



# The e\_VIGIL

Electronic Communication from  
the International Christian Community Churches

January Issue

January 1, 2008

## A New Years Message From our Presiding Minister

**It is that season of making resolutions; only to later suffer the guilt and defeat that comes with breaking those resolutions. It seems that as hard as we try, our eating habits return to what they had been, we slowly quit going to the gym or exercising, our prayer life slips away in favor of sleeping in just a bit longer, and that person we swore to be more compassionate with has just got on our last nerve. Even those who march into the New Year with “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” have a difficult time of it. I should claim this scenario as my own, because until very recently it was the description of the new year for me.**

**I'd like to share a couple of thoughts about this self-defeating thinking and behavior that have helped me change how I view the new year and give me great hope for what is ahead...**

**In October 07 I attended a conference in Denver where one of the workshops offered was entitled “Managing Stress.” I was drawn like a moth to a flame and found myself in a room full of overworked, tired managers from all over the country. The facilitator mentioned all the usual stress-busters... diet and exercise, balanced life, delegation, etc. But her punch line was something far more broad. She led us through a values clarification exercise where we considered everything that was important to us, and one by one, we eliminated items on the list until we were at the very core value. This was not as easy as I had thought it would be.**

**Once we had identified our deepest core value, she suggested that much of our stress comes from not living our core values. Her suggestion for reducing much unnecessary stress in our lives was to create a short personal mission statement, and to evaluate everything we do based upon that mission statement. She suggested that we jettison or change anything in our lives that did not support the mission statement or that directly conflicted with it. In other words, saying one thing and doing something else creates a great deal of internal anxiety and stress. I could see the light bulbs popping as each of us became aware of the inconsistencies and incongruities in our lives: people who most valued time with their children began to question the excessive time they spent at work; those who put the importance of physical health above all con't next page**

wondered if they could trade an hour of television for exercise; those who valued creativity began to plot time for painting, gardening and woodworking; and those of us who said that faith/spirituality was the most important thing began to consider the unnecessary activity in our lives that replaced the prayer, Bible study and acts of mercy that once sustained our relationship with God.

I am convinced that much of the anxiety in our lives comes from this primary fault of living an incongruent life. The second stress-producer is about as damaging. It is all or nothing thinking. All or nothing thinking leads us to abandon healthy eating after eating the first brownie at the first church potluck of the new year (this is particular poignant because New Creation has at least two primo brownie makers!). It causes us to abandon our exercise program because we failed to go two days last week, to ditch our Bible study commitment because we missed three days when we got up late, and to jettison our new tithing commitment when the Christmas bills arrive in mid-January. All or nothing thinking is about the ugly habit of self-judgment, and about denying ourselves the grace that Jesus Christ so abundantly pours out over our lives. The loving God that I serve is not standing over me with a spiritual stun gun to zap me every time I make a mistake or forget to pray or get up late or misspend my money or any of the hundreds of things that we all do that lead us away from health and wholeness in Christ. The God that I serve and the Christ who saves me from myself lives within and around me in the form of the Holy Spirit, who goes along side of us to guide us, to gently correct us and to set our paths right again. I know, sometimes that correction doesn't feel very gentle, but usually in my life that is because I've failed to listen earlier and sometimes I just don't respond to subtle nudges! Self-judgment and self-criticism manifest in our all or nothing thinking, and they cause us to hold ourselves to impossible standards.

So, this year I am replacing my list of New Years resolutions with the new practices of evaluating all that I do in light of my personal mission statement and eliminating unhealthy self-criticism in the form of all or nothing thinking. Already my new year looks brighter, and it is only 6 a.m. on the first day of the year! Usually by now I've succumbed to at least two or three temptations! I believe in sharing the journey with one another, and so I am inviting all of you to consider this as well. Even though the New Year will be a few days old by the time you read this, I assure you that it's never too late to begin anew with the God we adore, the Christ we follow and the Holy Spirit who guides us!

Lastly, I would like to share with you the personal mission statement that I developed while gazing up at those snow-covered Rocky Mountains in Colorado. Its development was the culmination of years of spiritual work that came together in a most unexpected place... a short workshop at a secular conference in a room full of mostly strangers. My personal mission statement is this: *Fear not!* I find myself asking new questions. Am I making this decision based upon fear or upon knowing that there is nothing to fear because of my relationship with Christ? Am I doing this thing because I am fearlessly surrendering to the leading of the Holy Spirit? Am I spending, eating or over-planning because of insecurity caused by fear, or am I totally trusting in God's provision? I have to admit that I started this a bit before the new year arrived, and I can testify that my stress and anxiety level have decreased significantly. Along with Saint Teresa of Avila, I can (most of the time) say. "All will be well. And all will be well."? Con't next page

