

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY



JANUARY 2023

International Council of Community Churches

SPECIAL EDITION

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World



OMG
Have we got a week planned for you!

The 73rd Annual Conference planning is underway

"All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it."
I Corinthians 12:27

We are family

July 18 – 21, 2023

- ✓ We have a new format.*
- ✓ We have world-class speakers and presenters.
- ✓ We have a beautiful hotel, wonderful meeting facilities, and great food.
- ✓ We have awesome workshops, mission opportunities & presentations, music, and fellowship chances.

We've been to the hotel that has been recently renovated and offers the roomy accommodations, fabulous breakfast buffet, and evening reception we've come to appreciate from Embassy Suites. That makes this a great family destination and possibility.

The Planning Committee has been diligently coordinating so many various facets of the conference. Worship, music, discussion groups, luncheon presentations, excursions, meals; the numerous details are endless, but so are the opportunities. There will be so many choices for you to pursue they will certainly satisfy whatever your individual interests may be.

You can experience powerful worship services, inspirational mission presentations, enlightening Bible Study discussions, moving musical presentations, encouraging workshops, entertaining fellowship offerings, tours of the Billy Graham museum/library not far from the hotel; the opportunities are endless. Your participation will be limited only by your enthusiasm.

Note that the conference this year will start on Tuesday, allowing our clergy time to satisfy their Sunday obligations, and still have sufficient time for Ministerium activities before

the conference. Registration for the conference will be available Feb. 1st. You can book the hotel now! I would encourage you to save your spot soon ... and bring a friend. You don't want to miss this, and it will be an experience you'll want to share. Watch for the February Christian Community for all conference information and/or visit the ICCC website for the latest.

*You will see another article explaining our exciting new format. This will give everyone the opportunity to pursue presentations that will focus on their

individual interests.

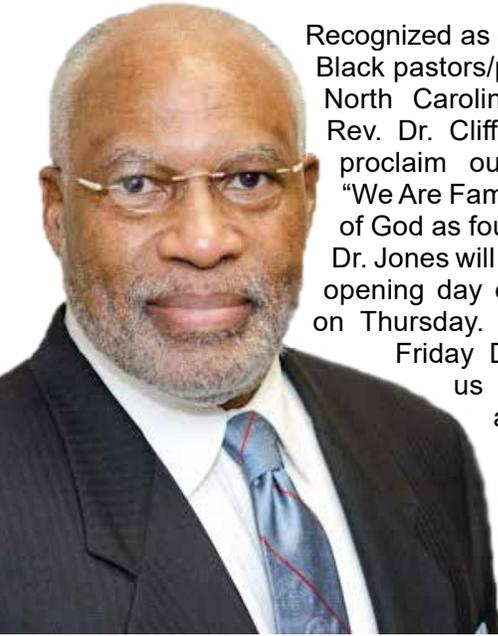
We'll see you in Charlotte!

Jerry Brown
VP for Planning



We are family

The Word Proclaimed by Rev. Dr. Clifford A. Jones



Recognized as one of the outstanding Black pastors/preachers in Charlotte, North Carolina and America, The Rev. Dr. Clifford A. Jones, Sr. will proclaim our conference theme, "We Are Family," rooted in the Word of God as found in I Corinthians 12. Dr. Jones will deliver sermons on the opening day of the conference and on Thursday. On Wednesday and Friday Dr. Jones will be with us for a one hour "Q, A and Comment" session. The "Q, A and Comment" time will allow conferees to enter into extended discussion and interchange with Dr. Jones.

Dr. Jones has been the Senior Pastor of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Charlotte for 40 years. Born in Philadelphia and reared in New Jersey, Dr. Jones received his Bachelor of Science degree from Maryland State College; the Master of Divinity and Master of Theology degrees from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; and the Doctor of Ministry degree from the Boston School of Theology. As part of his outstanding ministry, he has done further study at Regents Park College in Oxford, England and the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

In addition to his outstanding ability to explain and deliver God's Word, Dr. Jones has a great and compelling compassion for the needs of others, locally and globally. Dr. Jones led a delegation to form a solid and working partnership with the Winterveldt School in Mabopane, South Africa. The partnership led to the purchase and building of a fully equipped Christian education center for grades K – 12. In addition, a farm was purchased, three greenhouses were built to provide vegetables for sale, and a brick making machine was acquired so that homes and business buildings could be built while also providing a means for economic interdependence.

