

# THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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## President's Message

Abraham Wright

### Observance of Thanksgiving

It was the best of times; it is the worst of times; it was a perfect romance of two groups of individuals occupying the same territory in unity and in love; it was the worst of times when the realities of life were the marginalization and exploitation of a people whose hospitality and generosity did not secure them a seat at the welcome table in their Native Land.

As many of us were taught, Thanksgiving should be one of the best celebratory days of the year; for the concrete image of Thanksgiving in America was an almost universal sense of unity between the early American pilgrims and Native Americans. In a celebration with families and festive food (Native Americans supposedly included) they gave thanks to God for sustaining them through the bad times. As Rev. Leon Simpson, Priest, the Episcopal Church of Navajoland points out in a sermon delivered November 2020, the pilgrims were likened to the Israelites described in Deuteronomy 8:7-18: a people traveling to a new land under a covenant with God to possess the land of opportunities, wherein their prosperity depended on their obedience to God.

However, the history of this period in America indicates that if there were a covenant of good intention between Native Americans and the American pilgrims, it was broken; for all did not end well as the romance was analyzed more closely. There were economic exploitation of Native Americans wherein land was either taken away or tight restrictions were placed on it, wars wherein several Native Americans died, the deaths of Native Americans from lack of protection from diseases, and forced assimilation. True, Native Americans taught the American pilgrims several survival skills and shared many of their other resources, but somebody forgot to abide by the love of God.

Today, 300 years later, we need to complete the rewriting of this story. We missed an opportunity to treat Native Americans as sisters and brother when they welcomed us. Therefore, we ought to own this sin and repent so that the Church with one Lord, one faith, and one baptism can welcome those who believe that Jesus Christ is not only our Savior, but also our Lord, who teaches us to repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand (Matt. 10:5-7). If we do wrong unto the least of God's children, we do it also unto Him (Matt. 25:40).

Abraham



### Prayer for Thanksgiving

God of our weary years,  
God of our laughter and joy,  
God and Lord of the living and of the dead,  
We give you genuine thanks for the chance to  
Repent, not just for the "romance" we created  
For Thanksgiving, but for the other acts of injustice  
We committed as well.  
As we celebrate this 300th year of Thanksgiving,  
May we be ever mindful that what we do to the  
Least of your children, we do it unto You,  
Whether here in America or 10,000 miles away.  
In the name of Jesus, Savior and Lord. Amen.





## Executive Director's Message

**Phil Tom**

### *Adapting to the New Reality*

I read an interview with Rich Lesser, Chief Executive for the Boston Consulting Group, which provides consulting services for business groups. In the interview, Mr. Lesser was asked, "How do you think the pandemic has changed business in ways that will endure in the years ahead?" Mr. Lesser responded by saying this – "From the very beginning, we have used the phrase "new reality," not "new normal." "New normal" implies a return to the way things were, maybe with minor tweaks. "New reality" implies a different environment. My continued belief is that it will take longer than we would like, but eventually, this will be seen as more endemic than pandemic. It's not going away, but we'll learn to manage." (New York Times, September 26, 2012)

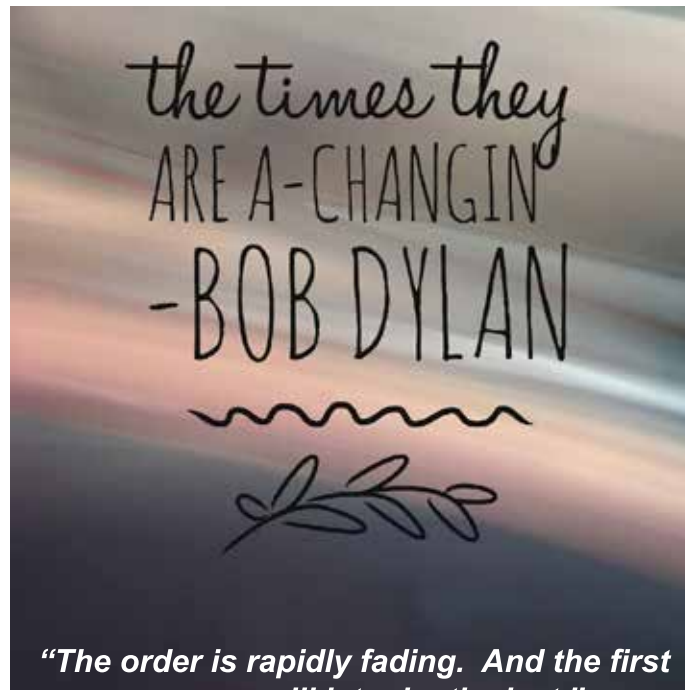
The CHURCH must also face this new reality. The pandemic has changed the way we worship, gather for meetings, how we give, and how we may do church. Many people are hungering to go back to in-person worship services, but others will prefer to stay online for worship for various reasons. If you decide to have an in-person service, what do you do with those who joined you for your online worship service and who do not live in your immediate area? Some pastors have decided to remain as a virtual church because of

