

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MAY 2025



International Council of Community Churches

Volume 75 |

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

| Number 7

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Executive Director's Message

Bruce Merton



On July 22-24 the 75th Annual Conference of the International Council of Community Churches will be held on the campus of Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, Illinois. **(Full details are in this issue.)** We are returning to the place where “it all started.” In 1950, on this campus, the biennial council of the Peoples Church of Christ and Community Centers, an all Afro-American group of churches and centers led by Joseph M. Evans, and the National Council of Community Churches, an all-Caucasian group of churches led by The Rev. Roy A. Burkhardt, engaged in the largest interracial merger of religious bodies in America. The result was The International Council of Community Churches.

The traditional gift for celebrating a 75th Anniversary is the diamond. This year's conference is shaping up to be quite a gem! Like a diamond, the Conference will be multifaceted allowing the light of God's goodness, grace and love to be refracted through many different experiences such as worship, workshops, casual fellowship

and conversation, puppet presentations, music, dancing and a kid's program. Our “Diamond Jubilee” will stretch from the Lake Forest Campus all the way to the Progressive Community Church on Chicago's southside. The journey between the two places will serve to remind us of the racial roots of our organization – Black and White – and our commitment to live, work, serve and minister that the prayer of Jesus “that they all might be one” would become a reality among all peoples.

The theme for this year's conference was suggested by Past President, Rev. Bob Fread. It is **“Remembering the Past, Engaging Our Present and Dreaming Our Future”**. The theme is wonderfully appropriate for a 75th Anniversary.

Master Oogway, in the movie Kung Fu Panda, speaks sage wisdom, “Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery but today is a gift.

That is why we call it the ‘present’.”

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ICCC MAY 2025

75th Anniversary Theme: Reflecting the Majesty of God (Revelation 4:3 ESV)

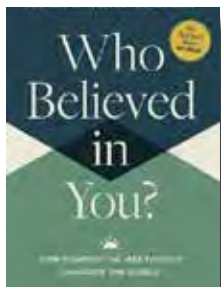


Book REVIEW

By Rev. Kenneth N. Nelson



As we honor 75 years of spiritual unity and Christian witness, this month's reading selections explore two essential callings within the church—*mentorship and ministry to the grieving*. Our featured title reminds us that leadership is shaped in relationship, while our second spotlight offers a curated list of powerful books that accompany us in seasons of loss and remembrance.



Mentorship:

Who Believed in You, Dina Powell McCormick & David McCormick. Mariner Books, \$28.99 (272p) ISBN 978-0063220363

Born during the pandemic's isolation, this compelling collection of leadership stories was inspired by one central question: *Who believed in you—even when you didn't believe in yourself?* The authors spoke with over 90 political, business, and media leaders, uncovering how meaningful mentorship changed their lives. Figures like Satya Nadella, Tory Burch, and Governor Wes Moore reflect on how someone else's belief unlocked their courage and vision.

This book is a heartfelt call to ministry leaders to become mentors who affirm, nurture, and uplift the next generation. Its pages remind readers that mentorship isn't optional; it's a sacred extension of discipleship. *Who Believed in You* offers a rich, faith-aligned model for raising others in leadership with intention and love. It is especially timely for ICCC congregations seeking to strengthen intergenerational bonds and prepare emerging leaders.

Reading Through Grief: A Faithful Companion for Healing

Curated by Mark Travers; originally featured in *Forbes* (May 11, 2024) and adapted for ICCC members.

Grief is not only a human emotion but also a sacred journey. As churches accompany those who mourn, books can serve as pastoral companions, helping individuals articulate their sorrow, rediscover hope, and recognize

God's presence in their pain. Whether you are a pastor offering support, a caregiver walking alongside others, or someone grieving personally, these selections provide biblically resonant, spiritually sensitive, and emotionally grounded pathways for healing.

