

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

FEBRUARY 2026



International Council of Community Churches

Volume 76 |

A Voice for Ecumenical Congregations and Christians Around the World

| Number 4

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Executive Director's Message

Bruce Merton

Going back so I.C.C.C. can go forward

A little over 800 years ago he was searching for meaning in his life. The young Italian man entered an old, run down church. There he heard the voice of God: "Rebuild my church. You can see it is in ruins." If we are truly honest with ourselves and if we really listen, I believe we will hear that same voice challenge us to rebuild, or at the least repair and renovate, the I.C.C.C.

That young man was Francis of Assisi. His first response was to physically rebuild, repair and renovate old churches in and around Assisi, but the voice of God kept hounding him: "Francis, rebuild my church. As you can see, it is in ruins." Francis came to realize that the rebuilding God was calling for was not institutional, but spiritual.

Last year we celebrated our 75th anniversary. We celebrated the grand and good.

We heard, with clarity and honesty, the very real issues and problems that present a serious challenge to our continuing existence.

My relationship and deep involvement with the I.C.C.C. has only been 23 years in number. It pales in insignificance to many of the faithful and it is significantly more years than many of the newly faithful. During the years I have been active, a common thread that has bound all of us together is our multiple institutional attempts at renewal, renovation, revival and rebuilding.

We have spent a huge amount of time, energy and resources trying to "fix" the I.C.C.C. Let's be honest, brutally honest! After all that so many have done, and continue to do, we must admit that it has not worked!

As the New Year dawned I decided to spend time in confession, thought, and prayer in preparation for continuing my 'temporary' service as Executive Director. Similar to Francis of Assisi, I hear the continuing voice of God: "Rebuild, renew, renovate, revive **MY** I.C.C.C."

And, like Francis, it dawned on me that our "institutional" efforts are never going to be the answer. The answer lies in the reality that our rebuilding, renewing, renovating and revival will consist of and be found in a spiritual REconversion.

Yes, a REconversion to the energy, commitment, beliefs, ideals and vision that brought the I.C.C.C. into existence. As I reflected on the history of the I.C.C.C. juxtaposed to our current situation it became abundantly clear that we have "lost our MOJO"! All of the hopes, dreams, aspirations and ideals that formed the foundation and initial success and growth of the I.C.C.C. are still viable, appropriate and needed in this day and age.

We need to go back to the past to secure our future! Sometimes repeating the old can work to make all things new!

Will you join me in GOING BACK so the I.C.C.C. can go FORWARD? Together we will hear the voice of God: "Well done, good and faithful servants!"

Bruce

ICCC FEBRUARY 2026

“Anchored by Grace, Transformed by Renewal: A Call to Revival.” Ezra 9:8 and Romans 12:2)



Book REVIEW

By Rev. Kenneth N. Nelson



As we enter America's 250th anniversary year, the ICCC February Book Review highlights works that speak to spiritual formation, relational leadership, civic responsibility, and Black historical witness. Together, these selections invite clergy and congregations to pursue renewal grounded in faith, dignity, and moral clarity. I believe these resources can foster more opportunities for constructive leadership and civic engagement. This direct application can enrich ministry efforts, guide personal spiritual growth, and support community-building initiatives.

Religious Freedom and America's Dialogue Selections

Tammy Melchien's *Choosing the Opposite* calls believers to embodied discipleship rooted in the Sermon on the Mount. Melchien argues that following Jesus often requires choosing obedience that runs counter to cultural instincts, self-protection, and convenience. With a pastoral and accessible tone, she presents Jesus' teachings as a Spirit-empowered pathway for retraining instincts toward humility, peacemaking, generosity, and forgiveness. The book is especially useful for congregations and leadership teams seeking faith that shapes daily decision-making. Additionally, *Choosing the Opposite* includes discussion questions designed for group study, making it a practical resource for clergy planning congregational engagement and study sessions. This resource can also be adapted for youth groups or intergenerational gatherings, encouraging participants to form discipleship habits that reflect Jesus' teachings. Moreover, it lends itself to ecumenical dialogues, enhancing its relevance during Black History Month and for diverse audiences seeking collective growth in faith.