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**A postscript about all or nothing thinking. All or nothing thinking comes from fear... fear of not measuring up, not being good enough, not doing enough, of being flawed beyond fixing. Self-judgment is difficult to set aside, or at least it was for me until I came to realize that its source in my life is fear. *Fear Not!* began to manifest itself only when I truly came to understand that I am a beloved child of the God of the Universe. I forget this often, and need each one of you to remind me of this great truth, as I remind you of this great truth for you. This is the blessing of Christian community, a community of faith that adamantly claims... In 2008, all will be well. And all will be well. Blessings, Carlene**

## January Calendar

**January 6:** The Epiphany (W)  
**January 13:** First Sunday After Epiphany (W)  
**January 18-25:** Prayer for Christian Unity Week  
**January 20:** Second Sunday After Epiphany (W)  
**January 21:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
**January 27:** Third Sunday After Epiphany (W)  
**February 3:** Last Sunday After Epiphany (W)  
**February 6:** ASH WEDNESDAY (P)

### Presiding Minister’s Travel Schedule

**January 20, 2008**  
Forgiving Heart, Columbus, GA (morning)  
**January 20, 2008**  
Holy Trinity, Montgomery, AL  
(evening)  
**January 27, 2008**  
Athens, TN  
Visit potential church  
With Assistant Presiding Minister  
Sharon Lindenbaum

## The Feast of the Epiphany

When Jesus was born, a single star rose in the East and announced his birth to the Magi, who came to Jerusalem in search of him. In that city, all ignored the “new born King of the Jews”. But when Herod the King heard of this, and learned from the reading of the prophecy about Jesus’ birthplace, Bethlehem, he decided in his heart that he must destroy Jesus, and he ordered the slaughter of children. We commemorate this event with the feast of Holy Innocents.

When the Magi guided by the faithful star, arrived at the place where Jesus was, they bowed down before him. They offered Jesus gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and then returned to their countries.

We commemorate the adoration of the Magi on the Epiphany, or “manifestation” of Jesus. The Magi are representative of all the peoples who would, follow them recognize and adore Jesus the Christ.

## The Emmaus Institute

For Information about how to join this incredible  
Learning community

Please contact Rev. Linda Veltheim at [EmmausICCC@charter.net](mailto:EmmausICCC@charter.net)

### **REMINDER CHURCH TREASURERS!!**

Please send your tithes to:

**Rev. Steve Garrett**  
**Office of the ICCC Treasurer**  
**P.O. Box 178**  
**Greer, S.C. 29652**

Rev. Steve Garrett  
Treasurer ICCC  
Pastor New Hope  
Christian Community Church



### **Renewal of Pastoral Recognition**

The ICCC Board of Ministry has sent letters to all Ordained, commissioned and Lay Pastors reminding them that their licenses expires December 31, 2007. If you have not sent your renewal fee and signed Code of Conduct Forms please do so now. Your new valid licenses cannot be forwarded to you until the process is complete. The Renewal License Fee is \$50.00

Rev. Emily Bel, Board of Ministry Chair

### **Dr. Martin Luther King, Junior**

**January 21, 2008**

**There are many ways we can honor the memory of Dr. King. I would like to suggest that we read Isaiah 62:1-5. How can we continue to keep the "DREAM" alive? Can you recall what Dr. King wanted to change? Has it? What "racism" in my own heart is still there? How do I still enforce stereotypes? Does racism seem to be getting worse or better? What did Dr. King teach us about suffering and nonviolence? What can I do about changing un-just laws and the desire for God's peace? We are all children of God: brother and sister. Racism is to be found in every culture and race and change begins with each of us. Rev. Philip Maniscalco**

## Governing Board News

The Governing Board is pleased to welcome Kim McGinnis to serve as Clerk of the Governing Board to fill the term vacated by Rev. Carlene wood when she was elected Presiding Minister. Kim is a very active member of Christ First ICCC in Gainesville, GA. And is also enrolled in the current Emmaus class. Please read Kim's message below.

In addition, the Governing Board is saddened to accept the resignation of Rob Hagen, Member-at Large. Rob has been a faithful Board member since 2005 and we will miss him greatly. The Governing Board has begun a discussion about filling the vacancy

### A message from Kim McGinnis, Clerk...

I would like to begin by saying thank you all for this opportunity of growth. I was nervous to be considered for the clerk position. I recognize that this position holds a huge responsibility and that it requires much time and effort.

I grew up in a small town Baptist church where the seed was planted to bring me to this day. I never imagined or dreamed that I would be where I am today on this faith journey. But I am proud to say that in the last three years my chosen family at Christ First ICCC has been my encouragers, supporters and the loved ones that hold me up in prayer. I have been through some tough stuff these past few years but walking in faith requires saying yes to God when He calls.

