

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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International Council of Community Churches

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A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

Number 3

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President's Message

Abraham Wright

A Savior is Born

Jesus: Savior, Redeemer, Messiah, King, Prince of Peace, Lord of lords, Emanuel! God is with us. Christmas is a day on which everyone should rejoice; for Christmas ushers in Jesus in the flesh, the Savior, fully human and fully divine, who became the source of salvation for all humankind.

The rich, especially those with ill-gotten finances, could repent of their sins and provide adequate resources for those they abused and for others in need. Those who were victims could patiently and ungrudgingly forgive; and the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles would be destroyed, so that salvation would be offered to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

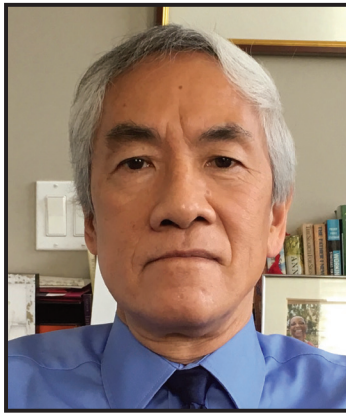
You see, God created the plan for eternal life through his Son Jesus. It was announced before Jesus was incarnated. Isaiah 40 and Micah 5 broadcast the good news that a savior would be born. John, his cousin and forerunner, declared that Jesus would be greater than he. Jesus's existence is anticipated as far back as Genesis 3:15. Then, John 1:1 validates that Christ was there from the beginning. Mary revealed the good news that she was chosen to be the mother of the Savior of the world (Luke 1:31-33). Since Jesus's birth was to be a virgin one, God convinced Joseph to accept Mary as his betrothed without shame (Matt. 1:18-25).

So, Jesus is born in "a manger," a place no doubt reserved for animals in/at a relative's house because the "guest room" ("the inn") was already taken. David, no doubt, had other relatives making the trip to Jerusalem, and it is highly probable that those relatives had occupied the guest room. So the birth of Jesus in "a manger" is not a means of disrespect, nor any less of a miraculous occurrence. Joseph and Mary are away from home in order to obey a political command by Caesar Augustus—the taking of census for the entire Roman world. Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem to obey the command; so the prophecy of Jesus's birth in Micah 5 is fulfilled while Mary and Joseph are in Jerusalem.

What also is interesting concerning the birth and lineage of Jesus is that there is enough royalty in Jesus to make him divine and abundance of love, humility, and understanding that allows him to appeal to people of all nations and cultures. He came and lived among humankind so that humankind after death could live again with him. It is significant that Professor Craig Blomberg reminds us that there are five women included in the genealogy of Jesus: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Uriah's wife (Bathsheba), and Mary. All but Mary had Gentile connection of some kind. Also, all except Mary



cont'd on page 6



Executive Director's Message

Phil Tom

Reconciliation

Reconciliation: rec-on-cil-i-a-tion | \ ,re-kən-,si-lē-'ā-shən. "The act of causing two people or groups to become friendly again after an argument or disagreement". Webster's dictionary

"So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. **And God has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**" 1 Corinthians 5:16-19

The title Prince of Peace is often used to refer to Jesus, especially during the Christmas season. In Isaiah 9:6, the prophet Isaiah prophesies about the coming Messiah – "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal God, Prince of Peace."

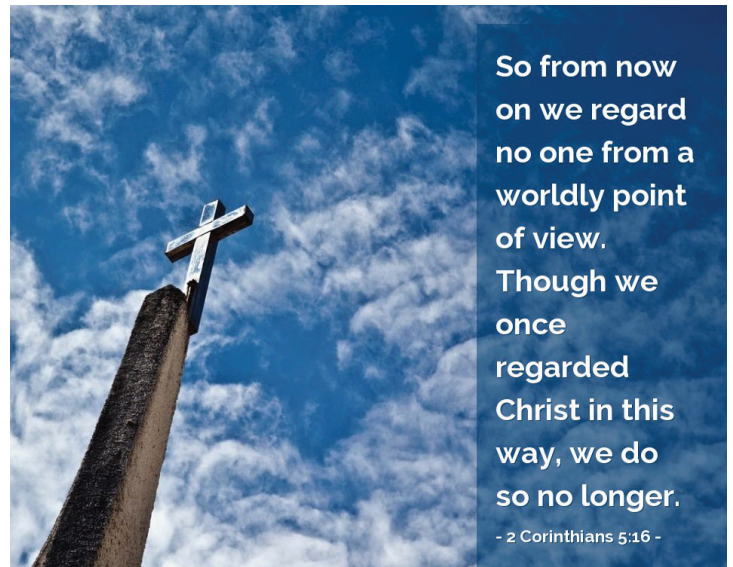
Jesus is called the Prince of Peace because He restores every broken relationship. Therefore, as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of the Christ-child again, we remember that we are called to be peacemakers. Peacemaking is the process of bringing about peace by reconciling adversaries.

