, me people...
 Need to hear how Jesus died on a cross
 To forgive them.
 How Jesus beat the grave
 How resurrection gives power to live
 In forgiveness
 How God is present, here, now,
 How to feel, experience, and live with the Holy Spirit.

They need to hear about hope
 And love
 And power
 And forgiveness
 And they need to hear it over and over
 And over and...

And what will happen
 When we – you and me
 Become like Christ for them?

Do you hear me?

We need worship that is exciting!
 Worship where people feel hope!
 Worship where people feel awe!
 Worship where music stirs the soul!

People need to meet friendly people
 Open and alive people

People need to hear the Sunday School teacher talking Jesus,
 talking love.

They need to hear a preacher who is on fire
 Whose heart and soul is aflame
 With God's love.

A preacher who knocks on doors,
 Visits in the hospitals
 Gets out of the study and becomes
 A pastor with a capital "P".

And the laity,
 The laity need to realize
 The preacher's job is not to type and address newsletters.
 Or go to the bank
 Or buy the church supplies.

When they hear, they will realize.
 The laity need to be empowered
 To be the church
 To do the "lick and stick" stuff, yes,
 But also to minister,

To witness
 To evangelize
 To touch
 To love
 To invite
 To bring others to the Throne of Grace
 And know
 When they bring them
 They will be fed!!!

Do you hear me?

Techniques and theories of church growth
 Won't make any difference
 Won't do any good
 If you don't do them or do you own...

Jesus' death, forgiveness, resurrection, power...
 Won't do any good if you don't accept it,
 Embrace it, use it
 And say yes to it.

Techniques won't work without soul
 They won't work without love
 They won't work without Christ.

And I cannot give you that.
 But God can.
 God has,
 And God does.

Do you hear me?

I can only ask you to accept God's love...
 I can only tell you God's love works...

Now, I beg you
 I implore you
 I plead with you.

Don't let my church die,
 Don't let our church die,
 Don't let your church die,
 Don't let the International Council of Community
 Churches die!

Please – in the name of Jesus
 Don't let it die.
 Wasn't one crucifixion
 One death
 Sufficient?

Please. Don't let it

Die...