I have been the clerk for Christ First ICCC since it's formation in 2004 and continue to serve in this manner. I reluctantly did it at first and after a spiritual gifts study I realized this was one of the gifts God has given me. I began to say to myself in many areas of my life, if it's not bringing me joy, I must relinquish it. When I began to see this position in a new and different light it began to bring me joy.

I found myself considering the Emmaus Institute in mid 2007 but I didn't dare discuss it with anyone. Someone near to my heart had a conversation with me about it and without that little nudge I might not have enrolled in Emmaus. So thank you for knowing what I needed to hear.

I'm not sure where this faith journey will take me but I'm willing to embark upon the opportunities God has placed before me. I pledge to do my best and try my hardest during my term as ICCC clerk. I ask that each of you hold the Governing Board and Board of Ministry in prayer as we listen for God's direction in all that we do. I want to thank you for allowing me to serve God and all of you while I continue to learn and stretch my faith in new ways.



## **CONVOCATION 2008 PLANNING TEAM IS SELECTED AND IS READY TO CONVENE!!!**

**Planning for the 2008 Convocation (November 7-9, 2008) has begun. We want to give a hearty thanks to the 2008 Convocation Planning Team: Allison Burris (Christ's Church of the Foothills, Hickory NC) and Sharon Morris (Fellowship of Faith, Greensboro NC) for agreeing to co-chair and to work with the others on the team, Rev. Monica Ledford (Christ First ICCC, Gainesville GA) and Rev. Philip Maniscalco (Good Shepherd ICCC, Atlanta GA). Please keep these four in your thoughts and prayers as they help to develop what is going to be the BEST convocation we have had thus far. More information will follow soon.**

### **The Big Loser Challenge From Christ First !**

**Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,**

**I hope that you all had a joyous Christmas season and that you are entering 2008 with excitement at what God is going to do in all of our churches this year. I would like to wish each of you a very Happy New Year!**

**At Christ First, ICCC in Gainesville, GA, we have decided to make 2008 our best year ever, and one way we have decided to accomplish this is by getting healthier. We have decided on a bit of a weight loss competition at our church, and one of our ladies has designed our program on a point based system with ways to earn even extra points by having memorized scripture verses each week at weigh-ins, etc.**

**I thought it might be interesting to extend a similar challenge to all of our churches. We have committed to doing a 16 week program and our start date is January 6<sup>th</sup> for our first weigh-in. I realize that this might not be enough time for you to get organized, but if your church would like to join us in a weight loss challenge, you can design your own 16 week program and methods with an overall goal of seeing which church at the end of 16 weeks is the biggest loser. This challenge is intended to promote a spirit of support and fun amongst us. Of course we can decide amongst us what treat the biggest losers will receive ...perhaps a great big trophy presented at Convocation!!!**

**Take this as my official challenge to all of you. Game on anyone?**

**Blessings, Pastor Monica**

## A New Column: Reading

There is a great deal of wisdom within our ICCC community of members and friends, and there is an eagerness for spiritual growth that is palpable. This leads many to search out new books, magazines and other resources that will enhance our relationship with Christ. I know from talking with many of you that you are much like Sandi and I... the line item in your person budget for "Books" is substantial!

The E-Vigil would like to offer a forum in which to share your reading recommendations, and hope that each issue will contain suggestions and reviews that will be of interest to other readers. I (Carlene) will start us out this month but WE NEED YOUR INPUT! If you have a suggestion for a good read, please send it to us to include in this new column. The title, author and a brief description or review would be helpful. Please help us share resources that you've discovered!

### Reading Recommendations January 2008

(Recommended by Carlene Wood)

*To Walk With Integrity: Spiritual Leadership in Times of Crisis* by Steve Doughty, Upper Room Books 2004

The title is a bit misleading, as this is not just a book for leaders, but for all Christians who seek to live a more seamless life of integrity, which is defined as living in an authentic and congruent manner. My favorite quote is, "Persons of integrity do not maintain one set of values in public and another in private... They draw no distinction between major and minor moments."

There are thought-provoking questions for personal meditation at the end of each chapter which led me to an enlightening self evaluation of the various characteristics of integrity, which include humility, compassion, honesty, prophetic living and others. It is a book that I will return to often and I would recommend it for all spiritual seekers who are interested in authentic Christian living.

Another selection follows on the next page

***The Apostles' Creed for Today*** by Justo L. Gonzalez, Westminster John Knox Press  
2007

This is not just another theological treatise on the Apostles' Creed. Justo Gonzalez is one of my favorite theological writers, and he does an incredible job of creating modern meaning in the Creed by focusing on the subversive nature of its development and the early Christian commitment to its beliefs. I had never understood the seditious nature of this document and how "in your face" those who adhered to it were, and how angry it made the political powers during the early development of Christianity. It also challenges us to reclaim its subversive nature and to understand how counter-cultural true Christianity continues to be in our modern world.

