



# The eVIGIL

Electronic Communication from  
The International Christian Community Churches

December Issue

December 1, 2007

## A Message from the Presiding Minister

Dear ICCC,

As I write this, Convocation 2007 is just a week behind us. Calls are still coming to me about amazing things that happened during our weekend...spiritual insights, clarity about the call of God on individual lives and on churches, reconciliations that have been as long as fourteen years in the making, mistakes that have been transformed into miracles, and so much more. There is no doubt in my mind that the Holy Spirit was among and within us!

I am honored and humbled by my election to the position of Presiding Minister. My commitment to you, ICCC, is to do my very best to follow God's leading as we move forward in our call to be a dynamic, growing and faithful denomination. Our foundation has been set, and we will build upon it in ways that we cannot imagine at present. We will step out in faith into places that we once feared, and into opportunities to serve Christ that we never dreamed possible. And that is just the beginning...

International Christian Community Churches is and will continue to be an example of God's kingdom breaking forth into the world. Each of us has an integral place in the work of Christ. Clergy, we are called to be loving and grace-filled servants. We are called to journey with others and to lead by example. We must be diligent in tending to our own relationship with Christ if we are to help others with theirs. We are accountable to God and to the people we serve. As Steve Brown so nicely puts it, each of us is merely one beggar telling another beggar where we found our bread. We must make room for God to feed us if we are to feed others.

Dear laity, while some are called into professional Christian service (some say it is because we cannot be trusted to do it on a voluntary basis!), you also are called into ministry. You are ministers of the gospel in your homes, in your places of work and leisure, in your schools and in your neighborhoods. Each of you has been given a very unique set of gifts and a call from God to use those gifts in ways that only you can. Your witness as you share your gifts with the world will attract others to Christ and will build up the kingdom of God as you worship with and work within your individual congregations in ICCC.

As we move into our sixth year in ICCC, I am so excited about the ways in which God will use us to bring grace, peace, hope and justice to our world. My prayer is that we keep our focus on being examples of Christ to a broken and hungry world.

Blessings,  
Carlene



## Convocation 2007: The Best Ever by Rev. Linda Veltheim

### December Calendar

#### **December 2;**

- ◆ First Sunday of **Advent**
- ◆ *Presiding Minister visits Christ First, Gainesville GA to celebrate Rev. Monica Ledford's ordination*

#### **December 9:**

- ◆ Second Sunday of **Advent**

#### **December 16:**

- ◆ Third Sunday of **Advent**

#### **December 23:**

- ◆ Fourth Sunday of **Advent**

#### **December 24: Christmas Eve**

#### **December 25: Christmas Day**

#### **December 26:**

- ◆ *Presiding Minister on vacation Dec. 26 through Dec. 31*

#### **Presiding Minister's Schedule...**

As the E-Vigil is distributed at the beginning of each month, I hope to include in it everything that has been planned and is already on my calendar for the coming month. I am so excited about the opportunity to visit our individual congregations and to do other work on behalf of the denomination! Advent and Christmas are busy times for all of us, and because I am newly-elected, I haven't scheduled a great deal yet. Above is what I do have planned thus far for December...

Rev. Linda Veltheim reports that we have just completed the best Convocation ever. Rev. Veltheim was in charge of this year's convocation. She has been co-coordinating people and speakers and seminars all year long. She is a power of strength. We have been fortunate to have such a gifted woman at our disposal. I have heard her say, "I just can't say NO!"

The theme selected for convocation was "United in Love, One love. One Spirit and One Purpose." Building on last year three Chaplains were appointed to provide prayer partners for those in need. They were Rev. Linda Simonds, Rev. David Strong and Rev. Mena Johnson.

The convocation provided an opportunity to learn: Church Relationships presented by Rev. Christine Oscar, Rev. Jerry Ethridge and Milton Blanchet; Jehovah Java by Rev. Sandi Rice; Loving God and Your Partner by Rev. Veltheim and Debbie Apperson; Single and Christian Rev. David Strong; Spiritual Practices by Rev. Carlene Wood; and Servant Leadership by Sharon Lindenbaum. A special thanks for all the singers and musicians: Spanky Austin, Allison Millwood, Christy Haussler, Randy Barnes, Choir of Christ First, Gainesville, Randy Barnes, Mena Johnson, and the Mass Choir under the direction of Sharon Lindenbaum. Special thanks to all the ushers and Acolytes. A special thank you to Allison Burris our registrar and Rev. Philip Maniscalco who found the logo and worked with set up and layout. Rev. Linda thanks them all! This is what a church family can accomplish. Amen!!