In response to children and families struggling with severe poverty, Dr. Jones has organized and led numerous medical and religious mission teams to provide needed health-care, medical supplies and educational training in Jamaica, Africa and Guyana, South America.

In addition to his many global interests and concerns, Dr. Jones is a dedicated supporter of senior citizen programs. His leadership led Friendship Church to open the first satellite center for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Senior Centers, offering exercise and other classes for seniors living in the area where the church is located. He serves of the Board of Directors for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Partnership, Inc.

Dr. Jones holds or has held many leadership positions including being a trustee for Morris College and Hood Theological Seminary, Vice President of the Baptist World Alliance and President of the General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Inc.

The Friendship Missionary Baptist Church has been blessed by God and the exercise of Dr. Jones' gifts and talents with a 115 acre campus. In addition to the church and its facilities, this land is being developed to provided inter-generational daycare, assisted living for seniors, an Alzheimer's center, a hospice house, single family dwellings, offices, a park shelter and amphitheater.

Among the many, many awards and recognitions he has received are "Senior Father of the Year, Black Fathers Rock," The Nelson Mandela Award from the National Baptist Convention in the USA, keynote for the 2007 National Political Black Caucus Prayer Breakfast, the Duke Divinity School – Gardner C. Taylor Lecturer, and the "Beautiful Are the Feet Award," at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference.

Published works include "The Star book of Stewardship," "Becoming and Practicing What It Means to Be a Christian," "Consuming Passion: Christianity and the Consumer Culture," and "From Proclamation to Practice: A Unique African American Approach to Stewardship."

Dr. Jones is married to the former Carolyn Brenda Reynolds. They are the proud parents of Mrs. E. Renee Darity, Rev. Michelle A. Jones, Pastor Anthony Jones, Jr. (Courtney) and Miss Alexa Mariah Fortune Jones. Dr. and Mrs. Jones have one adored granddaughter, Miss Michelle A. Jones (Jr.).

Our conference, in general, and you, specifically, will be richly blessed as we listen to and absorb the proclamation and insights that Dr. Jones will bring to us.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT “TRACK” FOR A GREAT CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

Reported by Dr. Bruce Merton

Last year my wife, Jill, and I were joined by four other members of our church family on a trip to Switzerland. It was an excellent experience and thoroughly enjoyed by all that went. During the trip I was reminded of the fact that while all of us had a great time in the same place, during the same time frame, and sharing some of the same experiences, the trip was really unique for each of us!

This was driven home by our trip from Zermatt to St. Moritz. We gathered at the Zermatt train station where we observed four different trains. We were boarding the Glacier Express for an 8 hour trip to St. Moritz. I was surprised to learn that the other three trains were also going to St. Moritz, but they were taking different tracks to get to the same destination.

The uniqueness of our trip for each person was in the fact that we were each afforded many opportunities to do things and have experiences that were geared to our own interests, inclinations and tastes. We all went to the common destination of Switzerland, but we each traveled a different “TRACK” and that contributed to our individual and shared joy.

This is being written to introduce all conference attendees to the fact that our conference structure is receiving significant change this year and for the future. Like the Switzerland adventure previously mentioned, we will all share a common conference experience. The conference will be held for all at the Embassy Suites Hotel on Tryon Street in Charlotte, North Carolina. We will all experience conference during a common time frame – Tuesday, July 18 to Friday, July 21. We will all share in the worship services of Tuesday and Thursday. We will all experience the Bible Studies, but each person present will get to put their own unique stamp on the conference experience by following an interest oriented TRACK that will allow you to mold and shape your conference experience based on your interests, inclinations and tastes. Conferees will be able to choose a TRACK that will enable them to focus on FELLOWSHIP, WORSHIP, MISSION or EDUCATION.



Each conferee will be asked to choose a TRACK focused on your primary interest to be followed during the conference. PLEASE NOTE: You are welcome to attend offerings in other tracks based on appeal, interest or need.



Bruce and Jill Merton

If you particularly enjoy the FELLOWSHIP experience of conference, you will choose that TRACK and, in addition to the commonly shared worship, Bible study and meals, you will partake in fellowship building activities and workshops.

