

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

Number 2

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President's Message

Abraham Wright

A Time for Forgiveness

According to the Christian calendar, we are in the final third of the largest of the three ordinary periods. These are times when we focus on the "ordinary" things of life, such as death, the birth of a child, conflicts within the family and the church, overcoming obstacles and difficulties in hard courses, and coping with other things such as sickness and deadly diseases. In short, these are periods when we are not observing one of the major events such as Epiphany, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Ideally, we use the spiritual insights and inspiration we received during special observances to embrace situations in "ordinary" life. One of the things we are reminded of from the last major Christian observance (Pentecost) is the coming of the power of the Holy Spirit, which gives us access to God at any time: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts: 1-8).

One of the effects of the Holy Spirit is the motivation to forgive; the lack of forgiveness wrecks the life of self, families, fellow believers, and life in general. Actually, Christ sets the standards that we should *always* forgive not only through his teaching, especially in Matthew 18:21, 22 (forgiving seventy-times seven) and in the Lord's Prayer ("and forgive us our debts as we forgive those who trespass against us") but also through the healing of the brokenness of other lives he touched and through his action on the cross.

Jesus sets a supreme example by forgiving the leaders of the church in Jerusalem for executing Him: "Father, forgive them, for they don't know not what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Note that Jesus forgives them *without* their repentance. Then, he forgives the thief on the cross who asks for forgiveness. After the Holy Spirit comes and Stephen is stoned, Stephen forgives those who crucified him similar to Jesus' forgiveness of the Jerusalem church leaders. Jesus forgives Saul, who because he thought he was doing what was right, persecuted Christians who he genuinely believed were blaspheming the one true God of Israel. Jesus also quickly persuades Ananias to trust Saul. Saul himself admitted that he was the worst of sinners. Yet, Jesus forgave him and appointed him as apostle to the Gentiles to formally introduce salvation to them. If the Word of God is true, these are facts, not lies. So why are we so reluctant to forgive?

It is this Holy Spirit who dwells within us and causes us to do that which is right, who makes us love our enemies as well as our friends, who keeps us in constant relationship with the Father, who comforts us during times of distress; it is this power of the Holy Spirit who empowers us with spiritual gifts, who leads and guides us in all things, and who can calm our fears and fill us with hope that will lead us through the process of forgiveness.

One of the ironies about our attitude toward forgiveness is that we constantly talk about embodying the Holy Spirit and the spirit of forgiveness, but honestly, how many of us actually take the process seriously?



continued on page 5



Executive Director's Message

Phil Tom

Giving Thanks

It is hard to believe that we are in November and Thanksgiving Day is around the corner, and the season of Advent is not far behind! Thanksgiving Day is a day when family and friends, and maybe even with some strangers, join together. It is a time for a great meal, excellent company, and an opportunity to thank God for our blessings. But I know I am preaching to the choir when I say every day is Thanksgiving Day. As the writer of I Thessalonians says, we must thank God every day, in all circumstances, good or bad. It is easy to give thanks to God when everything is going well, but we sometimes fail to give

thanks to God when things are not going well. During the past two-plus years with the Covid pandemic, some of us have experienced challenges and losses. I have experienced the loss of several family and friends due to Covid or an illness. I grieve that their lives were taken way too young. As difficult as it was for me to deal with these losses, I thanked God for these faithful servants' lives. As someone said – "we recognize bad things do not come from God, but with God, we do not have to be controlled by those bad events; we go through them."

Giving thanks is not just an isolated act but a way of living a life with a spirit of

generosity! Saying thank you is a relational act. When we thank God, we acknowledge our divine relationship with our Creator. When we thank another person, we recognize our human connection with that person, even if he/she is a stranger to us. How often do you thank others for their service, whether it be the person who serves your meal, cleans up your table after dinner, rings up your purchase at a store, or push-

es the elevator button for you when your hands are full? It is always surprising to me when I see people failing to thank someone for a task fulfilled. We do not fully ac-

knowledge or value the person's presence and human connection when we do this. What happens when someone says thank you for something you have done for him/her? You feel publicly affirmed as a person, as a member of God's beloved community, not just as some stranger or non-existent being.

Hannah Whitall Smith said, "The soul that gives thanks can find comfort in everything; the soul that complains can find comfort in nothing." So let us thank God daily and live a life of generosity with God and one another.

