

# Pastoral Report

Community Mennonite Church, Markham, Illinois

Pastors: Chuck & Bonnie Neufeld • Associate Pastor: Horace McMillon

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January 27, 2002 CMC Congregational Meeting

In addition to listing church activities and events, this report includes several paragraphs of “personal comments” from the pastors and some agenda-like stuff that the congregation should be aware of.

From the outset let me just say that pastoring this congregation continues to be an incredible privilege. What an honor it is to serve CMC in this way. Our prayer is that our efforts will be Spirit-led and Christ-centered. May our “pastoring” bring hope and healing to all who are a part of this congregation. That is our desire and it is to that end that we offer our service.

## ***Since our last Congregational Meeting***

*a good number of congregational events have occurred. What follows is a thoroughly incomplete list in chronological order. Let us know — and please forgive us — if we have forgotten some important items.*

- Youth Sunday was held July 1. Our youth did it all! The theme of the morning was: “To forgive or not to forgive, that is the question.”
- Nashville ‘01 Conference: July 2-8 (Pastor Chuck was one of the conference preachers.)
- Uriah Kandice Jordan was born July 19.
- Vacation Bible School: July 30 – August 3
- Grace Leatherman’s last CMC Sunday: July 29
- Pastor Horace’s Evaluation was done in August.
- A group from the Mennonite Church of Normal, Illinois was present for worship and potluck meal on August 26. They presented and commissioned the Choir Robes that were donated to us by their congregation. We had a beautiful time together!
- Ken & Louise Hawkley moved into the area on August 27.
- Horace Alexander was born on September 2.
- CMLC Quilt Sale was held on September 8. Several of our members enjoyed attending this fund raising event.
- Sunday School started up again on September 9 following the usual summer break.
- A Prayer Vigil was held in our church on the eve of September 11.
- A series of “Financial Seminars” were cosponsored by Bank 1 and HOPE and held in our Fellowship Hall in September.
- Women’s Retreat was held at Camp Friedenswald on September 14-16. Several car-loads of women were able attend this year.
- Pastors Bonnie and Chuck went to Mayo Clinic September 27-28 for treatment for Bonnie’s hand. Thank God that much healing has come her way since then!
- Pastor Dick Davis visited our congregation for several days (October 13-14) to examine our congregation’s experience with “cross-cultural” and “inter-racial” ministry.
- Pilsen MVS Unit worshiped with us October 28.
- “Ted & Lee” offered two presentations on November 4. The main presentation was the full production of “The Creation Chronicles.”
- Men’s Retreat was held at Camp Friedenswald on November 9-11. Evan Bontrager and Marvin Goertz attended this year.
- A Thanksgiving Banquet was held on Thursday Evening, November 15. Thanks to Mary Ann & Robert Woods for facilitating this event!
- A Craft/Bake/Yard Sale was organized as a fundraiser for the Building Fund by Sandy McDowell and Marlene Suter. This most successful event was held at the church on Nov. 17.
- Dave and Karen Ewert moved to Janesville, WI on December 14.
- Glen & Thelma transferred their membership to the Mennonite Church in Orrville, Ohio on December 28.
- On Dec. 16 we were privileged to announce Holly Clark’s decision to become a part of the CMC family. We will be planning a formal “reception into membership service” following “membership instruction classes.”
- The Advent and Christmas Season brought with it the usual variety of activities including:
  - *Christmas Decorating on December 8*
  - *Christmas Program on December 16*
  - *Christmas Distribution of HOPE Baskets on December 17-19*
  - *Sunday, December 23: Tom Yoder Neufeld was the guest preacher for this Sunday.*
  - *Christmas Eve service*
- We went over the \$20,000 mark on December 30. What a joy it is to see the congregation rally around this project. We hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide us as we seek to become even more the kind of inviting community God has equipped us to be.

- New Year's Eve Party and Prayer Service.
- Youth Retreat: Our entire youth group was able to attend this year's retreat on January 18-20. Thanks to Laura Devine & Steve Buchtel and Evan & Tonya Bontrager for making this work. "Great shall your reward be in heaven!"
- Several of our members have struggled with health matters in the past few weeks and months: Don Burklow has made a remarkable recovery from a heart attack and is again back at work. Chuck Kozlowsky is presently making incredible strides in his recovery from a stroke. We praise God for the healing that is coming to them and others.

### ***Sign-up Sunday:***

We continue to treasure the involvement of CMC members and attenders. What a joy it is to see young and old involved in worship, in various serving functions, in committees, in after-school activities, in choirs, etc. We hope that the form that was handed out today will give everyone a chance to serve where they feel most called.

### ***Building Program:***

Now that we've gathered the initial \$20,000, we are ready and able to proceed with plans for Phase I of the Building Renovations. We praise God for the congregation's support for this project.