We need to renew our peacemaking efforts because our communities, nation, world, and even parts of the Church face significant divisions and increased hostilities. For example, I serve on a church commit-

tee where another member and I do not share similar political and social positions. We vehemently disagree on many issues, but we acknowledge each other's points of view. We do not seek to demonize each other and agree that we are still brothers in Christ.

Reconciliation is hard work! We are called to be peacemakers because, as Christ has reconciled us with God, we must work to build bridges between people and nations and reconcile with even our adversaries. Let us continue the mission of building God's beloved community!

Have a joyful and blessed Advent season and Christmas!



Phil

ICCC DECEMBER 2021



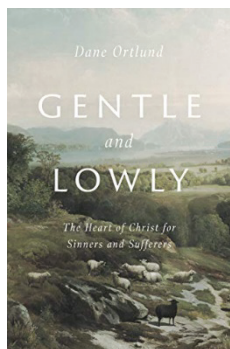
Book REVIEW

By Rev. Kenneth N. Nelson

Encouraging Our Hope (Romans 15:4)

A sampling of the Best Christian Discipleship Books

The caring and development of our relationships are critical to our lives and the future of our faith community. Here are three of the twenty-five best Christian discipleship books in 2021 (<https://www.findthisbest.com/best-christian-discipleship-books#p-1433566133>). I hope you find these top three a blessing to your community.

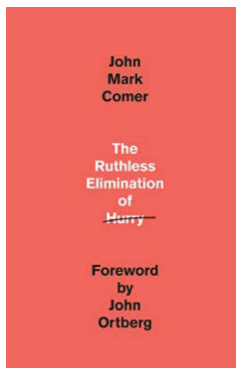


Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers by Dane C. Orlund. Crossway (March 18, 2020), Hardcover \$14.79 (226 pages) ISBN:1433566133

Senior Pastor Dane C. Orlund of Naperville Presbyterian Church in Naperville, Illinois, writes a book “for the discouraged, the frustrated, the weary, the disenchanted, the cynical, the empty” (page 13). Orlund suggests that his book “is for sinners and sufferers”

and asks the question: How does Jesus feel about them?” (page 13). While many may have a pet answer, Orlund thinks we can answer this question by understanding the heart of Jesus more by reflecting on his words: “I am gently and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29).

“The strategy of this book,” accordingly to Orlund, “will simply be to take either a Bible passage or a bit of teaching from the Puritans or others and consider what is being said about the heart of God and of Christ” (page 15). So, in twenty-five chapters, Orlund explores the person of Christ and what it means for us to understand his gentleness and lowness of heart. It may seem like a dry topic, but Bob Kelleman, author *Grief: Walking with Jesus*, offers this insight: “*Gentle and Lowly* is drawing me to the heart of Christ. It is helping me to draw the hearts of my counselees to Christ. *Gentle and Lowly* is the best book of the twenty-first century.”

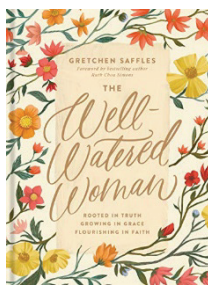


The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World by John Mark Comer. WaterBrook (October 29, 2019) \$17.17 (304 pages) ISBN-13: 978-0525653097

Are you in a hurry for God? Really? Most of us are faced with the choice to speed up and not to slow down. We find it difficult even in a pandemic to stop trying to be busy. John

Mark Comer, the founding pastor of Bridgetown Church in Portland, Oregon, warns us with the words of “the famous psychologist Carl Jung... Hurry is not of the devil; hurry is the devil” (p. 20). Slowing down and serving better is the general idea of this book. Comer’s book has three

major parts: the problem, the solution, and four practices for the unhurrying life. The four practices: Silence and solitude, Sabbath, Simplicity, and Slowing may look familiar, but Comer offers some new insights. Comer suggests that “this book is both a question and an answer. But mostly it’s an invitation, from one invitee to another. “Come to me.... Find rest for your souls” (p. 256).



The Well-Watered Woman: Rooted in Truth, Growing in Grace, Flourishing in Faith by Gretchen Saffles. Tyndale Momentum (April 6, 2021) Hardcover \$11.39 (304 pages) ISBN-13:978-1496445452

Sisters, here is a statement for your wellbeing from Gretchen Saffles: “The Well-Watered Woman doesn’t put off living as she waits for “someday.” She knows her mission is now, and she lives with gospel purpose guiding her every step” (p. 275).