Phil



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

ICCC NOVEMBER 2022

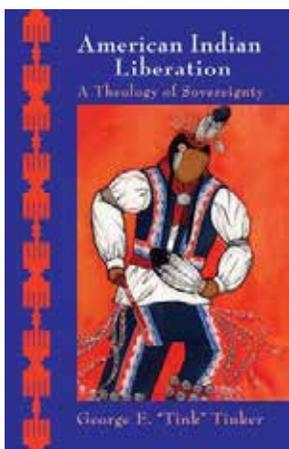


Book REVIEW

By Rev. Kenneth N. Nelson

Put on the new self...Col 3:10 ESV

Thanksgiving is one of the most revered holidays. We choose to be with family and friends during this season as much as others. This month we look at sharing in communities through the words and images of ***Goodnight Racism***, and in struggles of Native Americans in ***American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty***.



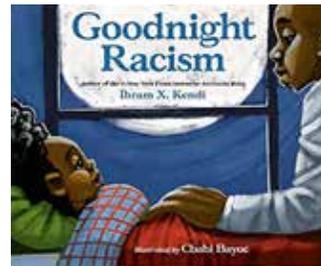
American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty by George Tinker (Osage) ORBIS (January 23, 2020) Kindle \$14.99 (176 p) ISBN:1570758050

Thanksgiving brings another opportunity to understand and appreciate Native American communities. One of the most challenged reflections on record is the book, ***American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty***. Where does Christianity and Native American

culture intersect? What interests are similar and what ways heal pain from the past? Professor George E. "Tink" Tinker offers a provocative view on questions because of his experience as a member of Osage Nation, being a Lutheran pastor, and faculty member of American Indian Cultures and Religious Tradition at Iliff School of Theology in Denver.

While many will say discussions of politics and religion must be avoided, Tinker counters that view by observing that "An American Indian theology must necessarily be a political theology, especially if we take political in its broadest sense to indicate the cultural life of a community," and "an American Indian theology must also reflect on the deep connection between the culture and the religious traditions of Indian peoples—both in all their diversity and in their underlying, foundational similarity" (Kindle p. 1). Kinder builds on these ideas with a compelling introduction and seven chapters—Chapter 1: Struggle, Resistance, Liberation, and Theological Methodology Indigenous Peoples and the Two-Thirds World; Chapter 2: Creation, Justice, and Peace; Chapter 3: Ecojustice and Native American Sovereignty; Chapter 4. Christology and Colonialism; Chapter 5. Abjection, Violence, Missions, and American Indians Missionary; Chapter 6: American Indian Liberation; Chapter 7: Culture and Domination and concludes with a section titled "Suggestions for Further Reading." If you are exploring the struggles of Native Americans and

searching for potential understanding, then ***American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty*** is a fantastic way to start your journey.



Goodnight Racism by Ibram X. Kendi, and Illustrations by Cbabi Bayoc. Kokila (June 14, 2022) (32p) Kindle \$10.99 ASIN: B09Q88SPV4

Do you recall your favorite bedtime story? Sure, we do! The question is do we have a

favorite bedtime story for our times? We do when we consider ***Goodnight Racism*** by acclaimed diversity author Ibram X. Kendi, and beautiful Illustrator Cbabi Bayoc. Most agree that our bedtime stories affirm our most cherish life themes and values worth. ***Goodnight Racism*** reflects this quality, especially for those who embrace the beloved community. Kirkus Reviews observes that ***Goodnight Racism*** offers "a nod to Margaret Wise Brown's classic ***Goodnight Moon***. ***Goodnight Racism*** is more a of picture-book art which shows all of humanity in their vibrant shades, and their cultures like Kendi's ***Antiracist Baby***. It seems that Kendi and Bayoc include every community that one can experience today or "a world where all people are safe, no matter how they look, how they worship, or how they love" (Kindle Loc 11-13).

Imagine a community canvas, where all people are at peace and collaborating with each other affirming our mutual humanity. Kendi and Bayoc reveal this mosaic canvas with enthralling images and languages that focus on the possible. This is an excellent picture-art book for grandparents, parents, and children to enjoy and share for many years.

SHARE YOUR COMMENTS. Remember, please share your thoughts at ICCCNOW@sbcglobal.net by the end of the month. Also let us know if we have your permission to quote or paraphrase your comments. *Thank you for your feedback and have a blessed month..*

Ecumeneews

Rev. Rock R. Fremont Jr., VP Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

The World Council of Churches 11th General Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany has come to an end.