Convocation T-Shirts are still Available  
Call the ICCO Office

**An apology for my oversight...**

On the second day after my election, I received an email from one of you in which I was held accountable for a “sin of omission.” While thanking everyone during Sunday’s service, including the Governing Board and all who made Convocation 2007 such a success, I failed to offer my deep gratitude to our Assistant Presiding Minister who stepped in as Interim Presiding Minister for a brief but very important time in our denomination’s formation. While I expressed this gratitude privately to Sharon Lindenbaum, I need to publicly thank her, and to tell all of you that her leadership was essential to our denomination and to our Convocation. She stepped forward and led the Governing Board during a very difficult time, and did so with incredible grace, compassion and insight. Thank you, Sharon, for being such a Christ-centered leader during a challenging time! And thank you to the dear one who brought this to my attention!

Carlene

**REMINDER CHURCH TREASURERS!!**

Please send your tithes to:

**Rev. Steve Garrett  
Office of the ICCC Treasurer  
P.O. Box178  
Greer, S.C. 29652**

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



**Renewal of Pastoral Recognition**

The Board of Ministry will soon be sending letters to all recognized ICCC Pastors reminding them that current licenses to practice for ordained clergy, commissioned pastors and lay pastors will expire on December 31. Forms (renewal and Code of Conduct) are attached to this edition of the E-Vigil for those who wish to begin the process a bit early!

The Renewal License Fee is \$50.00

*Emily*

Rev. Emily Bel, Board of Ministry Chair

## NEW VOICES

Rev. Linda Simonds and Rev. Steve Garrett were elected to the Governing Board Of the ICCC. They were asked what visions they had for the ICCC. Following are their Comments:

Rev. Linda Simonds, Member-at-Large, responded:

My vision for the future of this denomination is an easy one but it is not always easy to carry out. My goal is to spread Jesus' love and compassion to everyone, no matter who they are or where they are in their walk with the Lord.

One way to accomplish this is to have healthy, compassionate, loving leaders who will make it possible for all to know that they are loved. I know that this is an impossible task for one person to carry out, but as a denomination we can.

Jesus did not turn his back on anyone who truly came to him in faith. No matter who they were, from the lepers to the rich. If they were willing to follow His way they were accepted.

Young, old, GLBT, or straight all are welcome and accepted in Christ's love.

Toward this vision I would love to start some type of mission ministry. I am not the evangelistic type of minister so I know that is not my calling but I know that we have some of those in our denomination, and with the church funding they could become church planters.

On the more practical side, I would like to see a link on our ICCC website that would be a resource for Pastors. It would be a great way for the churches to share what works and what does not. To tell of Bible studies they have held that was a true blessing to those who participated. We have many new pastors and some that have been long time pastors that are running out of ideas, we all could share and learn from each other. It would be another way for the churches to feel connected to one each other.

I would like to see some type of retreat for pastors and their spouses. Pastors need a place to just be; and their spouses need a place that they can share with others, who are walking the same road as they are. If the pastors become more connected in turn so will the churches.

I know a lot of what I have said has been for pastors but in order for our churches to be healthy, loving, caring places for all we need to have pastors who exemplify those qualities. And in order to do that we need to support our leadership and to know who they are and what is going on in their lives.

Rev. Linda Simonds and Rev. Steve Garrett were ordained as clergy for the International Christian Community Churches at Convocation 2007, November 11. Rev. Simonds is Pastor of Holy Trinity ICCC in Montgomery, Alabama. Rev. Steve Garrett is Pastor of New Day ICCC in Greer, South Carolina. I know that you will join with me in wishing them success in their service to, their churches and the national church.

