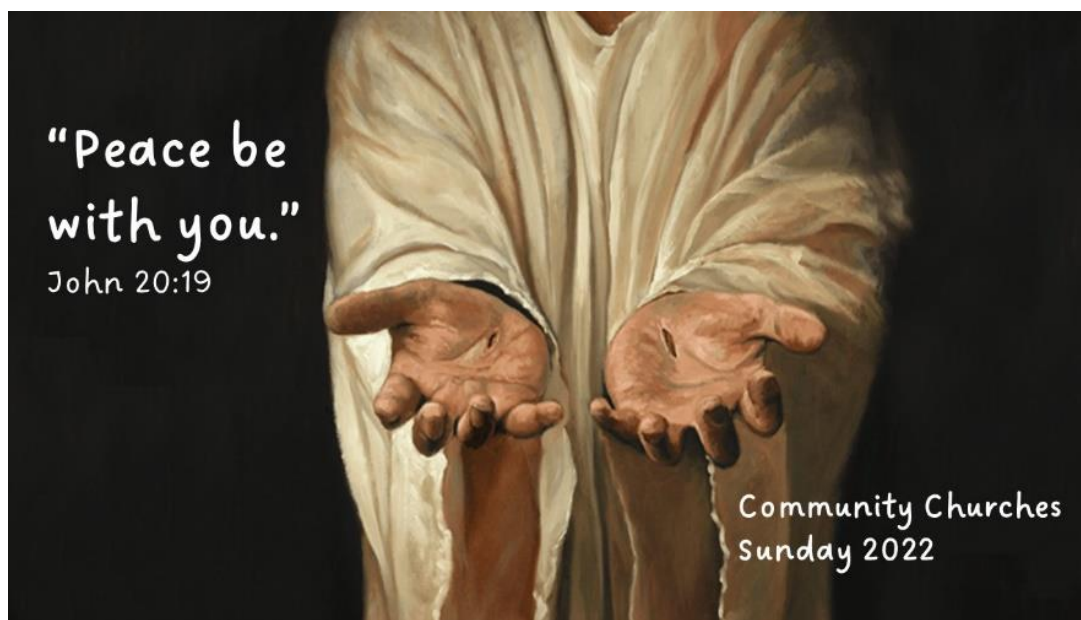


Community Churches Sunday 2022

Sunday, April 24, 2022

(or another Sunday chosen by your church)



Why Community Churches Sunday?

Community Churches Sunday gives local churches an opportunity to celebrate being a part of a unique part of Christian family – the Community Church Movement, and being a member of the International Council of Community Churches (ICCC). Marking this special Sunday helps congregations learn more about their church's connection to the ICCC.

When is Community Churches Sunday?

Traditionally, Community Churches Sunday has been celebrated on the last Sunday of April, thus putting it close to the church's celebration of Easter, and themes of new life and new creation that season brings. The Community Church Movement is a new way and expression of the Christian community. After centuries of division, which have left the Christian family fragmented in many denominations, the Community Church Movement desires a new way of Christian community – brought about through reconciliation, unity, love and new life.

This year the date is **April 24, 2022**, the Sunday following Easter. In those churches where it is not convenient to use that particular Sunday, we hope the local church will choose another Sunday in the year to celebrate Community Churches Sunday. For this reason, materials use only the year and not a specific date.

How Can My Church Celebrate Community Churches Sunday?

Here are a few suggestions your church may wish to consider:

1. Use the enclosed bulletin insert to distribute to your congregation. This is the quickest and easiest way for your church to mark its connection to the ICCC.
2. The theme Scripture chosen for this year is taken from John 20:19-31. Use this Scripture as a sermon text and relate this Scripture to your church's connection with the ICCC. Suggestions for this can be found in the "Sermon Help" later in this resource.
3. Use in worship some of the other "Worship Resources" found in this resource.
4. Have someone in your church who has been involved with the ICCC and/or has attended an ICCC Annual Conference. speak briefly to the congregation about the Council in a "Minute for Mission" or "Mission Moment".
5. Collect a special offering to be given to the ministry of the International Council of Community Churches.
6. Invite someone from the ICCC to speak or preach at your church that Sunday.
7. Be creative! Find a unique way to celebrate your connection to the ICCC (and let the ICCC know afterwards what you did!).

