

New Covenant Community Church

The Messenger

August 2019



Objection II: Your writings, differing from the common judgment, have already caused offense to the godly.

Answer: To the godly that were of contrary opinion only.

from The Practical Works of Richard Baxter

Richard Baxter was an English Puritan who lived in the late 1600s. In the course of his ministry, he produced a voluminous book on Christian training in which he offered instruction on everything from family life to the callings of soldiers, lawyers, and physicians. But a significant and influential segment in the church objected to his interpretations (as the above quote indicates) during those tumultuous times in church and society, and he was prohibited from preaching in 1662, and was even imprisoned for a time in 1665.

Our own circumstances are not quite as troublesome as the situation that Baxter encountered. Nevertheless, we recognize that our culture and current context continue to be engaged in political and theological conversations with voices from different perspectives. And, in reality, this is a good thing, for we do not appoint a particular person who has the authority to address the world with a definitive statement on theology or morality. Instead, we resist the thought of one individual making moral and theological pronouncements which bind our conscience. Certainly we affirm the authority of Scripture, but we also believe that more than one interpretation may be possible. So, because we cannot anticipate that all people will embrace only one interpretation, there will be occasions when we may have disagreements and debates, and as a community of theological discourse, we engage in study and conversation in order to sharpen our awareness of how God is actively working in the world.

Yet, in this situation, as in every situation, we need to show grace and care for one another as we share our different understandings. In communicating our perspectives on a variety of issues, ***we are blessed*** to be members of a church where we can articulate our thoughts, engage in faithful reflection, and represent our positions. We are not required to defer to a dogmatic authority which delivers the final word on what we must believe; instead, ***we are blessed*** to discuss openly and honestly theological concerns from end-of-life issues to questions about immigration to language about the Trinity.

As long as God continues to move among us, the theological task is never completed. People of faith must always be ready for new openings from the Spirit, and whenever new thoughts are offered with integrity, the proposals should be discussed responsibly and theologically. Surely, some theological explorations will not be beneficial or productive in leading us into new territory, but other theological adventures may reveal that God is sharing new insights, new discoveries, and a new world – characteristics which certainly describe any church that seeks to be faithful in the twenty-first century.

Blessings,

tom



Dear New Covenant Community Church Members and Friends,

In July we finally experienced summer weather (and heat). Fortunately, the 10:30 worship time helped avoid the worst of the heat. Hal Horton has managed to install and put into practice the video recording of our worship service, and Pastor Tom's sermons are now available on our web site; To see the web site, simply log onto **covenantakron.org**. To view a video of our recent church services, log onto **YouTube.com** and search for **NCCC live stream**.

I urge you all to check it out. This is a way for our small church to extend our reach and to allow our shut-in members or anyone who can't make the service to share in our worship experience. Thank you, Hal for making this possible. Hal would appreciate some assistance with the YouTube streaming on Sunday mornings from time to time and volunteers should speak with him. Another use of our new audio-visual capabilities allowed us to have a movie night in Fellowship hall on July 23rd the movie was "A League of Their Own". A group of our members shared 200 fliers with our neighbors and we advertised the showing in local media. We had 14 people attend, including two guests of our members. No neighborhood people showed, but it takes time for these ideas to bear fruit. The effort by our new member committee should be applauded.

On other news, our interim church Office Manager, Brooke Eliadis has been picking up our needed support work while the Personnel Committee has begun interviewing permanent candidates for the position. More announcements about this can be expected next month.

Thank you all for your continuing faith and support to New Covenant Community Church and its mission.

Yours in Christ,

John Sezna

2019 Governing Board President

Dear Friends,

I want to thank you for your wonderful support and nourishment these past several months when my husband was so sick. Actually, you all have been consistently supportive and attentive to John for these many years as his health declined. Many is the time you would ask about his condition. I am here to declare that NCCC has some of the best cooks in Akron and your dinners, gladly brought and gladly received by John and me, sustained us and relieved me of the daily bother of what in blazes I was going to do for dinner. With all the other pressures, that was a precious gift.

The response to my requests for the memorial service for John made for a lovely gathering, easy for all of the family to enjoy and relax. I was so proud of my church and how you put together an open and welcoming time for our friends and family.

