

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

DECEMBER 2023



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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

"Sweetest Name I Know"



The name of Jesus is known throughout the world both favorably and unfavorably. One of the most often quotations of Jesus is "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess" (Philippians 2:10). This one is probably my favorite because it constantly reminds me that following its dictate will determine where I spend eternity. Of course one of the other famous references, especially among diverse cultures, is simply "Jesus!" with various biblical contexts. Whether the situation is favorable or unfavorable, the response is "Jesus!" because Jesus speaks to sorrow, but he also brings joy. Again, regardless of the context, "Jesus! works. That's why this Christmas for you and for me, and for those who have not yet accepted this universal Jesus, I pray that we discover and reconsider new meaning in Him as "The Sweetest Name We Know!"

I don't know of anyone other than Jesus who could or who was willing to prepare for me or anyone else an everlasting dwelling place for just loving and worshipping Him, which included purchasing all the things he does for me practically at his expense. I love the name of Jesus because he gives me melodious carols, fills my stockings with all kinds of fruits and nuts and greetings that remind me to stay close to Him so that when the name of Jesus is called and every knee shall bow, I can bow with the other saints and be caught up to meet the other universal saints in the air. This is the heart of my Christmas!

Except for Jesus, I don't know of anyone else who, without a sweat or a tear, or asking for donations feeds or heals more people in one place at the same time; or feed thousands of individuals without placing a preorder of food and never receives a complaint that the food is over or undercooked. I also don't know of anyone else except Jesus who shows up in multiple places simultaneously without incident or showing up at the wrong address; Jesus gets it right the first time, every time. Who else has a better guaranteed program than that?

Jesus is the sweetest name I know because he treats more individuals than Kaiser Permanente, Blue Cross-Blue Shield, and Medicare without copays.

I've met few individuals other than Jesus who guarantee me a second chance if I would earnestly and sincerely repent; if I would only honor His creation as God's tabernacle on earth; if I would only guard and protect God's creation; if I would just keep in mind God's original intent for us, to recognize that his original intent was distraught with evil, but there is a restoration plan, and if I just look back at what was intended and look forward toward what can be, and love one another and protect God's kingdom, I will be OK when I bow before Him at His Second Coming.

Jesus is the sweetest name I know because he will right forever a wrong in my life, even my eating Santa's cookies and drinking his milk before he or she arrives.

continued on page 5



Executive Director's Message

Phil Tom

Blessed are the peacemakers

"The people walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.....For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting God, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:1, 9:6

As I write this article, my spirit grieves over the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, as Jews are injured and killed in Israel, and Palestinians are wounded, dying, and left adrift with nowhere to hide or go. I pray that by the time this CC is published, a resolution will occur to end this war and bring some peace and reconciliation to this part of God's beloved community. The just war theory might support Israel's position to destroy Hamas for its mass killings of Jews. Still, this war has come at the expense of innocent Palestinians who just want to live in peace in a free and unoccupied homeland. The people in Israel also yearn to live in peace and security. I am pro-Israel and pro-Pales-

tine! Some say you cannot be neutral in such a war. I am not neutral. I am pro-peace and pro-justice because we worship and serve a God of peace and justice.

As we journey through this Advent season, we prepare ourselves to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, God's gift to humanity, the Prince of Peace. Jesus calls us to experience peace within our spirits (Num. 6:24-26) and to bring peace and unity between people (Eph. 4:2-6). As God's children, we must work for peace and justice, whether for racial reconciliation and justice in our backyard or between warring nations. We must shatter the darkness that exists in our world by shining the light of God brightly through the darkness through our acts of compassion and justice.

Working for peace and justice is hard work! But, as members of the ICCC family and God's family, we are called to work for God's peace and justice. During this Advent season, let us recommit and renew ourselves to this mission to be God's peacemakers!

Phil



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."