increased attendance and participation. Yes, we may be zoomed out, but do you think everyone will want to get in their car and drive to the church building for an in-person evening meeting? How many folks use giving envelopes? Now you have to set up PayPal, a text, or other ways if you want folks to donate online. What do you do for a person who wants to join your

congregation online and lives in another state? Who knows what other ways we will have to adapt to the new reality!

We will eventually move past the pandemic, but the pandemic's impact will have affected us in significant ways, now and for the foreseen future. As we cannot go back to the "good old days" when church pews were filled with people in the 1950-60s, we cannot go back to 2019 and act as nothing had happened.

As we adapt to the new reality, let me know how ICCC can support you and your congregation as you navigate this new reality, e.g., webinars, training events, resources, clergy peer groups, chat sessions. I welcome your suggestions and comments.



*Phil*



## ICCC NOVEMBER 2021

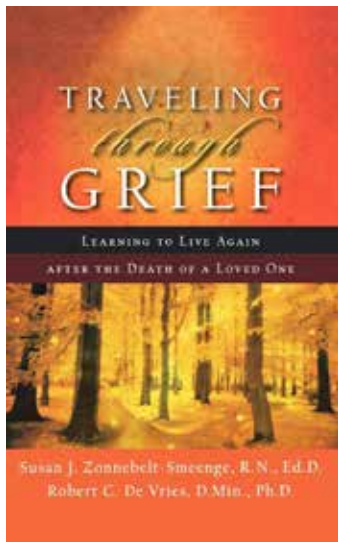


## Book REVIEW

By Rev. Kenneth N. Nelson

*Encouraging Our Hope (Romans 15:4)*

*Traveling through Grief* by Susan J. Zonnebelt-Smeenge and Robert C. DeVries Baker. Paperback \$11.99 (160p) ISBN-13 978-0801066764



Our grief can cause us to pause, to stall, and to lose our focus. In the book, *Traveling through Grief*, the authors make an un-fitting comment when they say, “Accepting the reality of a loved one’s death—how hard can that be?” (p. 49). Many of us would challenge this assertion and wonder seriously how this book helps. But the authors are not insensitive to their readers’ plight.

Consider this context for accepting the death of a loved one: “To everyone else, it is obvious that your loved one has died—obvious to everyone except your heart!” (p.49).

*Traveling* has an engaging quality about strengthening the heart during grieving. First, in 160 pages the authors created a dynamic aid to those grieving, and to caregivers. Second, the book’s structure allows the reader to follow the eight chapters or investigate their key interests. Third, the authors wrote chapters that contain a mental health and spiritual perspectives. Each chapter has excellent ideas to help people navigate grief.

In Chapter One, Detour Ahead, offers a sound roadmap for adjusting to grief. *Traveling* “focuses on grief following the death of a person you loved (although many of the principles also relate to losses in general), how grief changes your life’s journey, what the grief experience is like, and how you can use this forced detour called grieving to develop a revised life course that can become rich and rewarding again” (p.18) The authors maintain that “healthy grieving takes deliberate, intentional actions coupled with time in order for a person to effectively heal

after a death” (p.21). In the spiritual section of the chapter, the authors provide selected prayers and Scriptures to support the reader’s spiritual interest and application.