I remember the Sunday morning John was to leave the hospital and come home to Hospice care. I was driving home from the hospital and found myself right in front of NCCC. I came in for the last 15 minutes of the service and it felt so right. It was where I belonged.

You are the best and I thank you from the depths of my being for the love and support you give me.

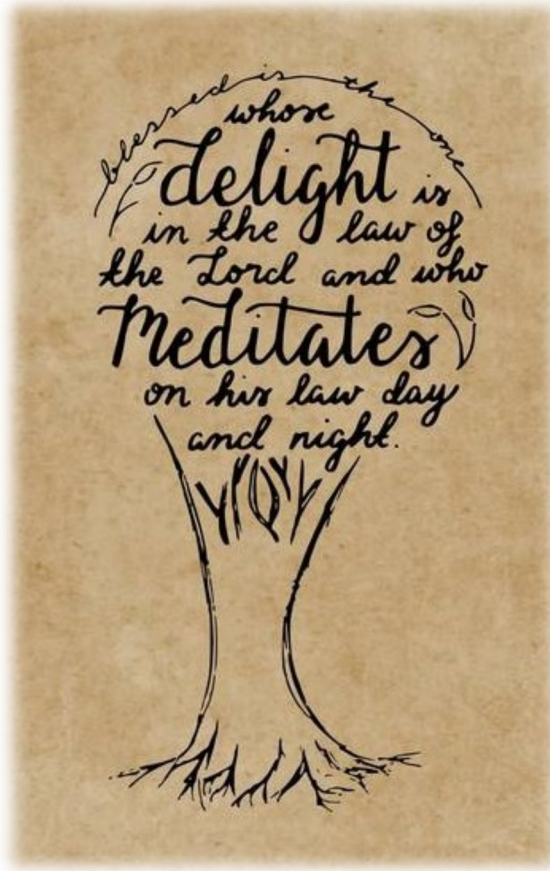
Much love,

Nancy Clem

ICCC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

On July 15-19, the Annual Conference of the International Council of Community Churches was held in Jacksonville, Florida, where our congregation was blessed with the faithful representation of Sue and Phil Smith.

Rev. Carl Davis opened the conference with a sermon entitled, "The Church Like a Tree," based on the passage from Psalm 1:1-6. His message stressed that, like a tree, the church must produce; the church must prosper; and the church must protect.



Over the course of two days, Dr. Marvin McMickle of Colgate Rochester Divinity School led an inspiring and powerful Bible Study on Acts 1:6-11, in which Jesus tells the disciples to "be my witnesses." In applying the text to those of us in attendance at the conference, Dr. McMickle challenged us by asking (1) Are we SEEING something as a witness (e.g., gun violence, political squabbling, wealth disparity, immigration, etc.)? Are we paying attention to what is happening in the world around us? (2) Are we SAYING something as a witness? Can we speak truth to power? Will we say something about what we have seen? (3) Are we willing to SUFFER as a witness? What are we willing to do about the things we have seen?

Accordingly, in seeking to be witnesses in the community, the ICCC held a prayer service at Jacksonville Landing which was the site of a mass shooting that occurred at a video game tournament last year. In addition to praying for the end of all forms of violence, the participants were encouraged to fast over the noon hour and donate the money that they would have spent on lunch to a local charity whose mission is focused on reducing violence in the community. As part of the business meeting, it was noted that New Covenant Community Church ranks #1 in "per capita giving," and 14th overall, to the International Council of Community Churches. Also, several changes to the by-laws were made. In our regional meeting, New Covenant Community Church will host the fall gathering of the Ohio/Michigan Fellowship on October 19.

The workshops were quite interesting as Naomi Washington-Leapheart led a thought-provoking seminar on using science fiction to interpret sacred texts. Quoting Walter Mosley, she shared with us that "this power to imagine is the first step in changing the world. Science fiction promises a future full of possibility, alternate lives, and even regret. The genre speaks most clearly to those who are dissatisfied with the way things are." The presentation focused on the fact that nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the imagination of our minds.

Also, Bruce Jones offered a workshop that highlighted seven critical choices every church should make:

- 1) Choose life over death. Tend to what is living and not what is passing away.
- 2) Choose community over isolation. People seek meaningful community.
- 3) Choose frontier over fortress. Does church look imposing to the community?
- 4) Choose fun over drudgery.
- 5) Choose relevancy over tradition.
- 6) Choose bold over mild.
- 7) Choose now rather than later. Are we delaying decisions in order to wait for a convenient time?