ICCC DECEMBER 2023

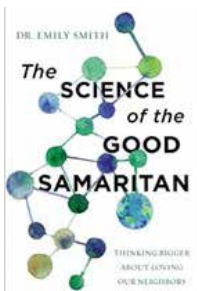


Book REVIEW

By Rev. Kenneth N. Nelson

2023 Theme: *Call to Fellowship (1 John 1:3 ESV)*

Season's greetings! We pray all is well with you, and the everlasting blessings of God are with you. We, moreover, pray that our sharing captures the idea of fellowship from First John 1:3.



Sometimes the holidays bring more conflict than compromise. And to that end, Ann Byle, *Publisher Weekly*, offers two book reviews—*Science of the Good Samaritan* and *Loving Disagreements*—about how to handle disagreements that are helpful insights for any occasion.

Byle, for example, offers *The Science of the Good Samaritan: Thinking Bigger About*

Loving Our Neighbors by Emily Smith (Zondervan, October 24, 2023, 288 pages, ISBN-13: 978-0310366690, Paperback \$17.99, Kindle \$12.99) which explores what loving your neighbor looks like, demonstrated by the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan. Smith—an epidemiologist who created the Facebook page Friendly Neighbor Epidemiologist—calls on Christians to reach outside their immediate circles, redefine what “neighbor” means, and help bridge society’s inequities. While providing steps to take for building a more just world, she writes, “Getting along is not the goal. Real peace is.”

What does Smith mean when she claims that “real peace is” the goal? In Chapter Five of Part 1 of the book: Centering, Smith challenges our current views by stating that “Regarding our pasts, we have failed to recognize our complicity in deeply oppressive structures. When we talk about “taking America back for God,” we’re talking about a return to an America that was good for white evangelicals but certainly not good for everyone. Christendom, it turns out, wasn’t all that Christian” (p. 65). Smith, then goes on to explain how the “deeply oppressive structures” can be changed by taking another reflective look at the Good Samaritan passage and other related passages. In the Appendix of the book, Smith offers some practical tips for making changes. One tip, I thought was engaging, was the “Be the Bridge” listening exercise. Smith explains that “It’s a program designed for churches to go through together and explore the complexities of racial reconciliation and systemic justice” (p. 236). In our times, we seem to want to make a point rather than listen for opportunities to share our humanity and unity. Smith offers an appealing overview for changing and valuing our relationships. It is a good read and action plan.



Loving Disagreement: Fighting for Community Through the Fruit of the Spirit (NavPress, October 17, 2023, 196 pages, ISBN: 164158615X, Paperback \$16.99, Kindle \$9.99, Logos Ebook \$10.19)

Matt Mikalatos and Kathy Khang take a dual perspective of how the fruit of the Spirit—including love, joy, peace, and kindness—can

help Christians connect to those with whom they disagree. “[Jesus] disciples regrouped, bickered, split up, found their communities and circles of influence. But they kept at it—kept fighting for community even in disagreement—and we think that is part of Jesus’ invitation to us,” Khang writes. Caitlin Carlson, senior editor at NavPress, says, “They challenge the church to take the fruit of the Spirit seriously—to grapple with how kindness requires sacrifice, gentleness requires seeing the vulnerable and marginalized, and more.”

A Logos reviewer observes, “I did not enjoy reading this book. Mostly, it pushed my emotional and theological buttons to such a degree that I was forced to think about things I don’t want to face. Which is why I needed this book. You may not like what’s within—but you need what is within. More than anything, Mikalatos and Khang disrupt just about every one of our false notions of tranquility by inviting us into the tender difficulties of the extravagant kindness of God.” I share this reviewer’s viewpoint and I welcome the observations of others in the book’s epilogue. In this section of the point, I found people sharing how they dealt differently with their view of the fruit of the Spirit and then found a new way to engage for a better community. This is a good book to read and share with others.

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.*

Why should I come to the Annual Conference in Kansas City?

Good question. Are you interested in:

- Worshipping together and being inspired by a really great preacher?
- Bible Study where you'll learn from a nationally-recognized expert?
- Workshops that will educate, enlighten, and encourage you?
- Fellowship with some of your dearest friends, some of the most loving and caring people you'll ever meet?
- Participating in a totally new Youth Program with a really cool new leader?
- Discovering new mission opportunities where you can really make a difference in someone's life?