***Beyond the Politics of Contempt* by Teschner, Malow, and Robinson** addresses the relational damage caused by polarization. Rather than urging agreement, the authors focus on dismantling contempt through listening, empathy, and curiosity. Their practical framework affirms ICCC's commitment to reconciliation and beloved community, offering leaders practical tools to sustain trust and compassion in divided environments.

***The Origins of the Declaration's Most Revolutionary Sentence*, Walter Isaacson** examines the enduring moral force of the Declaration of Independence's claim that all are created equal. By tracing its philosophical and historical roots, Isaacson underscores the sentence's enduring relevance to ethical leadership and shared civic identity. The book offers a concise resource for faith-informed civic reflection during a milestone national year.

Classic and Contemporary Black History Month Books

Keisha N. Blain's *Without Fear: Black Women and the Making of Human Rights* highlights the often-overlooked leadership of Black women in shaping global justice movements. Blain connects faith, moral imagination, and community organizing, making the book particularly relevant for congregational study and leadership development during Black History Month.

Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s *This Is Our Story* offers an accessible, richly illustrated account of African American history. Weaving together culture, struggle, and resilience, Gates offers a narrative that supports intergenerational learning and deepens appreciation for Black contributions to American life.

Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me*, written as a letter to his son, offers a deeply personal meditation on race, history, and the human cost of injustice. While not theological in form, it invites moral reflection, lament, and honest dialogue within faith communities.

Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited* remains a foundational theological work interpreting Jesus' message through the experience of the oppressed. Its gospel-centered vision of love, dignity, and nonviolent resistance has shaped generations of pastors and civil rights leaders.

Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, stands as one of the most powerful testimonies in American history. Douglass' account of enslavement, literacy, faith, and freedom offers essential material for sermons and studies on justice and moral courage.

Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* reflects on identity, trauma, and resilience with poetic clarity. Though literary in form, its themes of dignity and voice provide meaningful material for community reflection.

Together, these works call the ICCC community toward spiritual renewal, relational integrity, and faithful civic engagement. They offer resources for preaching, teaching, and leadership formation that remain anchored in grace while responding honestly to contemporary challenges. We encourage clergy and congregational leaders to select one of these books for their next sermon series or study group to foster immediate engagement and practical application. This approach enables communities to deepen their faith journey while exploring themes of justice, leadership, and transformation.

We Want to Hear from You! Do you have thoughts to share, or would you like to start a book discussion? We invite you to send your comments or express interest in a discussion by emailing us at iccnw@sbcglobal.net by the end of the month. Consider sharing: Did the book inspire you to take action, change a behavior, or see things differently? How has it impacted your perspective or daily life? Let us know if we may quote or paraphrase your insights. Your feedback is valuable, and we appreciate the time you take to share it. Thank you, and may your month be richly blessed!

Reflections from the 75th Anniversary Christian Unity Gathering

By Rev. Rock Fremont, Jr., Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, ICCC

Representatives of the International Council of Community Churches joined leaders from across the Christian family for the annual in-person meeting of the Churches Uniting in Christ Coordinating Council, held November 12–14 in Bethlehem.

ICCC was represented by Rev. Rock Fremont, Jr. and Rev. John Woodcock, who participated fully in the worship, governance, and discernment of the Council.

Hosted by our Moravian siblings at Central Moravian Church, the gathering brought together delegates from CUIC's ten member communions for worship, discernment, relationship-building, and governance. Participants were welcomed into the rich history and living witness of the Moravian Church, whose commitments to unity, shared life, justice, and hospitality shaped both the setting and the spirit of the meeting.