Saffles begins by noting that “this book is for the woman who desires abundant life in Christ but also finds herself craving more of this world—more affirmation, more money, more accomplishments, more pleasure” (p. 4).

In three parts, Saffles outlines a way for women to embrace their faith with power. In Part One, The Well, Saffles explains what it means to grow in a relationship with God in five chapters. Saffles uses statements throughout the book to give voice to a women’s heart in faith. Consider this: “The Well-Watered Woman is like a seed planted by God—continually growing by his grace, sustained by his promises” (p. 21). In Part Two, The Word, containing five chapters, Saffles enlightens her audience with the idea of the art of abiding in Chapter 9. Here the author engages us with her statement: “The fellowship we enjoy with Christ is a gift most of us leave untapped” (p. 154). In Part Three, The Way, containing five chapters, Saffles prepares her audience to begin a new mission. Saffles provides a powerful example of women who are well-watered in the faith. Then she offers one of her final statements for reflection and action: “Ultimately, the Well-Watered Woman looks like you, right where you are as you seek Jesus. You won’t do everything perfectly—God already knows that” (p. 268).

SHARE YOUR COMMENTS. 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 for your feedback, and have a blessed month.*



Ecumenews

By Rev. Rock R. Fremont Jr., OCC, ICCV VP for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

At least once a year, Christians are reminded of Jesus' prayer for his disciples that "they may be one so that the world may believe" (see John 17.21). Hearts are touched, and Christians come

together to pray for their unity. Congregations and parishes all over the world exchange preachers or arrange special ecumenical celebrations and prayer services. The event that touches off this special experience is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Traditionally the week of prayer is celebrated between 18-25 January, between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul. In the southern hemisphere, where January is a vacation time, churches often find other days to celebrate it, for example, around Pentecost, which is also a symbolic date for unity.

In order to prepare for the annual celebration, ecumenical partners in a particular region are invited to produce an introductory liturgical text on a biblical theme. Then an international editorial team of the World Council of Churches and Roman Catholic representatives refines this text to ensure that it can be prayed throughout the world and link it with the search for the church's visible unity.

The text is jointly published by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches through the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order, which also accompanies the entire production process of the text. The final material is sent to WCC member churches and Roman Catholic episcopal conferences, and they are invited to translate the text and contextualize or adapt it for their own use.

The 2022 theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was chosen by the Middle East Council of Churches. More than ever, in these difficult times, we need a light that shines in the darkness and that light, Christians proclaim, has been manifested in Jesus Christ.

The Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute (GEII) has adapted materials for the North American context. The 2022 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity material is now available through their website (geii.org), where you can also read more about past themes and the history of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Also.....I had the honor of traveling to Switzerland this past October to represent the Council at a gathering of ecumenical officers from member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC) from throughout the world. Out of 170 ecumenical officers within the WCC, only 40 colleagues could make it to the meeting in person, and most joined in this meeting via Zoom. We focused on plans for the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches taking place August 31–September 8, 2022. The theme is, "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity." The Assembly is the highest governing body of the WCC, and traditionally meets every eight years. It is the only time when the entire fellowship of member churches comes together in one place for prayer and celebration. The Assembly is a special time in the lives of member churches, ecumenical partners, and other churches, as it will potentially bring together more than 4000 participants coming from all over the world. It will be a unique opportunity for us to deepen our commitment to visible unity and to common witness and make the Assembly the most diverse Christian gathering of its size in the world. The 11th Assembly will take place in Karlsruhe, Germany, at the joint invitation of the Evangelical Church in Germany, the Protestant Church in Baden, the Council of Churches in Germany, the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine and the Protestant Church in Switzerland.



Our gathering in October was the largest gathering of WCC member church ecumenical officers in the lead-up to the assembly. In welcoming remarks, WCC Acting General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca expressed his joy that we were able to gather again after two years. "During the past two years we faced many questions in our different contexts about our world and the life of our churches," Sauca said, adding, "The world changed in ways we could not imagine." As plans for the assembly take shape, Sauca indicated that these plans are undergirded with a feeling of moving forward together. "This meeting is an integral part of the process of preparation for the next assembly. We look forward to your input on the fruits of our work and the harvest we can bring to Karlsruhe," he said. "Our world needs love, reconciliation and unity. And our fellowship is called to respond in prayer and with acts of transforming discipleship", added Sauca. Part of our discussion considered how hybrid meeting formats could enhance future cooperation.



Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland: Ecumenical Officers meeting hosted by the World Council of Churches at the Château de Bossey.