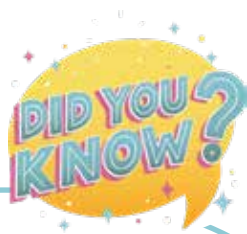
The Planning Committee is working diligently to line up exceptional talent and motivating speakers for the conference. We will share more details as commitments are confirmed, but be sure that it will be a stimulating, wonderful week in the Heartland of America that you will never forget. Plan now to join us July 16-19 next summer.

If you can come early or stay late you can visit some of our attractions; there is so much to do in our "City of Fountains" (more fountains than any other city in the world, except Rome). If you want to check out museums, there's quite a variety (art, history, jazz, sports). You could visit the Harry S Truman Presidential Library, the U.S. Reserve Bank, or Worlds of Fun amusement park. A little bit of everything to satisfy anyone's interest.



We can't wait to welcome you to Kansas City!

Jerry Brown
ICCC VP for Planning



*KC trivia: It was in Kansas City that McDonalds served their first happy meals and a young artist named Walt Disney befriended a little mouse he named Mortimer (his wife later convinced him to change the name to Micky).

Sharing Joys with

- **Rev. Ryan Thrasher and Palisades Community Church** (Washington, DC). Palisades Community Church celebrated their 100th year Church Anniversary on October 22nd. Rev. Thrasher played the bass he was given by the church at his installation service. **ICCC Regional Trustee Sandra Roberts** attended the celebration and is pictured on the right with Rev. Thrasher and Assoc. Pastor **Rev. Beth McKinney**.
- Welcome to **Rev. Kris McCoy!** Rev. McCoy was installed as Associate Pastor at **The Church at Litchfield Park, AZ** on November 19th.
- **Rev. Kyle Hug and Bridgeport Community Church, MI.** Rev. Hug was ordained on October 29th. **ICCC VP for Financial Development, Dorothy Campbell Gardner** presented the ordination certificate. ICCF Friends **Carolyn Nichols, Janet Burch and Grace O'Neal** all from **People's Community Church, Detroit**, attended the service, as well.
- **Antioch Community Church** as they welcome **Rev. Beth Armstrong** as their Interim Pastor. Beth will help Antioch's transitioning process after the loss of **Elder Harry Foockle**.



Sharing Concerns with

- **Pastor Emeritus Jud (The Church at Litchfield Park)** and **Betty Souers**, as Betty faces health challenges.
- **Joe Higgins**, as his surgery approaches mid-December.
- **Nick Brame, Seneca Community Church, MD** as he recovers from surgery and continues battling health issues.
- **Rev. Debra Tadlock** as she recovers from shoulder surgery. Rev. Tadlock has started a new church, **GracePointe Church**, which intends to have ICCF Membership as soon as they are able.



ICCC Resource About Raising Funds for your Congregation

Did you know that ICCF has a resource that provides ideas on raising funds for your congregation/center/community? It's titled **Fundraising 101**, and you can download it from our ICCF webpage at <https://www.iccnw.org/council-other-agency-resources/>.



Meet Our Leadership, One by One

REV. VICKY KIRKMAN Regional C Trustee for the Central Zone



Rev. Vicky Kirkman, the new Region C Trustee for the Central Zone is the Pastor of the Tennessee Valley Community Church and Center of Florence, AL.

She is a graduate of Liberty University and holds a master's degree in Theology. Rev. Kirkman has served as Pastor to TVCCC for the past five years and served TVCCC as the Administrator Assistant to the late Pastor Frederick Perkins who was a longtime member of the ICCC and attendee of the Annual Conference.

Pastor Kirkman is also a member of the Alabama Area Council of Community and Independent Churches where 11 Churches in Alabama come together to fellowship and work together for the building of God's kingdom together for the services and ministry to His people. With this model as a format, and the position being open, Rev. Kirkman's desire is to see the churches that had once made up the Region C- Central Zone reestablished and new churches added to fulfill the scripture from Matthew 17:21 "that they may all be one."