Throughout the three days, the Coordinating Council received reports from CUIC's five task forces: Anniversary, Education, Racial Social Justice, Relationships, and Young Adults. These reports highlighted the concrete ways CUIC continues to live into its Eight Marks of Unity, particularly its shared mission to confront racism and foster reconciliation across church and society.

Significant time was devoted to discerning CUIC's future direction in a changing ecclesial landscape. Council members reflected on the urgent need for ecumenical bodies to offer faithful responses to polarization, Christian nationalism, and deepening social divisions. These conversations emphasized CUIC's role as a space for honest dialogue, shared witness, and collaborative mission,



while also addressing questions of leadership development, organizational capacity, and future partnerships.

During the meeting, I was nominated to serve as President of Churches Uniting in Christ following the conclusion of Rev. Dr. Jean Hawxhurst's term. For ICCC, this nomination carries special significance, as it represents a continuation of leadership once offered by Abraham Wright, who previously served CUIC in this same role. I am deeply honored by the nomination and grateful for the strong ecumenical witness ICCC has long brought to Churches Uniting in Christ.

The gathering also included worship using the CUIC Communion liturgy, a walking tour of Bethlehem's UNESCO World Heritage sites, and shared meals that strengthened relationships across traditions. These moments of prayer, learning, and fellowship reflected CUIC's conviction that Christian unity is practiced not only through dialogue, but through shared life.

As CUIC looks ahead, ICCC members are encouraged to mark their calendars for the 25th anniversary CUIC worship celebration on September 16, 2026, in Memphis, Tennessee. This milestone gathering will commemorate the inauguration of Churches Uniting in Christ and renew our shared commitment to visible unity, justice, and reconciliation.

ICCC remains a valued and active partner in this ecumenical journey, continuing to witness to a unity that honors difference while calling the Church more fully into Christ's reconciling work.



“That’ll Never Happen to Me”

Submitted by Rev. Bill Ireland

Moderator for the ICCC Ministry Team for Leadership Development

At the end of every season in the National Football League many teams routinely fire coaches, general managers, and staff. Poor draft choices, salary cap issues, and not enough wins on the field propel this annual spree of housecleaning. Most coaches take this upheaval in stride. No matter how many games they win, they realize they’re just one bad season away from being fired. In fact, most coaches say they expect to be fired at some point in their careers.



I would venture that the majority of ministers don’t operate with the same assumption. Instead, our hope is to be able to plant ourselves somewhere where we can serve for a long time. There’s a good reason for this: longer tenures generally result in healthier congregations and increased effectiveness. One other reality comes into play as well. Namely, it takes time to earn a church’s trust, learn the system, and exert positive influence. In many ways, then, time matters when it comes to ministry.

Sadly, long tenures are becoming the exception rather than the rule. Early departures and forced terminations have routinely become a part of the congregational landscape. Cultural shifts, financial pressures, relational dynamics, and unclear expectations have combined to make long-term pastorates rather commonplace. If a church believes a minister hasn’t compiled enough “wins”, then the solution is to find a new minister. Rather than face up to the fact that the tried-and-true approaches of yesteryear no longer work, congregations often stubbornly persist in doing the same things over and over. It’s easier to blame someone rather than doing some serious soul searching. As a result, ministers are expendable.

I found myself in this camp several years ago. Recognizing that I was in a no-win situation, I decided to walk away from a church I was serving. The decision to do so was painful and hard, but ultimately the right thing for me. I learned a lot from the experience, and some of the lessons were indeed hard won. If you find yourself in a situation where you might have to leave your place of service (for whatever reason), I hope the following will be of help.

If you leave without having another place of service lined up, take a moment to breathe. Give yourself a break

from the grind of ministry. Use the interlude time to assess your gifts and your shortcomings. Time and distance unfailingly offer the gift of perspective. If you are fortunate enough to have another opportunity as a lifeline, recognize that a new place of service does not heal all wounds. We take whatever has happened to us wherever we go.