Sermon Help

The suggested Scripture for Community Churches Sunday this year is John 20:19-31. It is from this text we draw the theme "*Peace be with you*" from John 20:19. Churches which use the Revised Common Lectionary will see that this is one of the appointed texts for April 24.

Our theme highlights the first words out of the mouth of the Risen Christ's on both resurrection evening and a week later, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19,21,26) Plus we notice that on both occasions after offering words of "peace" the Risen Christ offers his wounded and broken hands to the disciples.

The word "peace" in these verses is the Greek "*eirene*" which literally means "to join or tie together in a whole". The word when used is meant to convene a meaning of wholeness or completeness and in Jewish thought meant the idea of the completeness or wholeness of the individual or being. It is far more comprehensive than the idea expressed when we use the word "peace" in English. Our use of the word today in English usually means the absence of war or strife, but the Greek convenes a much wider and deeper spirit of wholeness.

It is for this type of "peace" for which the International Council of Community Churches is in existence. The Council and the Community Church Movement over the last century is about the work of bringing and being God's "peace/wholeness" to both a divided Christianity and a whole human society.

When one reads the vision of the ICCC as expressed in the Council's Constitution, one sees how we wish to express the "peace" of the Risen Christ through our common life as a Council. Our Vision reads:

The Council is an international, intercultural, interracial fellowship of churches and ministry centers which seeks to realize Christian unity in local, national, and world relations. The Council seeks fellowship, mutual support, and common ministries that reflect the unity of all who see themselves within the Christian tradition. The Council seeks:

To be faithful to the prayer of Jesus Christ that "they may all be one;"

To witness to the inclusive love of God that overcomes all divisions;

To love and serve God, God's people, and God's creation;

To seek and share the truth;

To build toward a new world of peace;

To affirm individual freedom of conscience;

To affirm communities of justice, mercy, and love; and.

To be an integral partner in the worldwide ecumenical movement.

(ICCC Constitution Preamble-Vision)

Our ministry of overcoming division, loving and serving creation, seeking and sharing truth, building peace, affirming individual conscience, affirming communities of justice, mercy and love, and working in the worldwide ecumenical movement are all parts of working toward that "peace" offered by the Risen Christ.

We see when the Risen Christ speaks "peace", the bodily wounds from crucifixion are still present, but are no longer forcing him to be held by the power of death. It seems as if Christ is reminding us that the presence of evil and death are still present in our world today, but if we pursue Christ's word of true peace, the wounds of evil cannot hold us back in becoming whole and moving us into a new humanity. As the church – the body of Christ in the world today – we still carry the wounds of centuries of division. The great diversity of our ICCC member churches is a witness to our past divisions and wounds, as we have churches which come out of Reformation, Catholic, Orthodox and other traditions, but the ICCC is now a true living witness to the peace and wholeness the Risen Christ gives us as we seek to live together in one ICCC family. The wounds of our past sin do not hold us back from the peace and new life offered in Christ.

Rev. Olive E. Hinnant writes of this Scripture text, "The point of the Easter story in its original context was to give hope and empowerment to those surrounding Jesus. It was not about an empty tomb as much as it was about encountering the risen Christ in transforming ways. Jesus' death on the cross was not to save you or me as individuals or to grant a private, personal eternal life. No, Jesus' resurrection is about God's reign in all of creation, with all of creation" (*Preaching God's Transformative Justice, A Lectionary Commentary Year C*, by Dale P. Andrews, Dawn Otoni-Wilhelm and Ronald J. Allen, eds. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.)

It is to God's reign that this peace of the Risen Christ takes us, wounded and broken yet moving toward peace/wholeness and living and filled with life and hope.

Worship Resources

Hymn:

The Community Church

Through centuries of conflict and clash of thought with thought,
Our forbearers for opinions and formal creeds have fought;
But we have greater freedom, the Way of Christ to prove,
“Let us resolve to differ, while we resolve to love.”