The opportunity to build from sections of the United States, coming together as a body of believers – to bridge our differences, bond as brothers and sisters in Christ, and serve one another in love. While we continue to see a falling away from the church, it is my desire to draw churches to continue to be the light for others to see that Jesus is still the answer to all of the world's problems today and we need to be in place all across the region to deliver the message of salvation and hope through Jesus Christ to whoever will, "let them come."

Rev. Vicky Kirkman

Sweetest Name I Know cont'd from page 1

He is the sweetest name on earth because he is the only King of kings and Lord of lords who can grant Everlasting Life.

Jesus is the sweetest name I know because He has ocular spiritual vision, similar to that referenced in I Corinthians 13, and has appropriate Scriptures in place that guard those in leadership from ignoring blind spots so that they will remain humble instead of arrogant.

Jesus is the sweetest name I know because he is probably the most humble preacher in the pulpit, and the worship hour is not the most segregated hour of the day. In heart and mind it should be the model for the ICCC congregation.

Jesus is the sweetest name I know because there are probably more words written about him than anyone else, including more hymns, anthems, gospel songs, and other lyrics.

If you are looking for a name that's above all others, yet whose essence is as humble as a dove and whose loving kindness (with a few reprimands) can be celebrated every day of the year, I invite you to love your parents, other family members and friends, but consider Jesus as the Sweetest Name you know.

Yes, unto us a child was born,
Unto us a son was given,
and the government is upon
his shoulder.

For us now, and
during all times and in all places,
He is Wonderful, Counselor,
The Mighty God,
The Everlasting Father,
The Sweetest Name I Know.



Abraham

Help Give Foster Children Hope

To whom much is given, much is required. Luke 12:48

Each year 220,000 children in the U.S. with an average age of just 7 ½ are hastily removed from unsafe home living conditions and sent to a foster care facility. Each child has just a couple of minutes to stuff their belongings into a trash bag before going to foster care. It's a traumatic experience that we can help alleviate for up to 200 youngsters at next year's Annual Conference in Kansas City, Missouri.

Thanks to a life-changing organization—Comfort Cases—children entering foster care can now do so with hope and dignity. We encourage you to take a few moments to watch the short inspirational Comfort Cases video at the end of this article.

When you watch it, you'll see why we are so excited to announce that filling Comfort Cases with emotionally supportive personal care items for foster kids is going to be the hands-on mission event for the 2024 Annual Conference.

You are probably aware that onsite hands-on mission events at the ICCC's host hotel have recently become an integral and rewarding part of the Annual Conference experience. Just ask any conference attendee who has participated in such an event. They will happily share how uplifting it is to work together to help make a potentially life-changing difference for children who are living in desperate circumstances.

What is a Comfort Case you ask? It is a backpack or duffel bag that includes needed items such as a blanket, pajamas, socks, a cuddle toy, dental kit, personal hygiene items, a book, pencils, etc. When a child is removed from his or her home due to a traumatic event, the Comfort Case is given to him or her to eliminate the demoralizing practice of providing distressed children with trash bags to store their belongings.



You can help to make the backpacking event a huge success for children entering into foster care in Kansas City. **We are asking your congregation's Missions Committee as well as ICCC congregation members to sponsor as many backpacks as you can support.** Each backpack filled with emotionally supportive personal care items for these at-risk children costs \$55.

Our goal is to sponsor 200 backpacks to be assembled at Conference and delivered to the Kansas City Missouri Social Services/Police Departments specifically for foster children. But the Missions Committee budget only enables us to purchase 55 Comfort Cases. **We need your help to reach the 200 Comfort Cases goal.**

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

1. First, print the the Comfort Cases Donation Form.
2. Next, copy the following YouTube link and view the exceptionally moving and inspirational video about the comfort cases story. <https://youtu.be/1YGloYZLldo?feature=shared>
3. Prayerfully complete the **Comfort Cases Donation Form** making a donation for whatever number of Comfort Cases you choose to give, and
4. Mail your tax-deductible gift before December 15th to DeAnn Bath at the ICCC Home Office address on the form. **Thank you from your ICCC Missions Committee.**

Comfort Cases Donation Form

/We will prayerfully donate Comfort Cases at \$55 each for uprooted foster care children.