Seek help. Living through the process of deciding to leave or being forced to depart exacts a toll. In my case, I found the assistance of a coach and a spiritual director invaluable. By engaging both, I gained some clarity about what happened and how I might move forward. In a success-oriented culture, I was tempted to interpret my experience as failure. The help of friends, colleagues, and professionals provided a new lens through which to interpret the experience.

Plan for your financial future. When I decided to leave, I was told it would take at least two years to find another place of service. After consulting with our financial advisor, we figured we could handle two years. In my case, however, two years stretched into nearly five! We had to abandon our original plan and regroup. I learned again that the old adage “things take longer than things take” was spot on. All this to say, before you leave, no matter what the reason, plan ahead.

Collateral damage happens. Obviously, my experience was not limited to me and me alone. My wife and our daughter were both affected. As a result, they, too, experienced a great deal of grief, anger, and heartache. Our entire family had to walk through this trauma, and we each found our way in our own time and at our own pace. Nevertheless, all of us were wounded, and none of us could tend solely to our wounds. We all needed help.

I hope these insights will prove helpful if you are in or have walked through such an experience. Years ago, I heard of a minister who had to leave his congregation. I remember thinking at the time, “That’ll never happen to me.” Well, it did, and I hope it will never happen to you. If it does, I hope what I’ve written will encourage you as you make your way through.

If you have or anticipate having to leave your place of service, please feel free to contact me via the Pinnacle Leadership website.

Greetings and Happy New Year from the 2026 ICCC Mission Outreach Ministry Team

Submitted by Myrtis Brame,

ICCC Ministry Team for Mission Outreach Moderator from Seneca Community Church



I am excited to share that we are on a mission to reduce hunger in our local communities and across the world through simple acts of kindness this year. Food insecurity is growing, ranging from people missing meals

in local communities to extreme starvation and death in distant places in the world. Some of the many reasons can be attributed to governmental cutbacks, unemployment, war and man’s inhumanity to man and more.

When asked to serve as the ICCC Mission Ministry leader, I accepted the opportunity because I knew our God would strengthen and energize me, working together with other believers, namely Daniel Coffey (North Carolina), Shirley Corbin (Baltimore, Maryland/ Washington DC Area), Gail Fleeman, (Florida), Bob Harris (Ohio), Jackie Poole, (Alabama), Winnie West (Ohio) and Beatrice Winfrey (Illinois and Indiana) to organize and mobilize for impactful mission success.

Growing up in a richly endowed community of believers while living in a poverty-stricken community

in Mississippi, I witnessed how my elders relied on their faith working together “to make more of little” in times of adversity. As we enter 2026, my belief is reinforced by Seneca Community Church’s encouragement “to go forth in faith, grounded in grace, shaped by love and to stand ready to serve in a diverse and changing world.”

The Mission Ministry intends to work collectively with ICCC congregations, auxiliaries and individual members to support our existing local church food ministries and to expand our reach to reduce the impact of growing examples of hunger that we are seeing in our communities and the world. We are looking to accomplish this goal through small and large acts of kindness throughout the year.

Food adversity is real; we see the long food lines; we know the immigrant community is suffering; we see starvation and famine in the world; and we know God is calling on us to be his servants “to make more of little” by sharing our resources to reduce food insecurity this year. This month, we are showing how the Gahanna Community Congregational Church in Ohio mobilized to help feed their community. We will continue to feature the work of other congregations making a difference against hunger in future issues. In addition, please watch each Christian Community for ways you can personally help with each mission driven opportunity announced.

Summary list of planned mission activities for 2026.