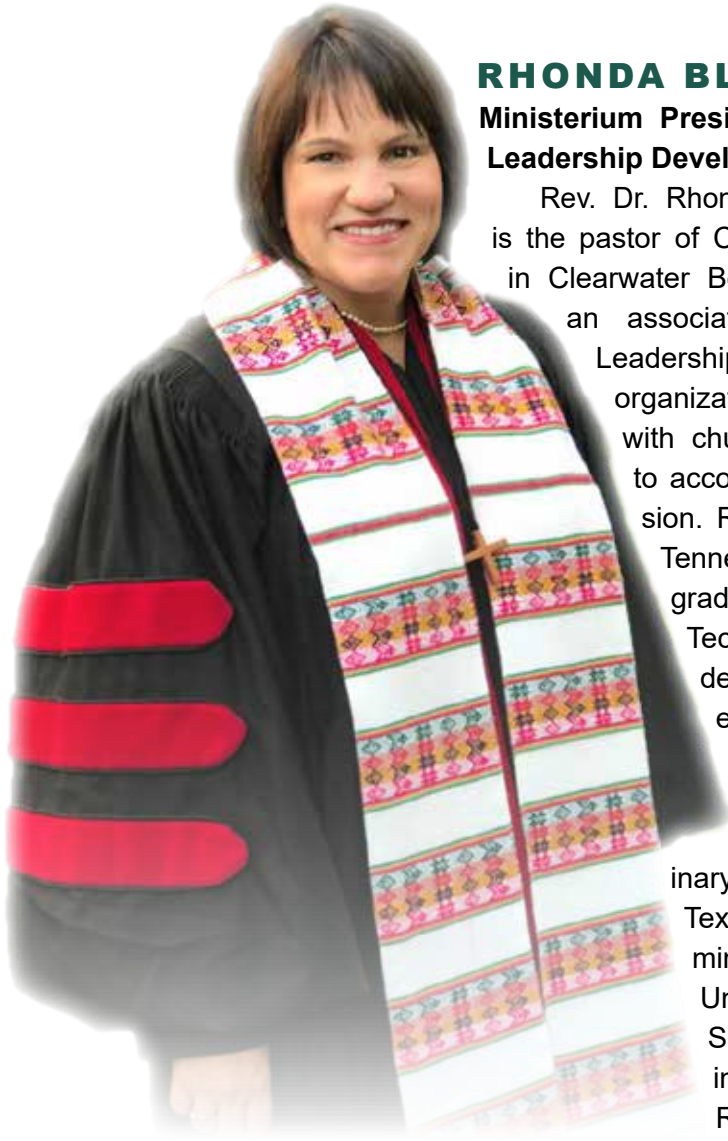
In Chapter Four, Saying Good-Bye to the Old Road, the author stresses the importance of memories on the grief journey. One of the key principles in this chapter is “memories of the person who died that honors what you had together and acknowledges who you are now because of your relationship, but also makes room for you to move on” (p.80). In the spiritual section, the authors provide prayers and examine questions about what one can expect about dying. Using several familiar bible verses, the authors provide a framework for living out your faith and honors those you have loved.

In Chapter Eight, The End of the Detour—Making it to the Other Side of Grief, the authors offer an encouraging, yet practical view about our grief: “... grief also provides opportunities for growth. Think about all the wisdom you have gained by going through this extremely difficult loss and grieving experience” (p.159).

*Traveling* is not a new book (2006), and caregivers may have this book in their libraries. *Traveling* should be every season of lives to help have more meaningful lives and memories. Chapter activities may be familiar or new, but each activity invites the reader to reconsider or consider using in a new way for someone in their life. This is a family resource as well with resources for supporting children and other families to navigating grieving.

SHARE YOUR COMMENTS. Remember, please share your thoughts at [ICCCNOW@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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 for your feedback, and have a blessed month*

## Meet Our Leadership, One by One



### **RHONDA BLEVINS**

#### **Ministerium President and V.P. of Leadership Development**

Rev. Dr. Rhonda Abbott Blevins is the pastor of Chapel by the Sea in Clearwater Beach, Florida and an associate with Pinnacle Leadership Associates, an organization that partners with churches and clergy to accomplish God's mission. Rhonda is an East Tennessee native and a graduate of Tennessee Tech University with a degree in secondary education. With a master of divinity from (a now embarrassing seminary) in Fort Worth, Texas and a doctor of ministry from Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia, Rhonda considers herself a lifelong

learner. With over twenty-five years in ministry, Rhonda has served as a campus minister, associate pastor, and denominational leader. Rhonda and her husband, Terry, have two sons, Jake and Rhys.

As president of the Ministerium, Rhonda is working alongside the Ministerium executive team (Rock Fremont, VP; Jennifer Brown, Secretary; William Currin, Treasurer) to foster community among clergy and to provide a continuing education event for clergy at the 2022 Annual Conference. As VP of Leadership Development, Rhonda has worked with Rev. Phil Tom to offer several online webinars through the Lilly Endowment/Duke Divinity Grant received in 2019.

*Rev. Dr. Rhonda Abbott Blevins*

*Gifts have been received  
for the following*

#### *In Memory of:*

Dave McNelly  
from RC & Gail Fleeman

April Neitzy  
from RC & Gail Fleeman

Rev. Dr. Robert Puckett  
from Bob Harris

Rev. J. Ronald Miller  
from Bob Harris

Claire Marsh (Mrs. C. Jim)  
from Carolyn Willey

Ron Miller  
from John Woodcock

Dr. Lakshmi Rao  
from Herman Harmelink III

Serena Smith  
from Sandra L. Roberts

Toni Harris  
from Louis Joy

Bob & Jane Puckett  
from Rhonda Blevins

Rose Addison  
from Charles Addison

Kay Andrews  
from Louis Joy

#### *In Honor of:*

Maxine Gaskins  
from Sandra L. Roberts

Rev. D. John Woodcock  
from Cairn Neely



**Our prayers are with:**

- **International Institute of Integral Human Science and Spiritual Science Fellowship (SSF/IIHS)** and the family of **Sister Leona Hartman O.Tr. MA. PhD.** Sr. Leona passed away September 20, 2021. She was the oldest of 23 children, a master musician who played 13 instruments, and a nun for over 72 years. A celebration of life was held on September 24th.