Name of Church/ ICCC Member/Friend _____

_____ 2 Comfort Cases \$110

_____ 5 Comfort Cases \$275

_____ 10 Comfort Cases \$550

_____ 20 Comfort Cases \$1,100

_____ 25 Comfort Cases \$1,375

_____ Number of Comfort Cases \$ _____

Street Address _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

Signature _____

Make Check payable to: ICCC and designate "For Comfort Cases"

Thank you! Your Comfort Cases gift is sure to bring a generous blessing of dignity and hope to the foster children in Kansas City as well as enhancing and enriching the conference experience for all attendees.

Mail to:

International Council of Community Churches (ICCC)
PO Box 846
Longmont, CO 80502
(815) 464-5690
Email: ICCCNOW@sbcglobal.net

Women's Holiday Gathering
HOSTED BY:
WCF OF THE ICCCC
Join us
VIRTUALLY
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2023
8:00 PM EASTERN STANDARD TIME
(5:00 PT, 6:00 MT, 7:00 CT)

[HTTPS://US06WEB.ZOOM.US/J/95370345616](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/95370345616)
MEETING ID: 953 7034 5616
DIAL IN: 13017158592..95370345616#

Contact Winessa Crutchfield ~ 301-785-5165

JORDAN SCHOLARSHIP

Hey Family, the Jordan Scholarship Committee is looking for applicants.

- ✓ Any High School Seniors seeking higher education?
- ✓ Anyone thinking about going back to school to finish working on your goal?

Contact DeAnn for an application, questions or concerns.

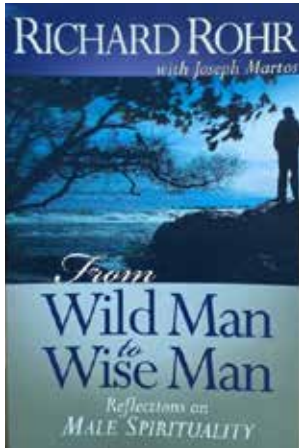


One Church, One Family, One Community

THANK YOU to a 2023 Annual Conference Sponsor
People's Community Church, Berea, OH

Greetings men of the ICCC

How quickly the months are going by since our Annual Conference. During the Conference meetings of Samaritan Men, the ICCC's men's group, I was asked to finish our study of Richard Rohr's book on male spirituality, **From Wild Man to Wise Man**. So, let's do that this Fall. We'll begin with a review of the first ten chapters (each is only a few pages), then pick up with chapters 11, 12 and 13 on the "Father Hunger", "Father Wound" and "Grief".



Our schedule of 7 pm Zoom gatherings in which to reflect together on the readings is as follows:

Dec. 5 ➡ Chapters 23& 24

Dec. 19 ➡ Chapter 25

You are invited to participate even if you have yet to read the book. Our discussions are stimulating, enjoyable and well-worthwhile. The link to our Zoom meetings is:

Rev. John Hardman-Zimmerman

The Zoom link for the workshops are
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82087374279?pwd=U0E5dGxZQkUvQlV4U2xnWlE5NXJsdz09>
Meeting ID: 820 8737 4279
Passcode: 437296

Consider what else you would like to see happen in or through our men's group. Let me know your ideas and suggestions.

The peace of Christ to you all, my friends.

Rev. John Hardman-Zimmerman
 ICCC Samaritans President

Jesus Calling

If you were at Annual Conference, you saw there was a Book Study session covering the book **Jesus Calling**.

If you are interested in purchasing the book, we still have some left! The cost is \$17.00 (book \$12, shipping and handling \$5), made payable to the ICCC. Mail to ICCC, PO Box 846, Longmont, CO 80502

"For many years, missionary Sarah Young kept a prayer journal, recording her thoughts and prayers. Then she decided to start listening for what Jesus might be saying to her in her daily journey.

The journey she started encouraged her heart, along with thousands of others the world over. Her meditations became the now classic devotional, Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence. These 365 days of readings share the words and scriptures Jesus laid on her heart to share. As you read these words of inspiration and encouragement you'll be brought closer to Jesus presence, experiencing His love and peace."

~ Christianbook.com