Faith-Aligned Grief Reads for ICCC Ministries

1. *On Grief and Grieving—Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler*. This foundational text on **the five stages of grief** offers universal spiritual insights that can be integrated with Christian care. Kessler, a hospice counselor, includes deeply empathetic stories that validate each person's journey.
2. *Bearing the Unbearable: Love, Loss, and the Heartbreaking Path of Grief*—Joanne Cacciatore. While not overtly religious, Cacciatore's writing is deeply spiritual, emphasizing compassion, mindfulness, and honoring loss with dignity. It is a helpful resource for grief support groups in church settings.
3. *It's OK That You're Not OK* – Megan Devine. This book challenges the pressure to "move on" quickly and validates the emotional weight of grief. Though not faith-based, its authenticity and pastoral tone are helpful for ministers offering long-term care and listening-centered support.
4. *The Long Goodbye* – Meghan O'Rourke. A memoir of losing a parent, this work offers comfort for adult children navigating anticipatory grief and long-term illness. It pairs well with Christian reflections on honoring parents and familial loss.
5. *The Year of Magical Thinking* – Joan Didion. A secular classic, Didion's poetic honesty is suitable for faith leaders seeking to understand the disorientation of sudden loss. Use with care, as it's more existential than pastoral.
6. *Notes on Grief* – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Adichie reflects with spiritual humility on her father's passing, making this collection of essays useful for multicultural and interfaith congregations seeking diverse expressions of grief.
7. *When Breath Becomes Air* – Paul Kalanithi. A bestselling memoir written by a Christian neurosurgeon reflecting on death and meaning. It engages spiritual questions directly and is a moving resource for those confronting terminal illness with faith.
8. *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss*—Jerry Sittser (Recommended Addition). Written by a Christian theologian who lost his wife, mother, and daughter in a car crash, this book offers one of the most theologically robust reflections on loss. It is highly recommended for pastoral libraries and grief preaching.
9. *Lament for a Son* – Nicholas Wolterstorff (Recommended Addition). A brief yet profound theological reflection by a Christian philosopher after the death of his son. It speaks powerfully to Christian hope and the tension of faith in mourning.
10. *A Grief Observed*— C.S. Lewis: "No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid...At other times it feels like being mildly drunk, or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says."

We welcome your reflections! Did *Who Believed in You* or any grief readings speak to your journey or ministry? Has mentorship or mourning shaped how you serve others? Email your responses to iccnnow@sbcglobal.net by the end of the month. Let us know if we may share your thoughts in future newsletters. Your voice helps us build a stronger, more compassionate ICCC community.

Remembering Nicaea: A Common Table, a Common Spirit

By Rev. Rock Fremont,
Vice President of Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations

This year marks the 1700th anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea—a moment in 325 CE when Christian leaders from across the known world gathered to articulate the heart of their shared faith. The result, the Nicene Creed, has endured as a symbol of Christian unity and belief.

For many of us in the International Council of Community Churches, especially those shaped by congregational traditions, councils like Nicaea may feel distant. Our churches often center local discernment, the freedom of the believer, and the Spirit's work in community. Yet Nicaea is still part of our story—a reminder that seeking understanding across difference is both ancient and necessary. Those gathered in 325 didn't agree on everything. But they believed that Christ could hold them together.

As the World Council of Churches and communions around the globe honor this anniversary, we are invited to reflect not just on what was said at Nicaea, but on why they gathered: for unity, for clarity, and for love's sake.

And as we look ahead to Pentecost on June 8, we are reminded that the Spirit of God has always moved communities to gather and listen across language, culture, and conviction. Pentecost didn't erase differences—it celebrated them. So too must we.

May this season between Nicaea and Pentecost be a time for us to recommit to the hard and holy work of being the Church together. Not because we are the same, but because we belong to one another.



A fresco depicting the First Council of Nicaea in the Sistine hall of the Vatican Library. Credit: Niday Picture Library / Alamy Stock Photo

75th Annual Conference cont'd. from page 1

The words highlight the importance of living in the moment while appreciating what we have had and leaning into what will be.