The living God we worship, the Lord of humankind,
Almighty and all loving, creating, ruling Mind,
The universe pervading, to heaven's remotest sphere –
Yet with each soul indwelling, that calls upon God here.

Let each believe in Jesus, according as one sees,
Revealed in gospel story, the Savior, One who frees
Our lives from sin and sorrow, and who before us trod
The way that finds through service, we seek the reign God.

Our lives and deeds we govern by Jesus' own commands;
That we love God and neighbor, this simple law demands,
With prayer and praise and worship, with tolerant mind to know
The truth that makes for freedom, this church shall forward go!

Tune: LANCASHIRE 7676D

This hymn was written in 1928 by Samuel R. Scholes. As the decades passed and theological language changed some words were altered in 1978 by David Brown and in 2019 by Robert Fread.

Other Worship Resources:

This “*Statement of Affirmation and Commitment*” was written was written in 1997 (revised 2020) by Robert Fread and is based on ideas expressed by historic Community church leaders such as Orvis Jordan and J. Ruskin Howe, and in the former ICCC Constitution.

A Statement of Affirmation and Commitment for Community Churches

We are God's people- created in diversity, gathered in unity.

We affirm our faith in one God;
in Christ our Teacher;
in the Spirit as our Guide.

We affirm our ministry as a Community Church-
a church which tolerates religious opinions;
a church which respects the sincere convictions of every person;
a church which seeks to be as comprehensive as the spirit and teachings of Christ,
and as inclusive as the love of God.

We affirm our place in the body of Christ,
in the one, holy Church,
in the people of God.

We commit ourselves to the continuing mission of Christian unity-
that unity for which Christ prayed,
“that they all may be one.”

Rev. Robert A. Fread, Original Version © 1997 Community Church Press

An Affirmation of Our Call, Vision, and Commitment

The following “*Affirmation of Call, Vision and Commitment*” is based on the vision statement in the preamble of the current ICCC Constitution. It was written in 2022 by Robert Fread for this resource,

We are God’s people!

We proclaim a faith in the God who was and is and is to come:
Creating Love: Eternal source of life and being;
Incarnate Love: Jesus Christ, reconciler and savior;
Renewing Love: Spirit of justice and peace.

We affirm our call to be bringers of God’s vision:
to witness to the inclusive love of God that overcomes all divisions;
to love and serve God, God’s people, and God’s creation;
to seek and share the truth;
to build toward a new world of peace;
to affirm individual freedom of conscience;
and to affirm communities of justice, mercy, and love.

We affirm our place in the Community Churches family:
to be faithful to the prayer of Jesus Christ that “they may all be one;”
and to seek unity with the whole Christian family.

We commit our lives to be faithful servants of God,
and followers and disciples of Jesus Christ.

We are God’s people! Thanks be to God!

Other Resources:

Over the years many churches have used the following in church bulletins and other publications:

We AGREE to differ.
We RESOLVE to love.
We UNITE to serve.

In recent years the following has appeared on the ICCC website:

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

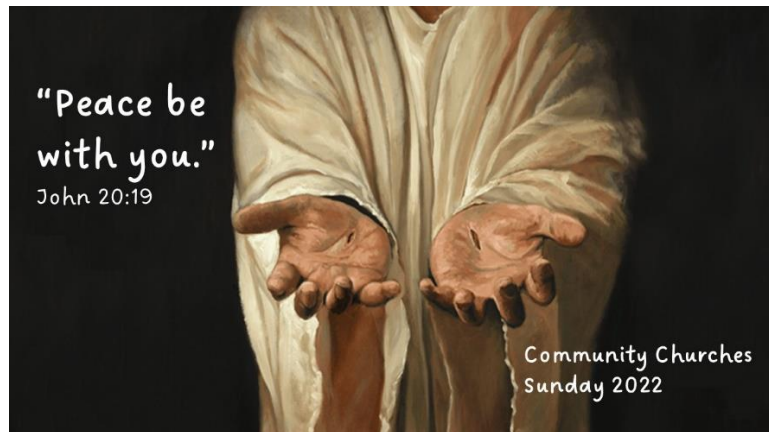
Bulletin Insert

The following two pages contain an 8 ½ X 11 (letter size) bulletin insert for use in your church. The insert is two sided. Please print as many inserts as needed for your church. If your church uses 11 X 14 (legal size) bulletins, please see the ICCC website at www.iccnw.org for a legal-size insert.