The theme, **"Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,"** shaped the gathering, and this rich and hopeful theme was expressed throughout the life and focus of the Assembly.

Nowhere was this more evident than in our times of worship and prayer. The Christian church is rich in culture, language, color, and perspective, and each morning and evening, we could experience this richness as we worshiped and celebrated our Christian faith and identity as the family of God; singing each other's songs and gathering in styles of worship that affirmed orthodox traditions, traditional worship, and contemporary worship. The music had energy, songs were sung with joy, and it was a reminder that the church is global and not captured by any one culture.

Another deep and rich encouragement was the link between worship and Bible study. Scripture was acted out; it was explored, and we met in small home groups. In these groups, we reflected on Scripture and the life of the churches we represented. The studies were drawn from the Gospels and linked to each day's thematic focus.

The Assembly met with the ongoing war in Ukraine in the foreground. This was made real with the presence of people directly impacted by the war. This was not the only very sensitive matter that needed to be faced. There was intentional listening and the seeking of consensus. This was not an easy process. Not everyone was happy with every aspect of the outcome. In all the discussions, we stayed centered in "Christ's Love".

Finally, the Assembly served as a solid and graphic reminder that the Ecumenical movement holds at its core the pattern, energy, and dynamic of relationships – between people and across cultures and church traditions. We are in Christ connected to one another, which builds reconciliation and unity.

As previously mentioned in my October article, resources from the Assembly are available on the Assembly website, and I encourage you to peruse them. I hope to share documents from the Assembly in upcoming articles, beginning with the following official message.



"A Call to Act Together" was adopted as the message of the 11th Assembly, intended to be shared with and used by member denominations and their congregations to increase participation in ecumenism. "We will find the strength to act from a unity founded in Christ's love, for it enables us to learn the things that make for peace, to transform division into reconciliation, and to work for the healing of our living planet," the statement reads, in part.

Sections titled "Come, Follow Me!" and "Go into the Whole World" are inspired by the common Christian call to discipleship and to follow Jesus in sharing the Good News. A section titled "Our Journey Together" includes this prayer:

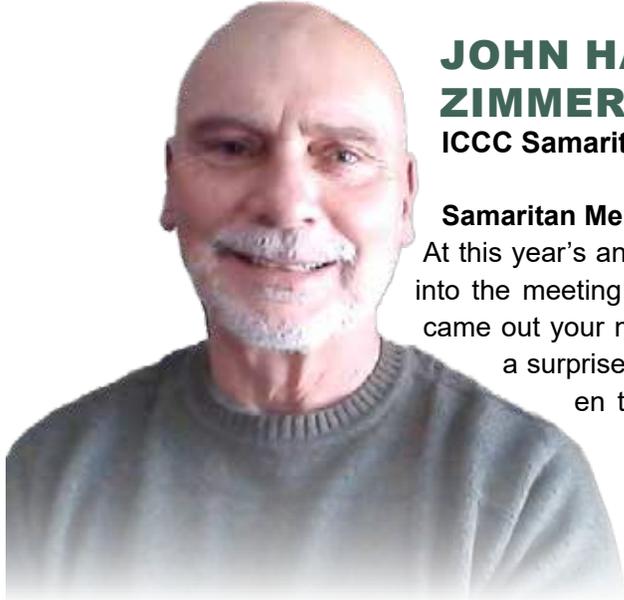
*"Hearing the word of God together, we recognize our common calling;
Listening and talking together, we become closer neighbors;
Lamenting together, we open ourselves to each other's pain and suffering;
Working together, we consent to common action;
Celebrating together, we delight in each other's joys and hopes;
Praying together, we discover the richness of our traditions and the pain of our divisions."*

Read the full text at www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/message-of-the-wcc-11th-assembly-a-call-to-act-together.



Rev. Rock Fremont with newly elected WCC president from North America, Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

Meet Our Leadership, One by One



**JOHN HARDMAN-
ZIMMERMAN**
ICCC Samaritans President

Samaritan Men on the Move

At this year's annual conference, I went into the meeting of Samaritan Men and came out your new president! This was a surprise, but also an honor, given that for too many years I have not been able to be at conference.

By way of introduction, I was ordained

in the ICCC by Ralph Shotwell at the New Carlisle Community Church in Indiana, so long ago now, that many of you may not remember this vibrant leader of our fellowship. But as God would have it, I have pastored United Methodist Churches in tandem with my wife, who is an ordained Elder in the UMC, ever since. Presently she and I pastor six, yes six, churches in the Rutland area of Vermont. That accounts for why I haven't written to you sooner!