If you come to conference with a particular interest in EDUCATION, you will choose the EDUCATION TRACK and find yourself immersed in activities like a book study and discussion, conversation with the Bible study leader, and workshops that educate you on a variety of topics.

Do you come to conference with mission on your mind and heart? You will enjoy and enhance your conference experience by following the MISSION TRACK. This TRACK will allow you to experience “hands on” mission opportunities along with workshops and presentations from and about our ICCC mission partner.

Is the experience of worship a driving force for your conference attendance? Follow the WORSHIP TRACK for experiences such as “Keynote Conversations” with our worship preacher, Dr. Clifford Jones; worship through music and workshops about improving, planning and doing worship in your church setting.

The new structure is a product of a mandate from the Board of Directors to “Reform, Reframe and Re-Vision” the conference experience. The structure is evolving and, as with everything new and different, there will be “growing pains,” imperfections, needs for “tweaking” and ongoing revisions. Please be patient as the new structure takes its shape and form. Your constructive criticisms and suggestions will be welcomed, considered, and, if appropriate, implemented.

Let’s gather together in Charlotte for a great conference that will show “We Are Family” even though we experience family from our own unique perspective and spirit. Register February 1st and choose the TRACK that is best for you!

The SAME Yet Different QUINCY



There is an age-old arguable saying by Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr that the more things change, the more they appear to be the same. The implication is that although things may appear to be new on the surface, the fundamental nature or core does not change. So, let's look at the purpose of ICCC Annual Conference: To provide a well-planned gathering of the ICCC family in a congenial relationship wherein church delegations, members and friends of ICCC congregations at large, and presenters deliver some of the most effective educational and inspirational sermons, Bible Studies, meaningful workshops and variety of music, and genuine fellowship that motivate conferees to take what they receive and go back to their individual congregations and renew themselves in a variety of ways. The 2023 Annual Conference proposes to do just that, but in a different format: use of the track system where in conferees can choose their own focus: Worship, Education, Fellowship, and Mission. But equally important, the 2023 Planning Committee, in consultation with SOAR, has made an intentional effort to make the content just as existing.

With the Conference held TUESDAY through FRIDAY, conferees will hear two dynamic sermons by nationally-known Dr. Clifford Jones, senior pastor, Friendship Baptist Church, Charlotte, NC, and two one-hour follow-up sessions; members of one of his widely-know musical groups also will appear. The Bible Study presenter, a renowned scholar soon to be announced, will follow a similar format. The dynamic music department of Imagine Church of the

Carolinas, under the leadership of Rev. Bruce Jones, will render music Tuesday evening, together with a special guest. The comparable Roberta Smith, the Conference Music Director, will also direct the Conference Choir.

There are four special mission projects (some onsite and some within the Charlotte proper) and mission education by special presenters. Fellowship, which partly overlaps with Education, will include movies and discussions, trips to the Billy Graham Library, one or two



relevant book studies, a luncheon and a prayer breakfast, the Banquet, and the Supper Club. And yes, there are times designated for the Ministerium, the Women's Christian Fellowship (WCF), and the Samaritans to meet. There also are a Youth and a Children's program. Committees and Zones (and areas within zones) will have times to meet if necessary.

On hand to greet us will be the Mayor of Charlotte (or designee), and judicatory representatives from at least two of the major Christian denominations. The host church is Imagine Church of the Carolinas. The Community Church of Lake Wylie also will be present.

The hotel is conveniently located one block off Interstate 77. The airport is 12-15 minutes away. There is a free hotel shuttle; however, you must remember to call the special number at the hotel for pickup. There also is an Enterprise Rent-a-Car one block from the hotel.



Several eating places are within a mile; and the hotel shuttle service is available for use within a 3 mile radius. Breakfast (more than you can eat or drink) and a complementary evening social hour are included in the hotel cost.

So, we need you to begin now, if you have not already done so, to plan to attend this historic conference. If you are faithful to the heart of ICCC: reconciliation of the body of Christ, then say within yourself, as we graciously say to you, that for the ICCC family, all forms of transportation July 18-21, 2023 lead to Charlotte, North Carolina.

Abraham Wright

Abraham Wright, ICCC President