Next year, the ICCC Annual Conference will be in Dublin, Ohio, and it will be an opportunity in which all of us can participate.

Bible Study



After a brief respite for the summer, our Wednesday afternoon Bible Study will resume on August 28, at 4:00 p.m. We are currently studying the gospel of Matthew, which calls disciples of every age to faithful discipleship so that we may share in God's work in the world. If you are interested in examining alternative interpretations, discussing theological questions, and contemplating Scripture's relevance to our contemporary culture, then come and join the handful of faithful disciples who meet on Wednesday afternoons for our Bible Study.

Outdoor Worship on September 8

On Sunday, September 8, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., we will have the joy of joining our sisters and brothers in the faith for an outdoor worship service and picnic at Tadmor Shrine (3000 Krebs Drive). We will celebrate with our friends at Allenside Presbyterian Church, North Springfield Presbyterian Church, and Firestone Park Presbyterian Church. The folks from Firestone Park will be bringing hot dogs and condiments, and our congregation is asked to bring cold sides (such as potato salad, fruit, etc). You may also want to bring a lawn chair or blanket. Please mark your calendars for this meaningful time of worship. If the case of inclement weather, we will gather at the Firestone Park Presbyterian Church.



Blessed to Bless

"The blessed one always blesses. And people want to be blessed! This is so apparent wherever you go. No one is brought to life through curses, gossip, accusations, and blaming. There is so much of that taking place around us all the time, and it calls forth only darkness, destruction, and death. As the "blessed ones," we can walk through



this world and offer blessings. It doesn't require much effort. It flows naturally from our hearts. When we hear within our ourselves the voice calling us by name and blessing us, the darkness no longer distracts us. The voice that calls us the Beloved will give us words to bless others and reveal to them that they are no less blessed than we." – from Mornings with Henri J. M. Nouwen: Readings and Reflections, compiled by Evelyn Bence, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1997), page 19.

Fellowship News

Coffee Hour

Lemonade Hour ends Sept. 1, and Coffee Hour begins Sept. 15. (There is no Coffee Hour Sept. 8 because of combined service at Tadmor Shrine Temple). We're back to using the old coffee pot to make 10 cups of regular coffee. Instructions are on the wall above table in the hallway. Two people are needed each Sunday—one to make coffee and the other to bring goodies. Both people clean up. The sign up sheet will be posted Aug. 11.



Throw One on the BBQ



The Barbecue is Sat., Aug. 24, beginning at 6 pm at the home of Carol and Mark Davis, 1079 Sellman. Provided: lemonade, iced tea, coffee, paper products, utensils, etc. BYOB. Bring your own meat to grill (grillers available to assist Mark), and sign up for a side dish that will serve 8. Sign ups run through Aug. 18.

Light Lunch & Movie

Fellowship Committee will provide a light lunch on Sept. 29 following the movie "How to Train Your Dragon, #1" which will be shown during the worship service on Sept. 29. A freewill offering will be taken.



As we enter into a busy time in the life of the Fellowship Committee, any additional people who wish to assist with an activity would be most welcome.
See Nancy Williams.

News

Acme Community Cashback Program begins Aug. 8 and runs through Dec. 28. Please place any receipts you have in the “white” church located on the table in the hallway.



Akron Pride Festival, Aug. 24, 11-7, Hardesty Park. Details forthcoming. The Governing Board voted to give \$100 toward this event. We hope to have a table with flyers, etc. outside through early afternoon.

Akron Area Interfaith Council

It's a new year in the life of AAIC after our successful Hunger Walk in early May. Kathy Ress is the new chair. She writes that “the AAIC is an intersection of different faiths and cultures, a sacred space that can lead to rich and creative visioning and problem solving....The AAIC can be a model for different communities working together, bringing together the best that all faiths have to offer...”



The first meeting is Tuesday, Aug. 6 from 10:30-12 at St. Hilary's in Fairlawn. Come as a guest and learn of the year's events. Leave as a member if you so choose. Contact Nancy Williams if you wish to attend the Aug. 6 meeting.

New Covenant Community Church

Ecumenical in Outlook, Presbyterian in Heritage

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