The reality is that of the three elements of time – past, present and future – the present is the most fleeting. It passes with the beat of a heart, the flutter of an eye, the speaking of a single word, a single step or a single breath. Yet it is that fleeting, momentary **present** which gives us the appreciative eye that looks back and, at the same time, unfolds with the hope of our future. We will speak of our Conference as a meeting in the **present** when, in reality, it will unfold as millions and millions of momentary **presents** which turn into the **past** while we march steadily into our **future**. **Time is like that!** As Isaac Watts wrote, “Time like an ever-rolling stream, bears all of us away; we fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.”

In our **present** Conference we will be surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses from the **past** while we use our time together to earnestly and prayerfully seek a **future** of renewal and growth in the ministry and service of God through Jesus, the Christ.

I look forward to seeing you at conference and ask that you would join me in the affirmation of faith written in Isaac Watts' hymn, “O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter in the stormy blast, and our eternal home. Under the shadow of your throne your saints have dwelt secure; sufficient is your arm alone, and our defense is sure.”

The I.C.C.C.'s **past** has been lived; the **present** is being lived; the **future** will be lived. Let us be grateful for our **past**; bold, courageous and honest in living our **present**; hopeful for a bright and lasting **future** while believing and owning that “Before the hills in order stood or earth received her frame, from everlasting God is God, to endless years the same.”

Grace and Peace,

Bruce

Conference Volunteers Needed for Children

With the annual conference coming up, we are searching for caring, enthusiastic volunteers to help with the children's program. This is a great opportunity to invest in our youngest attendees, creating a fun and meaningful experience for them while their families participate in the conference.

The time commitment is about eight hours total, spread over the three-day conference. If we get enough volunteers, we can rotate shifts so that everyone gets a break.

If you're interested or have questions, please reach out to Rev. Amanda Alvarado at amanda.alvarado@uprisingaustin.org. Thank you for helping us make this a welcoming and engaging space for all!



Sharing Concerns with:

- Our concerns and prayers are with **Charles Addison**, who's brother Bennie passed away April 22nd, from a short illness.

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations
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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.”*

Here is a Sneak Peek at the 75th Anniversary Conference Schedule



Most conference meetings will be held on the campus of Lake Forest College in Brown Hall. This century-old building has a new conference center attached with the latest digital technology and green design to respect God's creation. Our primary conference room, the Tarble Room, is a beautiful room filled with natural light, featuring windows on three sides and great views of the tree-lined campus. Brown Hall is surrounded by convenient parking and close to the Student Union, where the cafeteria offers three meals a day.



Brown Hall on Lake Forest College Campus



Tarble Room, primary meeting room
for Annual Conference

Tuesday, July 22
Remembering the Past

9 AM to 1 PM
Registration

1 – 1:30 PM
**Opening Session at
Lake Forest College**
Welcome, Introductions and
Puppet Presentation,
“Did You See C.C.?”

1:30 – 3:30 PM
Children’s & Youth Programming

1:45 – 3:15 PM
Plenary 1 - Remembering the Past
We will celebrate our past and recognize
long-term conference attendees,
Past-Presidents & Executive Directors

3:30 PM ~ Break

5:30 – 7:15 PM
75th Anniversary Dinner Reception
at Lake Forest First Presbyterian Church
This buffet style meal is included in the
registration fee

*The church is across the street
from Lake Forest College*

7:30 PM
75th Anniversary Worship
at the First Presbyterian Church
with Rev. Don Ashmall,
Council Minister Emeritus

Meals at the Lake Forest College Cafeteria

Breakfast - 7:30 to 9 AM - \$6.00
Lunch - 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM - \$10.00
Dinner - 4:30 to 6:30 PM - \$12.50

A 1 Day/3 Meal Ticket ~ \$ 27.50

Wednesday, July 23

Engaging our Present

9 – 10 AM

Auxiliaries

(WCF/Samaritans/Ministerium)