Timeline	Mission Ministry Hunger Relief Program
	I. Hunger Relief Mission Grants
Year-Round	IA. Member Church Hunger Relief Grants
School Calendar	IB. School Lunch Debt Relief Grants
April 5 - May 24 (Easter – Pentecost)	II. Acts of Kindness, Emergency Grocery Gift Cards
	III. CWS Best Gift Hunger Relief Events
July 2026	IIIA. Best Gift Hunger Relief Event and Workshop - Conference
Nov 29 - Dec 24 (Season of Advent)	IIIB. CWS Best Gift Hunger Events in local churches/communities
Year-Round	IV. Contingency Natural Disaster Fund
	Hurricane Melissa Support to Jamaica
	https://supportjamaica.gov.jm/
	Church World Services Hurricane Melissa Relief
	www.cws.global.org/donate-3/emergency-response-fund/
Christian Community Newsletter	Feature ICCC Church Food or Hunger Relief Programs

How Does Your Garden Grow: Cultivating Rooted Community Ministries

*Submitted by Rev. Robb Tarr,
Senior Pastor of Gahanna Community Congregational Church in Gahanna, OH*

In ministry, it can be easy to slip into frequently using metaphors that are popular from scripture. We might be prone to referring to anyone giving a little pushback as a “prodigal,” or someone we could be prone to overlooking as a “Samaritan” because of Jesus’ parables. Agrarian metaphors are also spread throughout the Bible, and they can overtake our vocabulary sometimes, too – whether it’s the receptiveness of soil, or the types of fruit our lives produce.

Since we started a community garden on our church grounds in summer of 2020, it’s amazing how much we can catch ourselves overdoing our agricultural language from the double sources of Biblical language and ministry activity. But it’s also true that a good metaphor is helpful for making a complex idea feel more accessible.

We’ve found that some of the particulars of our gardening activity are useful references for better “rooting” ourselves in the deeper purpose of this ministry: connection, partnership, and transformation with our community. If you and your church share those same goals in living your faith and participating in God’s Kingdom, maybe those same metaphors can be meaningful for your own efforts to “plant a seed” even and especially if a completely different ministry community than gardening is what fits your calling and context. (Sorry if the metaphor has gotten a little “overripe.”)

Getting the Lay of the Land

Just like you wouldn’t try to plant a tropical fruit in a wintry climate, or start planting anything without charting out the terrain of your plot, understanding context is vital for rooted community ministry. For us, that means discussing plans for any ministry with people and groups we have some relationship with to find out what is needed most, and where there was the most opportunity for us to act and connect more deeply with others. That’s how it emerged that us having open land and some folks with garden experience matched with our local food pantry rarely getting fresh produce. Sometimes we get excited about a good abstract idea, but realize it’s taking

us away from connection, so patiently pursuing a responsive, collaborative idea ends up working better.

Tilling the Soil

In doing a fine-tuned preparation of the growing environment, sometimes we work on removing rocks or old roots, but sometimes we find we need to test and add nutrients to the soil so it’s most conducive to growing healthy plants. In rooted community ministry, because including others who often feel they don’t have a place, and building formative relationships between people is as important as accomplishing tasks, taking the time to cultivate the environment is vital, too. Constructing roles with room for people of diverse gifts and interests, modeling learning over perfection, and prioritizing consensus all help. A church that’s able to embrace a desire to be healthy soil to help the seeds those around them carry, rather than having a desire to make everyone else accommodate its precious, private seeds can have a remarkable impact.

Companion Planting

One of my favorite things to learn as an inexperienced gardener is how planting different types of crops together can be mutually beneficial. Some plants deter pests that would be destructive to another, or attract pollinators that are helpful. Plants can also be matched if one puts nutrients back into the soil that another takes out a lot of. Not only is this a fascinating example of nature at work, it’s a powerful metaphor of how thriving ministry is more likely to occur when it is done “with” the people our lives touch, rather than just “for” others. Intentionally engaging in ministry that is meant to be partnered rather than proprietary has brought amazing people into our lives we wouldn’t have encountered otherwise.