Nonetheless, let's get the ball rolling. I am soliciting your ideas for our men's group and I will share one right off the top. I see our friendship as just that, brothers in Christ, who desire to nurture the Spirit in one another and serve our churches, communities and ICCC fellowship as led by the Spirit.

To that end I am initially suggesting a Zoom study on male spirituality, using as a resource Richard Rohr's book, *From Wild Man to Wise Man*. If you are interested or have other ideas, contact me at hzfam@hotmail.com or call or text me at 802-282-7532.

I am so looking forward to experiencing the blessing that each of you are.

President's Message *cont'd from page 2*

In my family, for instance, there are those of us who have used incidents such as not repaying a \$300 loan or not attending a niece's or a nephew's funeral service, or refusing to do something that goes against not only our consciences but also against the will of God by refusing to forgive one another for decades. We still hold onto these things as if the minutiae were as precious as gold, remembering the incidents as if they happened yesterday. When approached concerning letting go of the deadly poison, our defense is one of self-righteousness. I also often hear more serious matters where in someone was wronged and refused to forgive. But there also are too many of these incidents that exist among other so-called devout Christians. True, there are some egregious acts of sin committed against too many of us, some of which we will probably remember until we die because the images are so real. But *does remembering* mean that we treat the offender with hatred or malice? Some things are difficult to forget and difficult to forgive. Some offenses also have serious consequences, which the offender must honor. But the love of God requires that we forgive one another as God forgives us. It is not just for the offender's sake, but for our physical, emotional, and spiritual health as well.

There is power in forgiveness. If we don't forgive, the lack of forgiveness festers and becomes an incurable cancer, the wildest of amebas. But forgiveness brings peace that helps us to move forward with life; it is therapeutic. The lack of forgiveness destroys individuals, marriages, churches and other vital relationships; but most critically, it destroys our genuine relationship with Christ. Louis B. Smedes believes that, "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that that prisoner was you."

During this preAdvent season, let us not be like the wicked servant in Matthew 18:23-25. Instead, let us pray that the Holy Spirit who dwells within us will lead us to forgive from the heart instead of merely giving lip service to be heard among humankind.

Abraham

John Hardman-Zimmerman

Our prayers are with

- The family of **Erlene O'Brien, Antioch Community Church, MO**. Erlene passed away September 27th. For those who attended the 2022 Annual Conference, Erlene made the little prayer quilts that were for the taking. She was 98 years old!

**Sharing Joys with**

- **Rev. Ryan Thrasher**, Senior Pastor at **Palisades Community Church**, Washington, DC.

Rev. Thrasher was installed on October 2nd. **ICCC President Abraham Wright** participated in the installation and **Regional Trustee Myrtis Brame** attended. Rev. Thrasher is a trained musician and the church gifted him this bass. Welcome!



Someone You Should Know

We've been going through old photos here in the office. Recognize these ICCC faithful supporters?



It's **Sue and Phil Smith** pictured here at the 1995 Annual Conference!

Sue and Phil have been coming to conference for 18+ years and have been active in Clergy Commissions, Men and Women groups and the Ohio Fellowship. You can count on seeing Sue each year as you arrive for Annual Conference at the registration table!

**Thank you,
Phil and Sue,
for all your
support and love!**



Full-Time Minister

Pembroke Township, IL- Minister/Pastor- St. Anne Woods Chapel Community Church-Non-Denominational

St. Anne Woods Chapel Community Church is prayerfully seeking a full time Minister who is called by God, ordained, and dedicated to the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Status and qualifications will include:

- Must hold a degree from an accredited seminar or Bible college.
- Must be an ordained and/or licensed minister.
- Must have a minimum of 3-6 years of experience as a minister or minister assistance.
- Must have great leadership skills, ability to reach out to the youth, and open to growing the ministry.

Duties:

- Coordinating with the church secretary to prepare a weekly bulletin.
- Conducting weekly adult bible study.
- Preaching the weekly sermon on Sunday mornings.
- Teaching weekly Sunday School class
- Administering the Sacraments of communion and baptism.
- Officiating at all weddings, funerals, and other ceremonial occasions as needed.
- Participating in community events.
- Works with the deacons and board regarding the future of the church.

If interested in the position, please submit the following information listed below to stannewoodschapelc@gmail.com. Please submit documents in a PDF format only.