**Sharing Joys with:**

- The **Alabama Area Council** collected items and raised \$3,540.00 for their Hurricane Relief Project. "May God bless us all, (Givers and Receivers) according to His word in Deuteronomy 31:8, Proverbs 19:17, Luke 6:38 and Hebrews 13:5!!" ~ **Pastor Kenneth Robinson** (2nd VP AAC) & **Pastor Dennis Brock** (President AAC).
- Congratulations to **Rev. Dr. Brian Holland** and **Second Community Church** as they celebrate 60 years of praising and serving God. A banquet was held October 16th along with a spirited anniversary worship service October 17th.
- Congratulations to ICCC **Chaplain Hare Varnon** who recently received a grant from the Ministerial Effectiveness Training Fund to support his Doctor of Ministry study at Erskine Theological Seminary. We wish him well in his studies.



- The Jordan Scholarship was recently awarded to **Courtney Johnson**. Courtney is pursuing a degree in Engineering. Courtney is a member of Mt. Zion Community Church, Birmingham, AL. Congratulations and best wishes in his educational endeavors!

If you were at the Annual Conference this past July, you may have caught a glimpse of Sandra Nelson's Tree of Life Necklace, which resembles the ICCC logo. We were able to purchase more of these from Fair Trade made in Peru to help women in Peru make a living and support their families.

If you would like to purchase one, contact the Council Office. The cost is \$20.00 plus \$5.00 shipping and handling.

**THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

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*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."***







## PASTORAL SEARCH

### *Senior Minister*

Bridgeport Community Church, (Bridgeport, Michigan) is seeking a candidate for Senior Pastor to replace current pastor retiring December 2021.

BCC is an interdenominational church that has been serving the community since 1867.

Responsibilities include spiritual leadership, pastoral and youth ministry, church and community relationships and church administration.

Ideal candidate will have a Bachelor's degree and seminary degree or equivalent. Strong biblical knowledge and proclamation of The Word is required, along with good communication and planning skills.

Qualified individuals should submit a resume to Attention: Pastoral Search Committee via 1867BCC@gmail.com.

### *A Time to Laugh*



**"While moving the new pastor into his office, the deacons voted to call an emergency meeting."**

### *Ordained Minister*

Join us in turning the tide from surviving to thriving in 2021 and beyond. The historic Community Church of East Williston is a Mainline, Interdenominational Protestant Church serving the needs of persons from all backgrounds. We have a faithful, hardworking congregational core and seek a Senior Minister who, through Christian love and action, will help us turn those with occasional attendance into persons with faithful commitment. The position requires an experienced, ordained Protestant minister with youthful enthusiasm to reestablish CCEW as the "Light in the Community." We offer a competitive salary and a beautiful manse in a verdant suburb with a highly ranked school district (top 10% in NY), only 25 minutes from Manhattan via railroad.

Our ideal candidate:

- Is an ordained minister and graduate of an accredited Protestant Seminary (CCEW will facilitate ordination if necessary)
- Maintains a cheerful and enthusiastic outlook
- Preaches interesting, thoughtful and provocative sermons
- Relates Scripture and the teachings of God to everyday lives
- Fosters relationships with youth and young families
- Collaborates with lay leadership and church staff to coordinate and conduct the ministries of the church
- Counsels congregants and committees
- Uses social media to further the goals of the church
- Considers high quality and diverse music to be a vital part of worship
- Demonstrates team building and conflict resolution skills
- Visits congregants in need
- Works to expand the influence of the church in the community
- Provides wedding support including rehearsals
- Has experience in pastoral ministry as a Senior Minister

The Pastoral Search Committee is accepting packages containing (but not limited to) your resume, your calling (share your call to ministry), style of ministry (share your beliefs) and samples of your sermons on a website, blog or Facebook.

Please email your response to: [maryellen@ccew.org](mailto:maryellen@ccew.org), or mail a hard copy to:

Community Church of East Williston  
Pastoral Search Committee  
Mary Ellen Williams, Chairperson  
45 East Williston Avenue  
East Williston, NY 11596