10: 15 AM ~ Morning Opening

Announcements, Introductions and Puppet Presentation, “I See, CC”

Children’s & Youth Programming

10:45 AM – 12:15 PM

Plenary 2 - Today’s ICCC

12:15 PM ~ Lunch Break

1:30 – 3:30 PM ~ Workshops

1 – Discussion and Comment on the Proposed and Revised Constitution,
with Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Bruce Merton

2 – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion,
with Dr. Linda Abington and Rev. Dr. Sharyon Cosey

1:30 – 5 PM

Children’s & Youth Programming

3:45 - 5 PM

Business Meeting 1

Action on New Constitution

5:15 PM ~ Supper Break

7: 30 PM

Evening Worship

with Rev. Dr. Seretha Pearsall, Pastor
Park Road Community Church,
Washington, DC

Thursday, July 24

Dreaming our Future

9 – 10 AM

Auxiliaries

(WCF/Samaritans/Ministerium)

10:15 – 10:30 AM

Morning Opening

Announcements and Puppet Presentation, “Can You See, CC?”

10:30 AM – Noon

Children’s & Youth Programming

10:45 – 11:45 AM

Business Meeting 2

Noon - Lunch Break

1 PM

We are all invited to Southside Chicago where we will be hosted by Progressive Community Church for a Meet & Greet, Dinner, and our final Worship Service together.

Rev. Phil Tom, former Executive Director of the ICCC, will speak at the worship service.

Music for the service will be provided by Chosen Generation and the Music Ministry of Progressive Community Church.

Bus transportation will be provided to the Southside. When the worship service has concluded, delegates will be transported back to Lake Forest College or the Conference Hotel.



No conference events will be hosted at the hotel. It is recommended that delegates have a car for traveling between the hotel and Lake Forest College. The ICCC has a courtesy block of rooms at a Hilton Garden Inn, which is the closest hotel to Lake Forst College. Information on the hotel can be found in this issue or at www.icccnow.org

75th Annual Conference

July 22-24, 2025 – Lake Forest, IL

Conference Lodging Information

The ICCC recommends using the Hilton Garden Inn in Lake Forest, IL, for those attending the 2025 Annual Conference.

The hotel address is:
26225 North Riverwoods Boulevard
Lake Forest, IL 60045.

This hotel is about 5 miles from the Lake Forest College campus and is the closest hotel to the college.



The ICCC has a courtesy block of rooms at the special rate of:

- \$159 plus tax for a king room or
- \$169 plus tax for a double queen room.

These rates are good from Sunday, July 20 to Friday, July 25. The deadline to receive this rate is Sunday, June 15, or until the hotel sells out of rooms, whichever is first.

We encourage people to make reservations EARLY.

Hotel information can be found at <http://www.icccnow.org/hotel-information>

Reservations can be made by:

- **calling 847-735-8374** and using the code **ICCC25** OR
- making your reservation online through www.hilton.com and entering the code **ICCC25** in the **Group Code** field. It should automatically give you the ICCC rate IF your reservation is for the dates included (between July 20 and July 25).

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the new conference format, no conference programming will be held at this hotel. Most conference programming will be held on the Lake Forest College campus, 555 North Sheridan Road, Lake Forest, Illinois 60045. Individuals will be responsible for transportation between the hotel and the college.

Other Lodging Options (5 to 10 miles from college)

Sleep Inn, 3250 Bittersweet Ave, Lake Bluff, IL 60044, (224) 303-4592

Comfort Inn and Suites, 517 E. Highway 83, Mundelein, IL 60060, (224) 245-5077



International Council of Community Churches
ICCC Registration Form – 2025 Annual Conference: July 22-24
75th Anniversary Conference
"Seeking God's Vision: Remembering the Past, Dreaming a Future"
Lake Forest, IL