Weeding and Trimming

It may not be everyone’s favorite gardening task, but most people understand why weeding is vital for maintaining the health of crops. The importance of trimming plants themselves may sometimes be missed, though, but it is also essential because a plant directing its growing energy to what

is healthiest rather than spreading itself too thin can make a big difference. We've learned about making sure to grow the crops that our neighbors we donate to use most – not just our favorites, or the most novel plants. Any “rooted” community ministry needs to view discerning and adjusting to its context as an ongoing, developing discipline. Including a range of people also requires helping people shape ideas they bring to be complementary without anyone feeling rejected. Well-directed, well-cared for energy maximizes and magnifies in amazing ways.

Seasons Turn

Again, when your goals are deeper than just immediate, specific task completion – goals like having harvests year over year and not just picking one crop... or like cultivating formative, ongoing relationships and not just doing a particular activity – then having deep values and long-term plans is necessary. In our garden, we've learned about crop rotation from year to year, managing soil amendments, and timing out seedlings and plants we grow inside and outside. For any rooted community ministry, having rhythms of learning, implementation, celebration, and rest; as well as challenging activity, relational care, and personal reflection proves to support partnerships, community impact, and personal thriving in a similar way.

We have felt called that just as Jesus lived and ministered fully amongst us, we who follow Jesus are inherently called to live and minister with those around us. Just as this incarnational planting is a foundational part of God's character, we've found rooted community ministry is in fact an essential character of our salvation and faith. This has been our best effort as branches to stay connected to God's vine, and hope you find your connection, too.

If you'd like to explore this metaphor and these topics more deeply together, we hope you'll reach out to us at Gahanna Community Congregational Church. There's also a related video on the Daily Bread Produce Garden facebook page you can watch. Hope your roots grow deep and support plenty of fruit. Visit facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064809605745 to follow.



International Council of Community Churches

2025 Budget as of December 31, 2025

INCOME	2025 Budget	Actual
Churches & Centers (N1)	\$ 84,100.00	\$ 68,347.51
Individuals (N2)	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 31,984.93
Individuals - Clergy Membership (N2m)	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,568.28
Areas, regions, Zones (N3)	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 235.00
Christian Community (N5)	\$ 200.00	\$ 36.00
Endowment Earnings Distribution	\$ 11,478.00	\$ 11,679.00
Miscellaneous Income (N11)	\$ 200.00	\$ 1,000.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 153,478.00	\$ 123,850.72
EXPENDITURES	2025 Budget	Actual
STAFF		
Executive Director, Interim (D1)	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 13,000.00
Executive Expenses (D2)	\$ 4,000.00	
Associate for Administration (E1)	\$ 33,100.00	\$ 22,698.00
Health Benefit (E3)	\$ 8,904.00	
Retirement (E7)	\$ 4,000.00	
Assistant Administrator (F1)		\$ 5,169.02
Payroll Liabilities	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 2,092.53
TOTAL STAFF	\$ 66,004.00	\$ 42,959.55
OPERATIONS		
Office Space (A1)	\$ -	\$ 3,125.74
Utilities & Services (A2)	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 4,698.73
Telephone (A3)	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 2,596.44
Supplies (A5)	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,839.70
Equipment (A6)	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 4,813.01
Property Insurance (A7)	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 451.00
D&O Insurance/Other Insurance (A8)	\$ 2,800.00	\$ 1,579.65
Printing (A9)	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 623.00
Postage (A10)	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 1,896.92
Office Maintenance (A12)		
Professional Services (A13)	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,509.67
Board of Trustees (C4)	\$ 500.00	
Executive Field Services (C10)	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 9,722.60
Miscellaneous (A14)	\$ 300.00	\$ 703.36
Credit Card Merchant Fees (16)	\$ 1,700.00	\$ 1,331.45
TOTAL OPERATIONS	\$ 41,800.00	\$ 35,891.27
PROGRAM		
Ecumenics (B)	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 3,540.00
Christian Community (C8)	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,895.98
Missions	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 1,949.19
TOTAL PROGRAM	\$ 16,500.00	\$ 7,385.17
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 124,304.00	\$ 86,235.99

FRANKLY on FINANCES

By Bruce Merton, Executive Director

In the last issue of the Christian Community readers were provided with a copy of the 2026 Annual Budget which was approved at last year's Annual Conference. The budgeted amount is \$158,000

Meeting the 2026 budget will allow the I.C.C.C. to move toward funding our part-time positions of Administrative Assistant and Executive Director while maintaining minimal program expenditures.