## DEVELOPING A VISION WITH THE EYES OF CHRIST

As one of your newly elected members of the Governing Board, I bring a new set of eyes to the table. But the eyes that I bring hopefully are not my eyes, but the eyes of Christ. Since we are quite honestly in service to Christ, our vision must be Christ-centered. From my point of view, to develop a vision for ICCC through the eyes of Christ we must always remember the compassion that Christ has for the people that he came in contact with. One of my goals as a denominational leader is to respond with compassion to the needs of our current churches as well as those that wait on the horizon. Christ was also always looking to the future. While Christ built on things of the past, his ultimate goal was in moving forward in his teaching and in his preparing others for the days ahead. As members of the Governing Board I think that it is incumbent on us to remember and examine the past, but to lead for the future. We are sitting on the precipice of incredible growth, and by keeping our focus on moving forward in faith and stewardship of our resources I know that we can follow a vision that is faithful to our calling. If we compare our denominational growth to that of a child, we have moved from infancy and the toddler stage to where we are learning to walk. Now that you know my vision for the Governing Board, I want you to know me. While I was elected to serve in the position of treasurer, that does not limit my desire to serve in many capacities within the denomination. I am here as a servant to you – every church, every pastor, every member. I am as close as a phone call. If we are to be successful as a denomination and a force for Christ in our world, we must all pull together and develop our identity and vision. I truly do want to hear from you and I want to be able to attend meetings with news and ideas from our local communities of faith. My desire is to make the path of joining ICCC as a worshipping body as easy as possible. I want to work with any church that is facing challenges, and to be there to support and help find answers to these challenges. If I don't have the solution, I am committed to finding that person or those people that do. Ultimately my goal is to continue building on the foundation that has been laid already constantly remembering that Jesus Christ is our cornerstone and that all our work will be in vain if we fail to keep our eyes focused on him. Please feel free to contact me for anything or to simply ask for prayer as we join our hearts and our minds in moving forward.

Learning to walk always incurs a few scraped knees and a couple of bruises; however, those are minor to the ultimate accomplishment of standing steady on our feet and being able to maneuver wherever we need to go. Jesus didn't stand still. He was always on the move, and I hope that you will see a Governing Board on the move too. My goal is outreach. I want to know our churches and the people that are building the kingdom. I want to be able to go to you in person or in communication and know where the strengths of our congregations are as well as the struggles that we are facing, and in turn celebrate and use these strengths and work together to overcome the struggles. Jesus never stayed in the temple or synagogue waiting on people to come to him. No, he went out into all the areas that begged for his attention and talked and ate with the people so that they could understand that he really cared for them and what they were facing in their lives. Christ was also the Great Physician. He offered healing to those who came to him and sought his help. I want us to also be a source of healing for wounds within our denomination. Whether these problems are congenital, temporal or chronic, I see the Governing Board and its resources as a healing body. And most of all Jesus spent a tremendous amount of time empowering those who would carry on the work that he started. All of us on the Governing Board are here for a designated period of time. In that time it is imperative that we identify and raise up leaders to carry on the great work of this denomination so that we may grow stronger with each change of the guard.

Now that you know my vision for the Governing Board, I want you to know me. While I was elected to serve in the position of treasurer, that does not limit my desire to serve in many capacities within the denomination. I am here as a servant to you – every church, every pastor, every member. I am as close as a phone call. If we are to be successful as a denomination and a force for Christ in our world, we must all pull together and develop our identity and vision. I truly do want to hear from you and I want to be able to attend meetings with news and ideas from our local communities of faith. My desire is to make the path of joining ICCC as a worshipping body as easy as possible. I want to work with any church that is facing challenges, and to be there to support and help find answers to these challenges. If I don't have the solution, I am committed to finding that person or those people that do. Ultimately my goal is to continue building on the foundation that has been laid already constantly remembering that Jesus Christ is our cornerstone and that all our work will be in vain if we fail to keep our eyes focused on him. Please feel free to contact me for anything or to simply ask for prayer as we join our hearts and our minds in moving forward. Rev. Steve Garrett



## Advent

Advent Begins December 2, 2007  
It is the first day of the new church year

**Advent..** Advent begins the new church year. It begins the Sunday after the Feast of the reign of Christ and lasts for four weeks. It is the time the church prepares for the Birth of Christ. It is observed with fasting, prayers, and meditation to help us prepare our souls to welcome God Incarnate. The season although penitential is not without a spirit of joy, hope, and anticipation. The use of purple or dark blue reminds us of Advent's penitential nature.