Name (as you would like it on badge) _____

Full Address _____

Telephone (_____) _____ E-mail Address: _____

Emergency Contact Name _____ Phone _____

Church (member of) _____

First Conference: Yes No Status: Clergy Laity

➤ ➤ ➤ **FOR THE ELEMENTARY AND YOUTH PROGRAMS ONLY!** ⬅ ⬅ ⬅

■ Age (on 7-1-2025) _____ Grade completed by (7-1-2025) _____

■ If **under 18**, an adult who is registered for the Conference and who will serve as a sponsor and assume responsibility for said young person must sign below:

_____ Sponsor Signature _____ Print Sponsor Name

CONFERENCE FEES

Fill in Dollar Amount for this
Registration

| | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Infants/Small Child (birth to not entering kindergarten) | \$ 0.00 | \$ |
| Elementary Child (entering kindergarten - entering 6th grade) | \$ 100.00 | \$ |
| Youth (completed 6th grade - entering 12th grade) | \$ 150.00 | \$ |
| Young Adult (completed 12th grade - age 29) | \$ 175.00 | \$ |
| Adult Register by May 31, 2025 - Early Bird Special \$195.00 | \$ 220.00 | \$ |
| Tuesday Daily Registrant (non-buffet registration is \$40) | \$ 100.00 | \$ |
| Wednesday Daily Registrant | \$ 60.00 | \$ |
| Thursday Daily Registrant | \$ 60.00 | \$ |
| TOTAL ENCLOSED | | \$ |

A **75th Anniversary Buffet** will be served on Tuesday, July 22, and is included in the registration fee. Tickets for the Buffet are limited to 120 people, on a first come, first served basis. Buffet tickets are only sold as part of a registration. No buffet tickets will be sold after June 30. (Registrations without a buffet ticket will be reduced by \$60)

Please return this form with payment to: ICCC, PO Box 249, Loudon, TN 37774

Check or Money Order made payable to ICCC VISA MASTERCARD AMEX DISCOVER

Acct. #: _____ Exp. Date: _____ CVV: _____

Print name as it appears on card: _____ Signature _____

One form per person. Early Bird registration must be **received in the office by May 31st**. Registrations after June 30, 2025 will be accepted at Conference only and will not include a buffet ticket. **CANCELLATIONS:** A cancellation received in the office by July 11 will be refunded the registration fee less \$25 administration fee per person. Cancellations received in the office on or after July 12 will be refunded the registration fee less \$ 75 administration fee per person.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSIONS MAY BE VIDEOTAPED OR LIVE STREAMED. By registering for conference, you agree the ICCC may use or broadcast your image, name, voice and story in any medium or format, throughout the world forever, free-of-charge, and for any reasonable purpose in furtherance of its mission.



Seeking Full-Time Senior Pastor

The Protestant Community Church (also known as the Cathedral of the Woods) of Medford Lakes, NJ is seeking to fill the position of Senior Pastor. This will be a position beginning August 2025. The Protestant Community Church (PCC) is 20 miles east of Philadelphia. PCC is an interdenominational and congregationally governed church with an average attendance of 90-120 between two services at 8 o'clock and 10 o'clock. Additional Information: <https://protestantcommunitychurch.org>

The Senior Pastor is responsible for providing leadership and administrative oversight of the church's ministries, including worship, music, preaching, teaching, mission service, stewardship, and fellowship. This Individual will work with the church staff to provide opportunities for members to engage in worship, discipleship, and mission.

The Senior Pastor is accountable to the PCC congregation and its Board of Trustees. The applicant must hold a degree from an accredited or recognized Seminary or Bible College, be Ordained or Licensed Minister.

If you are interested in this position, please submit the following:

- Cover letter that includes salary expectations
- 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
- Any mission-related social media site.