At the left you will see a final accounting of 2025 receipts and expenditures. Expenditures are being held to a bare minimum as we continue to fall short in meeting annually approved budgets. The funds received amount to average monthly receipts of \$10,320.89. That amount falls \$2,845.78 short of meeting the monthly needs for 2026.

The surplus of 2025 receipts over expenditures (\$37,615.72) can be used to fund the anticipated short fall for 2026. However, doing this really gets us no closer to sound financial footing. It also does not move us forward in properly funding the much-needed position of Executive Director. Most importantly, if you believe we are called to be in mission beyond our own needs, we will have to continue making the flat, no growth, contributions that have marked our "giving beyond self" from 2021 to the present.

Only one-third of our member churches and centers sent in "estimates" of their 2026 giving. Thanks is expressed to each of those churches and an urgent appeal is made to churches that did not respond. PLEASE send the I.C.C.C. office an estimate (It is not a pledge!) of your giving for 2026 so we can work to realistically understand and utilize our finances.

The Ministry Team for Stewardship and Financial Development Moderator, Brian Sullivan, Executive Director, Bruce Merton, or Treasurer, Nick Brame can answer questions, field comments OR offer assistance in helping your church raise additional funds for the I.C.C.C. as well as your local missions. Reach out to ICCCNOW@sbcglobal.net

Let's pitch in and together we will accomplish much! Thank you!



It's Happening July 20-23, 2026! *The ICCC Annual Conference*

in beautiful **Crystal City, VA**, just across the Potomac River
from Washington, DC

Our venue is the **Crystal City DoubleTree hotel**. The hotel has already provided a link for those who wish to make their reservations early. The cost is \$135 per night. (Tax not included)



Here's the link to make a reservation under our room block.

<https://book.passkey.com/go/dcaaeiccc26>

The conference will actually begin the morning of Tuesday, July 21 but we encourage everyone to arrive in the afternoon or evening of Monday, July 20. Registration materials will be available that evening in the hotel lobby. Standard check out and departure will be Friday, July 24 **BUT...** if you want to come early or stay after the conference and do some sightseeing in our nation's capital, you can reserve up to three days before the conference or three days after the conference at the same room rate.

**There is a complimentary hotel shuttle to and from
Ronald Reagan Washington International Airport (DCA)**

We have some parking passes for folks who may be driving in from east coast locations. 10 passes will be available on a first come first served basis. They will cover parking for all four evenings of the conference. To qualify, send a copy of your hotel reservation confirmation to peacechurchnow@gmail.com. Pastor RC Fleeman, Conference Planning Chairman will reserve the parking passes for you.

The Annual Conference of our 76th year is happening the same year as our nation's 250th birthday. There are always many things in DC to see and do, but this year there will be even more.

You will find a conference registration form in this edition of the Christian Community. Make as many copies as you need and send them to the ICCC office administrator.

Please plan to join us at the Annual Conference!

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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Sharing Concerns With

- **Elaine Richardson Dennis and her family**, as they mourn the death of Elaine's brother, **Elijah Kindred**. Elijah passed away on December 16th. His funeral was held in San Diego, CA on December 30th.
- **Abraham Wright** as he continues in rehabilitation for health challenges.