Dialogue also centered on learning gained from our experiences during COVID-19 and how our communities of faith dealt with—and are still coping



with—the challenges of the ongoing pandemic. WCC leaders were able to update us on the latest news from the Assembly Planning committee, as well as some highlights of content from the assembly programs. We were also able to share our different perspectives on the assembly theme, with a lens toward special topics such as overcoming racism, and discerning the shape of the

future of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. We also had an opportunity to meet with Bossey students, who shared their issues and challenges, as well as their vision for a way forward in the ecumenical movement, and perspectives on the assembly. I am grateful for the opportunity to represent the International Council of Community Churches and looking forward to sharing more from this experience in newsletters to come!

Our prayers are with:

- **Tom Friedberg**, ICCC Endowment Moderator. Tom is home from the hospital recuperating from quadruple bypass surgery with complications. He thanks everyone for their prayers.
- **Rev RC Fleeman, Peace Community Church, FL** as he recovers from knee surgery.
- **Rev. Bruce Merton, Peace Community Church** as he anticipates shoulder surgery.
- **Lonnie Miller and Family, Wilson Memorial Union Church, NJ** as they prepare for Lonnie's husband, Ron Miller's Memorial Service, being held on December 18th at Wilson Memorial Union Church.
- **Rev. Michael Donahue**, ICCC VP for Membership Services and his wife **Kari** as they muddle through life's challenges right now.

**Sharing Joys with:**

- **Rev. Gail Fleeman**, Peace Community Church, FL as she celebrates a non-malignant biopsy!
- **People's Community Church** in Detroit and their new Senior Pastor **Rev. Dr. Alton K. Parks**, who was installed October 31, 2021. **ICCC President Abraham Wright** attended the service.
- **Pastor Emeritus John Woodcock** as he celebrates 50 years ordained! A celebration service and reception will be held at **Church of the Loving Shepherd** on Sunday, December 12th. This is available on Zoom via the church's website www.churchofthelovingshepherd.org. There will also be another service on December 11th at St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church. For streaming connections, visit www.stfrancisfields.com.
- **Pastor Eloise Crenshaw and Metropolitan Community Church, AL.** Eloise will be installed as their Senior Pastor on December 12th and an all-day celebration is planned.

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."***



Meet Our Leadership, One by One

DEIDRE SEIDEL

The new Regional Trustee for
the Eastern Zone, Region A

Deidre is an active member of Wilson Memorial Church in Watchung, NJ, playing in their handbell choir –The Ost Memorial Ringers, a member of several committees, and has previously served as a member of Wilson's Executive Board. She has lived in Watchung, NJ except for a 5 month period she briefly lived in Frankfurt, Germany.

She is a CPA who worked for PricewaterhouseCoopers, and now works for

Johnson & Johnson in their Talent Mobility group.

In addition to attending the ICCC conferences, Deidre loves her annual family vacation to the 1,000 Islands on the St. Lawrence Seaway, and the occasional work trip that brings her to new locations. In addition to playing bells and spending time with her friends and family, in her spare time Deidre can usually be found doing yardwork, playing with her cats, or watching cooking/baking shows.

As a new trustee for the Eastern Zone, Region A, she looks forward to connecting with the regional churches both virtually and in person. Deidre Seidel has attended the ICCC Annual Conference since 2013.

Deidre Seidel

President's message cont'd. from p. 1

had a “cloud of suspicion surrounding their sexual behavior” whether it was warranted or not” (Blomberg 233). The wise men (no number specified) wandered at those things which were told them by the shepherds, and the shepherds returned to their stations glorifying and praising God for the things they had seen and heard (Luke 20:20). Jesus is wrapped with strips of cloth, which is not the typical royal garment. This makes Jesus that much more human, since the wrapping of children with strips of cloth was a common practice; yet, royalty resides in his character, his love, his speech, his caring, and later his willingness to die for our sins as the only means of our redemption.

Jesus is human and divine; he is born of ordinary and extraordinary parents—one highly favored and one holy and divine. He lives among humankind; he associates with ordinary people, he tears down cultural barriers, rebukes oppressive social economic practices, defies the rich who are abusive, elevates the poor, welcomes the outcast, and addresses other forms of marginalization; and he extends the invitation to everyone to follow him with the assurance that if we follow him he will prepare an eternal place for us.

So we need not get caught up with who can give the most impressive gift or whose living quarters are decorated best or who ranks higher on his or her job or who has which titles in our congregations. We should strive to pay the one debt that each of us owes each other: to love one another as we love ourselves and let our works be commensurate with our faith; then, Jesus will be the best Christmas year round.

For God gave us the perfect gift when he incarnated his only begotten Son. May the miracle of Jesus's birth and the message of love and peace on earth that He brings touch each of our lives this holiday season.

Abraham

Note: Thanks to David Hauschild's for his accurate translation of “inn.”



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.

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, 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