This time of penitence and preparation was observed in the early church as early as the Fourth Century; it is mentioned in A.D. 380 at the Council of Saragossa. This season though focused on our individual failure to live the life of faith that God has planned for us is tempered with Joy. On the third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday, a special note of joy is introduced into the liturgy.(in some liturgical churches the vestments and Paraments are pink) This change of color and the tone of the liturgy indicates the assurance of everyone in the redemption of humankind by Christ..

### **The Advent Wreath**

The presence of the Advent Wreath in worship is a symbol of our preparation and longing for Emmanuel. The wreath is composed of pine or holiday greenery with four candles placed equal distances around the wreath. The color of the candles is three purple (or Dk. Blue) and one pink. The four candles represent the four centuries people waited for the birth of Christ.

Each week of Advent a candle is lighted and special prayers are prayed preparing the people for the coming of Christ. The first purple candle represents Love. We acknowledge God's great love for us and our love of others. The second purple candle represents Peace. We pray for Peace: the peace of Christ. The third candle is pink and we rejoice in the goodness of God. The last purple candle represents hope. In the birth of the Christ child is our hope and salvation

### **An Advent Prayer**

Lord, Giver of all good gifts, we confess that we are crammed full, spiritually stuffed and fat because we never say no. Our frenetic rush to force more fun into our lives leaves us only increasingly empty. Give us the gift this Advent of self-restraint that we might be freed from distraction, addictions, and undue attachment to things\_\_ freer to love you and our neighbor, Amen !

## **NEW COLUMN: The Mini-Gospel Corner**

From time to time, we are all asked how to address touchy, uncomfortable subjects in a way that will not be offensive or hurtful to others. So we have developed the “mini-Gospel Corner” as a way to look at ourselves and issues that are delicate and sometimes not pleasant. We will also use this as a way to inspire, up-lift and praise the wonderful things we do and say and the joy we bring to one another.

So, if you have a word, a problem, a suggestion, whatever, please let the Governing Board know. We all believe in and share the real Gospel and this is our way of bringing a little bit of that truth to everyone.

### **THE mini GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SHARON**

**Book of Sharon, Chapter 6, verses 1-10**

#### **The Parable of Speaking and Hearing**

There were in those days people abiding in their homes, churches, restaurants and all manner of places. And as they spoke among themselves, sometimes they forgot where they were and engaged their mouths before they engaged their thoughts. And sometimes their ears heard things they did not understand or perhaps were not meant for their ears. Or perhaps, they did not hear all of what was said and misunderstood the words.

And often, they spoke loudly without considering those around them or without meaning to, saying things they did not want to be heard. And lo and behold, these words spread like wild fire among the people. And since not everyone has the gift of “interpretation,” sometimes the words were not correct, misunderstood and just plain hurtful.

And thus, my Sisters and Brothers, was born the “Ear and Mouth” illness called GOSSIP. The symptoms are many: damaged reputations, broken relationships, injured hearts, angry feelings, untrue statements, half-true words, and sometimes, believe it or not, mean-spirited behavior. So all the leaders in the churches, heads of households, parents and even kids, got together and wrote the ‘SPEAK-ATTITUDES.’”

- ‡ Thou shalt not repeat words not meant for you.
- ‡ Thou shalt not listen when not invited to do so.
- ‡ When thou speaketh of others, it will be in loving ways, with kind and true words, not repeating unkind and untrue things about others.
- ‡ If thou ears hear things about others, thou shalt not repeat them, except in prayer to God.
- ‡ And thou shalt remember, that what you say makes an impression on how others see you.

And now, my Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you to practice these things and heed these words, for kindness and consideration beget the same. But ill words, untrue words and just pain ol' minding someone else's sheep-stuff can come to no good. For in truth, the way you speak, what you speak, what you choose to repeat, and what you hear and choose how you heart it, become part of your witness. And as much as God loves a cheerful giver, God does not like an unkind witness.



## Christmas

I was watching television the other night. The News focused on Black Friday. In retail this is the most important day of the year. “Black” refers taking the retails sales out of the red and putting them in the black: profitable. I am amazed that so many people rush out to the stores some opening at four in the morning to shop! We run out to the stores to buy gifts that say I love you, that I care, or sadly to impress. Last year I visited a friend on Christmas day and saw with amazement at least fifty toys for one 10-year-old child. It was two in the afternoon and some of the gifts were still wrapped and several of the gifts were broken. In the manger scene or the nativity play we often misunderstand what is portrayed for us. It is not that gifts for or special attention to the Christ Child that is important. Those gathered at the manger are looking at God’s gift to us. It is the single most important gift ever given: SALVATION. We seek Emmanuel: God with us. God became man and is with us. Prayer answered.