International Council of Community Churches
ICCC Registration Form – 2026 Annual Conference
July 21-23 Crystal City, VA near Washington, DC
“OUR FUTURE: Rediscovering the Values of Jesus”

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 7-1-2026) _____ Grade completed by (7-1-2026) _____
- 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:

\$ 0.00	Infants (not occupying chair at banquet)	\$
\$ 35.00	Child* (Ages 1-5)	\$
\$ 60.00	Elementary* (entering kindergarten - entering 6 th grade)	\$
\$ 50.00	**Add-on ONLY if Adult meal is preferred for Banquet Child/Elementary registration	\$
\$ 145.00	Youth (completed 6 th grade - entering 12 th grade)	\$
\$ 195.00	Young Adult (completed 12 th grade - age 23)	\$
\$ 230.00	Adult Register by April 1, 2026 for the Early Bird Special \$200	\$
\$ 75.00/day	Daily Registrants Circle Day(s) T W Th (meals not included)	\$
Total Enclosed		\$

THE MENU FOR OUR PLANNED THURSDAY EVENING BANQUET HAS NOT YET BEEN DETERMINED. YOU WILL BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY BEFORE THE CONFERENCE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN TWO ENTREE OPTIONS.

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 April 1st.** Registrations after June 30, 2026 will be accepted at Conference only. **CANCELLATIONS:** A \$25 administration fee will be assessed for each cancellation.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSIONS MAY BE VIDEOTAPED for advertising or Social Media. By registering for conference, you agree the ICCC may use 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 A Full-Time Pastoral Director

The Pastoral Director serves as the primary spiritual leader of The Center. This role nurtures the spiritual heart of the organization and ensures that worship, pastoral care, and spiritual programming reflect The Center's mission, values, and founding vision.

The Pastoral Director provides compassionate spiritual leadership to the fellowship, staff, volunteers, and broader community. This is a relational, incarnational ministry rooted in presence, listening, service, and community. The role aims to cultivate spiritual culture and help people recognize God's presence in ordinary work, community, and creation. We strive to live what Jesus taught in Matthew 26: when you do it for the least of them, you do it to me.

The Pastoral Director works closely with the Executive Director, staff, and volunteers to steward The Center's mission and to walk faithfully with the community through seasons of growth, challenge, and transition.

Key Responsibilities:

- Pastoral care of The Center's fellowship and staff, including individual meetings, home and hospital visits, programs and special events.
- Plan and conduct 8:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. chapel services and memorial services.
- Work with other Program Directors to integrate the values of Christ and the Center into all offerings of the Center.
- Chapel Oversight:
 - a) Oversee the care and maintenance of the Chapel, chapel garden and labyrinth
 - b) Identify facility and housekeeping of the above areas and coordinate with the appropriate staff.
 - c) Recruit and hire Chapel-related staff such as auxiliary ministers, soloists, musicians and hostesses.
- Write content for The Center's newsletter related spiritual programming.
- Work with leadership to set financial goals and manage budgets for Chapel and spiritual programs.

Qualifications

- Masters in Divinity preferred
- Ordained as a Christian minister
- Ability to learn the basic software and technology used for scheduling, communication, and administration.
- Valid driver's license and the ability to perform the physical duties of the role.
- Must be at least 21 years old.

General Expectations

- Collaborate across the departments and support major Center events when needed.
- Demonstrate flexibility, initiative, and a strong commitment to The Center's mission.
- Participate actively in staff meetings and community life.
- Represent The Center with professionalism, humility, and warmth.

Schedule and Compensation:

This is a full-time, year-round position. Regular office hours are required, along with weekend and evening availability to support chapel services, pastoral care, and special events. Compensation is based on experience and includes a supportive and well-rounded benefits package, including individual medical, dental, and vision insurance; a non-contributory pension plan with a 5% annual employer contribution; generous paid time off; meals during work hours; and discounted access to Center programs.

How to Apply

All candidates must apply through our online application form, available at <https://thecenterpalos.org/pastoral-director/>. The application includes submission of a resume, a writing sample, professional references, and several questions related to spiritual beliefs, ministry experience, and alignment with The Center's mission and values.

To ensure a fair, thoughtful, and consistent review process, we kindly ask that all inquiries and materials be submitted exclusively through this electronic application. Phone calls, emails, or mailed materials will not be accepted.

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