Questions at the end of each chapter offer both individual and group study, and certainly led me to a deeper discernment of my personal beliefs... as well as creating several new questions for theological discussion! If you are intrigued



Here is some NEWS

from the Churches

NEWS FROM CHRIST'S CHURCH OF THE FOOTHILLS  
**HICKORY, NC...**

Christ's Church of the Foothills, Hickory, NC worked hard and long to present their Christmas Cantata, "YOU ARE THE LIGHT", written by Sharon Lindenbaum. For the second year in a row, their cantata was played on the radio at noon on Christmas day. The program was taped and placed on CDs and if anyone would like a copy, please contact the church. They will be glad to send a CD to you and/or your church.

A note from the editor! It would be wonderful to be able to share photos of our church activities, pictures of our leadership, and the authors of these great articles. It is a way of getting to know each other. Remember to obtain written from all who are in the photos before sending for publication

## **Good Shepherd ICCC Atlanta, GA**

### **Advent Service Breaks New Ground**

On Sunday, Nov. 9 The Pulpit Players of Good Shepherd in conjunction with Randy Barnes, their Minister of Music presented, "O, Mary!, an Advent story in song, readings and prayer.

The cast included: Ms. Jo Ann Jensen, Ms. Jackie Pruitt, Mr. Frank Harrell and Mr. Joseph Storey as the Narrator. Rev. Mena Johnson and Rev. Jay Neely delivered special readings. Musical soloists were Jo Ann Jensen, Frank Harrell, and Randy Barnes. Special guests Ms. Fran Poole and Ms. Cindy Shepherd added their special talents as professional singers to enrich the Advent experience.

Cindy's Ave Maria in Latin moved the congregation and guests and Fran's Mary Did You Know. Jackie Pruitt created a beautiful reading and interpretation of the Magnificat. Fran and Randy performed, "What Child is This" in soaring harmony.

This Advent program presented Mary' the Mother of God, journey in faith and devotion and the role she played in our gift of salvation. We give special thanks to Rev. Maniscalco, who wrote and directed our production. And to Randy Barnes who directed our singers. FH

### **Rev. Maniscalco Honored**

During service on Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup>. Rev. Philip Maniscalco was honored with a certificate for his contributions of time and talent to Good Shepherd. In his speech Rev. Jay Neely, the Senior Pastor recounted the many tasks and services Rev. Philip has contributed to Good Shepherd.. In particular he pointed out the production of the church's newsletter the Sheep's Gate. Rev. Neely presented Philip with a certificate from the Board of Directors acknowledging his contributions and dedication. Rev. Philip surprised and speechless (a rarity) expressed his love and gratitude. FH

### **A Special Gift for Christmas: Rev. Karen Ann Bunner- Edwards**

Rev. Karen Ann Bunner-Edwards performed a Christmas Eve concert as part of the Christmas Eve Midnight service at Good Shepherd. This concert proved to be a Christmas blessing. Her beautiful rich soprano voice brought the meaning of Christmas to life. Words cannot express the emotional impact her music had on our congregation and guests. She was accompanied by her partner of 18 years Ms. Jann K. Evans. We would recommend Rev. Karen Ann to the churches as a special treat for their congregations or fund raising. You may contact her at [KAE11217@aol.com](mailto:KAE11217@aol.com). or visit her web-site High Praise Ministries, Inc

# Governing Board

Presiding Minister: Rev. Carlene Wood  
Acting Presiding Minister: Ms. Sharon Lindenbaum  
Clerk of the Board: Ms. Kim McGinnis  
Treasurer: Rev. Steve Garrett  
At-Large: Rev. David Strong  
At-Large: Rev. Linda Simonds  
At-Large: Vacant



# Board of Ministry

Chairperson: Rev. Emily Bel  
Rev. Mena Johnson  
Mr. Ray Powell

# Area Leaders

Rev. Jerry Ethridge: GA  
Vacant: NC; SC.  
Vacant: AL.; TN.; WA.

# Emmaus Institute

Director: Rev. Linda Veltheim



**Reminder:**

- ?? Check your calendar for due dates for articles to be placed in the e-vigil
- ?? Please make copies of this newsletter to be distributed at your church
- ?? Clergy License Fees **were Due Dec, 31**
- ?? Governing Board Meeting Feb. 8-9

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**Deadline: 25<sup>th</sup> of the month**

Follow the Star  
For  
Christ Waits  
For You

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