Final Comments

This resource was developed by Rev. Bob Fread for the Informational Services and Outreach of the **International Council of Community Churches**, P.O. Box 846, Longmont, CO 80502, phone: 815-464-5690.

If you have questions or comments, you can contact the ICCC Office or Rev. Bob Fread at 319-830-2150 or email: RFread65@hotmail.com.



***“Jesus came and stood among them and said.
‘Peace be with you’”*** (John 20:19)

On the evening of resurrection, the Risen Christ came and stood among the disciples and the first words spoken were “Peace be with you.” A week later, this time with Thomas present, the Risen Christ again greets them with the same words, “Peace be with you”. Both times when speaking words of peace, he shows the brokenness of his hands and side. The word “peace” in these verses literally means “to tie together in a whole”. Peace as Jesus speaks of it is not simply the absence of war or strife but is the wholeness and complete sense of well-being that only God can bring.

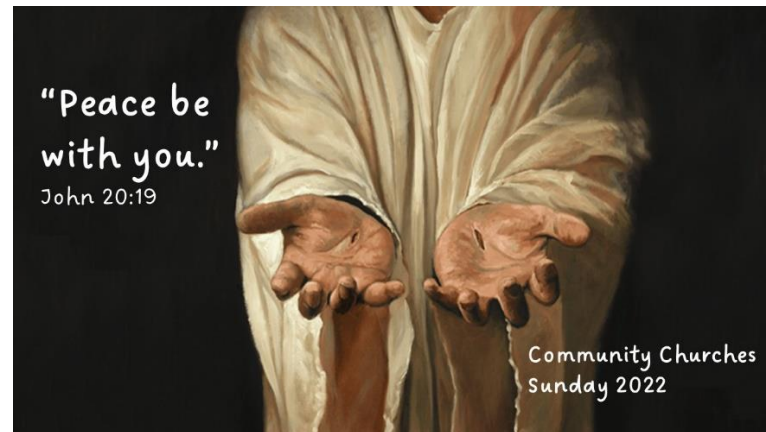
On this the **Community Churches Sunday** we remember that the International Council of Community Churches (ICCC) exists for the reason of healing the broken and scarred body of Christ - the church, thus the Council proclaims and works for peace, wholeness and completeness within all parts of the human family. No longer can we have race, gender or even theology, stand in the way of God's wholeness for us.



International Council of Community Churches

We rejoice that your congregation is a part of the ICCC family, as together we work for the peace offered by the Risen Christ. On this Community Churches Sunday, the ICCC simply says to your congregation,

“Peace be with you.”



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What is the International Council of Community Churches?



International Council of Community Churches

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the number of Community, Union, Federated, People's, Independent and Ecumenical churches grew in our country. As these churches sought fellowship and needed resources, they formed two organizations, one for mainly Caucasian churches and another

for African-American churches. In 1950, these two church groups merged to form the current International Council of Community Churches (ICCC), the most racially diverse religious body of its time. Since its inception, the ICCC has worked tirelessly for racial justice and reconciliation, and for Christian unity among churches.

Currently, the Council includes about 50 churches/ministries in the United States plus affiliates in 3 other nations. The ICCC is headquartered in Longmont, Colorado, and maintains a minimal staff of an Executive Director and Office Administrator. The Council is governed throughout the year by a Board of Directors and a Board of Trustees.

Each year ICCC members are invited to the ICCC Annual Conference. The 2022 ICCC Annual Conference will be July 18-21, 2022, in Dublin, OH (a suburb of Columbus). The conference is not just a business meeting but is a "family reunion" of clergy and laity from our member units around the country. Annual Conference involves times of fellowship, worship, Bible study, workshops, and business, while making new friends and renewing old relationships. **We hope you will consider joining us this summer!**

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