The gifts that are so important to us go unnoticed most of the time. The gift of love. God so loved us that God gave us Jesus, who will die for us so that we might have eternal life. And the gift we should be giving is love: love of neighbor and of self. In the love of God we see Christ in the poor and the needy; those less fortunate than ourselves.

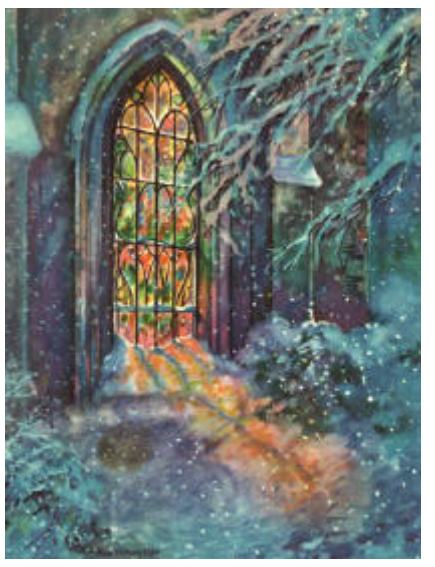
What our family and friends will cherish most is the time we spend with them sharing in God’s grace. There are always things we had wished we had done: writing letters to friends, visiting those we love who are ill, spending time with our children and watching them grow in love and faith. We often wait to long in mending fences and letting people we love drift away.

Material gifts can never say what the human heart can do with a single touch or embrace. A single tear of love and joy is more valuable than silver and gold. Why not plan to share the gift of love by spending time with those you love

Rev. Philip Maniscalco, Editor

**The Best Holiday  
Provisions Are Love  
And Forgiveness.**

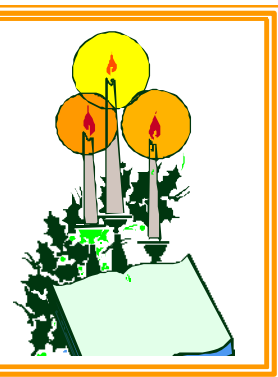
# Joy to the World and Peace on Earth



During the Seasons of Advent and Christmas you are called to worship. Christ is waiting for you. Please visit the denominational website and find a church close to you. If not an ICCC Church a church that will welcome you.

Advent is a time for reflection on your own spiritual journey. Whether rich or poor or strong or weak God is waiting for you. There are some voids in life that only God can fill.

You may have left God because you feel that the church has abandoned you. This is not true. You were created in the image of God. The Son of God was sacrificed on a cross for your salvation. God loves you just as you are. Come, worship God. Jesus is waiting for you.



The Presiding Minister,  
Governing Board, Clergy and Congregations  
of the  
International Christian Community Churches  
Wish you and yours the Holiest of Christmases.  
May the Blessings of Christ be with you in the New Year

## Please note:

Due to the space limitations the forms for the annual clergy report and Renewal information are located on our website for you to download. Rev. Emily Bel.

Rev. Emily Bel, ICCC BoM Chair,  
PO Box 8042, Columbus, GA 31908.



# Governing Board

Presiding Minister: Rev. Carlene Wood  
Assistant Presiding Minister: Ms. Sharon Lindenbaum  
Clerk of the Board: To be Announced  
Treasurer: Rev. Steve Garrett  
At-Large: Rev. David Strong  
At- Large: Rev. Linda Simonds  
At- Large: Mr. Rob Hagen



# Board of Ministry

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

# Area Leaders

Rev. Jerry Ethridge: GA  
Rev. Carlene Wood: NC; SC.  
Rob Hagen: 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
- Ministry License Fees due Dec 31

## e-Vigil Editor:

Rev. Philip Maniscalco  
[philipmaniscalco@bellsouth.net](mailto:philipmaniscalco@bellsouth.net)

404-906-3294

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

And the WORD  
Was made flesh.  
Alleluia

## \*\*\*NEW CONTACT INFORMATION\*\*\*

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P.O. Box 6787

Asheville, NC 28816

[intlccc@charter.net](mailto:intlccc@charter.net) or [www.intlccc.org](http://www.intlccc.org) or 828.505.4306