- Cover letter that includes salary expectations, a little information about yourself, and why you believe that God is calling you to apply for this position.
- Resume
- Copy of Ministerial License and/or Certificate of Ordination.
- Degree from seminar or bible college
- Three references which would include one personal reference and two professional (minister/pastor) letters of preference.

Applicants are accepted until Wednesday, November 09, 2022.

Full-Time Minister

According to a recent survey, a rare combination of high energy, high satisfaction, flexibility, and strong support for mission set our small church apart from most others. New Covenant Community Church, in Akron, Ohio, a long-time ICCC member, is seeking a full-time minister to replace its present minister who is retiring in February, 2023. For more information, please contact Susie Stevenor, PNC Clerk, at pncnccc@gmail.com.

Senior 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.

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.

To view their ideal candidate thoughts, visit the ICCC website for the full ad.

<https://www.iccnw.org/careers/>

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



PASTORAL SEARCH

Interim Pastor

The First Church of Evans is seeking to fill the position of Interim Pastor. This will be a part-time, temporary position until the position of permanent pastor is filled. The First Church of Evans is a non-denominational and congregationally governed church of 60-65 average attendance founded over 200 years ago and is located in a small town setting in Derby, NY, approximately 25 miles south of Buffalo, NY.

The duties of the Interim Pastor will include:

- Collaborating with the church secretary to prepare a weekly bulletin
- Completing an Order of Worship for Sunday Service
- Preaching the weekly Sermon on Sunday mornings
- Administering the Sacraments of Communion and Baptism
- Able to perform weddings and funerals

Ministerial Status and Qualifications

- Must hold a degree from a Seminary or Bible College
- Must be an Ordained and/or Licensed Minister
- Would prefer at least 3-5 years ministry experience as a Lead or Senior Pastor

If interested in this position, please submit the following:

- Cover letter that includes salary expectation
- Current resume (including email address and contact telephone numbers)
- Personal Statement of Faith
- Submit three personal and two professional (minister/pastor) letters of reference
- Copy of Ministerial License and/or Certificate of Ordination

Full-Time Pastor

The First Church of Evans is seeking to fill the position of full-time Pastor. The First Church of Evans is a non-denominational and congregationally governed community church of 60-65 average attendance founded over 200 years ago and is located in a small town setting in Derby, NY, approximately 25 miles south of Buffalo, NY.

Ministerial status and qualifications will include:

- must hold a degree from an accredited seminary or Bible college
- must be an ordained and/or licensed minister
- must have a minimum of 3-5 years' experience as a lead or senior pastor or commensurate position or very exceptional experience as an associate pastor
- must be in agreement with our church's Statement of Faith
- must have strong interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills

The duties of the Pastor will include:

- coordinating with the church secretary to prepare a weekly bulletin
- completing an Order of Worship for Sunday service
- preaching the weekly sermon on Sunday mornings
- conducting a weekly adult Bible study
- teaching a weekly Sunday School class
- preparing a devotional article for the monthly newsletter
- administering the Sacraments of Communion and Baptism
- officiating at all weddings, funerals and other ceremonial occasions as needed
- responsible for the recording of births, baptisms, marriages, deaths, admissions and dismissions
- participating in community organizations, such as The Lake Shore Association of Christian Churches and the International Council of Community Churches to develop relationships with area churches and Christ-centered ministries to proactively serve our community and share the gospel of Jesus Christ
- sits on the Board of Directors of the Steepleview Housing Corporation, a residential facility for disabled and elderly, sponsored by The First Church of Evans. Additional responsibilities may also include communion services at the facility and/or tenant-relations meetings, etc.
- works with deacons on visitations to address the physical and spiritual needs of individuals
- serves as an ex-officio member of all church committees and as a non-voting member and spiritual advisor at all monthly church council meetings
- provides pastoral counseling to help members deal with personal issues

If interested in this position, please submit the following:

- cover letter that includes salary expectation, a little bit about you and why you believe God is calling you to apply for this ministry
- current resume (including email address and contact telephone numbers)
- personal Statement of Faith
- submit three personal and two professional (minister/pastor) letters of reference
- copy of Ministerial License and/or Certificate of Ordination

Information may be submitted to:

The First Church of Evans • PO Box 364 • Derby, NY 14047

Attn: Carl Mende, Search Committee Chairman

-or-

Submit documents in PDF format only to: fcoc@carlmende.com