Please submit your information to:

The Protestant Community Church

c/o Chrissie Greatrex

100 Stokes Road

Medford Lakes, NJ 08055

Or

Email: pastorsearch@protestantcommunitychurch.org

Seeking Pastor

Seeking a Shepherd for Our Little Church in the Woods

Bradford Woods Community Church, nestled in the heart of Bradford Woods, PA, (just a stone's throw from Pittsburgh), a vibrant non-denominational congregation, seeks a dynamic pastor who embodies warmth, charisma, and a passion for community. We are looking for someone who can connect with people, inspire growth, and lead our church. We're a close-knit congregation averaging about 30-35 in Sunday attendance, with a rich history dating back to 1915.

Our ideal candidate will embody Christ's love, foster inclusivity, and guide us in spiritual growth and community service. We are also looking for someone who can connect with people to grow the congregation in an intentional and meaningful way. If you are driven to make a difference and eager to engage with our congregation and the broader community, we want to hear from you!

Come help us continue our mission of spreading God's love through worship, education, and outreach in our serene woodland sanctuary. For more details, please contact us at BWCC2025@gmail.com

Bradford Woods
Community Church
4836 Wexford Run Road,
Bradford Woods PA 15015
724-935-3135



International Council of Community Churches

TO: ICCC MEMBER CHURCHES

FROM: Pastor R.C. Fleeman, Peace Community Church, Ft. Myers Beach, Florida

Dear ICCC Church Families:

I have been tasked with creating a commemorative booklet for the ICCC's 75th Anniversary. The conference planning committee wishes to include congratulatory ads in the booklet. Hopefully, every member church will participate by purchasing an ad.

Here's how it will work:

- Ad prices are below. Despite inflation, the prices have not increased in several years.
- Choose the size of the ad you want to have included in the booklet.
- Create your ad copy / layout and send it to me.
- Hopefully your ad will highlight your church and offer congratulations to the ICCC on its 75th anniversary. You might also wish to include the number of years your church has been a member of the ICCC.

Please send the ad copy to me at: icccbooklet2025@gmail.com. I can accept ads in JPEG, pdf, and MS Word, PowerPoint and Publisher formats.

I am willing to help you with the layout for an ad if you wish. If you prefer, you may also mail the ad copy to me at:

Rev. R.C. Fleeman
c/o Peace Community Church
P.O. Box 60958
Fort Myers, FL 33906

Please send funds to cover the cost of the ad to the ICCC office by mail and indicate that the payment is for an ad in the booklet. Payment by check should be mailed to:

ICCC
P.O. Box 249
Loudon, TN 37774

DEADLINE: May 16, 2025

AD PRICES:

- 8" width x 11" height (Full Page): \$200.00
- 8" width x 5" height (Half Page): \$110.00
- 4" width x 5" height (Quarter Page): \$ 60.00

Thanks,
Rev. R.C. Fleeman

Rejoice for the "Second Coming" is at hand!

*Submitted by Bruce Merton,
Executive Director*

Take ease! This is not the second coming of Jesus. No rapture!

It is the "second coming" of DeAnn. DeAnn is back! **(She wants to make it clear that it is in an *interim* capacity)** Repair and not rapture is the goal and there is no one better suited to help the I.C.C.C. out of a jam than the one that has done it so many times before.

Noting that she was overwhelmed and unable to fill the Administrative Assistant position, Pam Kirkpatrick, resigned at the end of March. In the aftermath of that resignation, the Board found that there were multiple issues that had been left unaddressed. The main issues surrounded the failure to receive a year-end financial report and several singular months without any financial information.

As **Interim** Administrator, DeAnn will maintain part-time office hours in her Colorado location. The *available* office hours will be Wednesday and Thursday 12:00pm – 5:00pm Eastern Time.

The I.C.C.C.'s phone number and email address remain the same and they are monitored even if the time is outside of *available* office hours.

A new search for an Administrative Assistant will begin in the very near future. In the meantime, DeAnn will be working to produce the financial reports and documents that are needed to properly function in the present and prepare for the financial needs of our future. She will also be the conduit for communications between churches, centers, the Board and myself.

Please join me as we rejoice in this "second coming" by offering our sincere and profound thanks to DeAnn and praise to God who provides "very present help in our time of need."