### ***Membership Drive:***

The pastoral team and elders have discussed various ways of extending the invitation to CMC. In a document Pastor Horace prepared to help us think about this matter he wrote: "We strongly believe that CMC is a very special place with a very important purpose. We have a special witness: that it is possible for all of us regardless of race, gender, class or social status to be reconciled to one another in Christ — in this life... It is a witness that desperately needs to be heard. There are both church and unchurched for whom our witness can be the point of entry into a richer and more fulfilling Christian life..." The discussion paper on "*Membership Drive*" is posted at the back of the sanctuary. Help yourself to a copy. We will be incorporating aspects of this emphasis in various CMC programs. Pray that God will continue to guide us as we seek to be faithful to our calling in this area.

### ***Staffing and Structure:***

The pastoral team has spent considerable time developing job descriptions and working relationships that do honor to the needs of the congregation while taking into account the realities of each member's other commitments. A document entitled "CMC Pastoral Staff — Clarification of present staff functions and structures" (posted on back bulletin board) clarifies present commitments and arrangements. If you would like a copy, help yourself.

### ***Congregational Review:***

The church board met with Wayne Hochstetler, conference minister, to discuss the value of a congregational evaluation. Since Neufelds' pastoral evaluations will be required this spring, the board thought it best to schedule a congregational review for the fall of 2002. We trust that this process will allow us as a congregation to consider "*the old — the new — and that which doesn't yet exist.*" We hope it can help us "let go" — "hang on" — and "discover!"

### ***Questions, Dreams, Longings:***

- As hard as our youth sponsors work, we wonder what other regular youth activities could be developed to bolster what is already happening.
- How about another adult Sunday School — for young families with children? Other?
- We wonder if the Sunday School program could become more of an "*outreach program*" than it presently is. At present we may not be viewing it as such.
- What if the Thursday Evening Bible Study sessions were more of a "whole church" activity? That would allow for a very different approach.
- Small Groups: Much of what we read emphasizes how helpful such groups can be to the welfare of a congregation. Is it time to give "*Small Groups*" another try?
- Discipling Program: How can we pair up "mature Christians" with seekers or new-comers who want to learn what it means to be a Christ-follower.

### ***Comments from Pastor Horace***

Fourth of July was a special treat. Under the leadership of Doug Swartz an Ohio Venture group made the journey here to Markham for several days

of service. It was great to be a part of having our Youth welcome them with a big BBQ feast. Later that evening, both groups went out for fireworks.

Thursday Evening Bible studies have continued to flourish. We just recently finished a 12 week look at the “Bible, Non-Violence and What it Means to Live In Peace.” That followed a six week look at the “Power of Giving: Tithes and First Fruits.” Most weeks between 20-30 attend; mostly from our congregation, although we have also had many visitors and guests. We are currently looking at topics in the Gospel of John. Going forward, we will be looking at Biblical principles for “Expanding our Witness and Widening our Reach.”

The fellowship meals have also been a special time for gathering and fellowship. Under the leadership of Mertis Odom we have also issued an invitation to the shelters. We are often joined by folk from Last Call Ministries. Mary Ann and Robert Woods sponsored a Thanksgiving Dinner Service. A great many from the congregation participated.

I look forward to the next series of youth Baptism classes coming up this spring. I was impressed at how hard so many of the youth worked to prepare. This year we will keep the seminar style format. We will be looking at the material a little differently. In other words it will not be the same class. As a result, youth who have taken a Baptism Class in the past will be able to participate this year as well.

Monique and I would like to thank the congregation for all your prayers, calls, cards, gifts and even hospital visits. Your support has meant more to us than you will ever know. You have uplifted our spirits when we needed uplifting. I appreciate the affirmation of the congregation and have taken steps to make the most of the areas of opportunity identified on the evaluation.

### ***Comments from***

#### ***Pastors Chuck & Bonnie***

In addition to the various items mentioned in this report, let me (Chuck) just say how grateful Bonnie and I are for the chance we have to pastor this congregation. Every time we leave town for even just a few days, we look forward to getting back home. To Bonnie and me that suggests a good sense of feeling “settled about being here.”

The year 2002 has begun with some significant challenges for us as a couple and as a family. Bonnie has spent all but a few days of the new year in Newton, Kansas helping our daughter Kristin during this time of recuperating following the birth of

their son, Micah. Please remember Bonnie, as well as Kristin and her family in prayer. While Bonnie is in Newton I am tending to the many and varied tasks related to our work as pastors of CMC. It’s going alright, although I sure do miss Bonnie. As you well know, things just aren’t the same when Bonnie’s gone. She has assured me that, although she doesn’t know when, she is planning on coming back! Praise God!

Our second three-year term is up in June. We look forward to the congregation’s evaluation of our work as we contemplate God’s ongoing call in our lives. Although we continue to feel settled in our call to ministry in Markham, we also desire to hear the congregation’s confirmation or challenge in this regard.

### ***Conclusion:***

Your pastoral team wants you to know that we continue to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Please help us be the kinds of pastors that will assist you as a congregation be everything God wants you to be. Praise God we’re in this together!

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*Report prepared by Chuck Neufeld  
January 25, 2002*