

Pastoral Report

Submitted by Pastor Bonnie Neufeld on behalf of the CMC Pastoral Team
Pastors: Chuck & Bonnie Neufeld • Associate Pastor: Horace McMillon

CMC Congregational Meeting June 8, 2003

Ephesians 1:15-23

I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. So I never stop being grateful for you, as I mention you in my prayers. I ask the glorious Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you his Spirit. The Spirit will make you wise and let you understand what it means to know God. My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and that you will understand the hope that was given to you when God chose you. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all of God's people.

I want you to know about the great and mighty power that God has for us followers. It is the same wonderful power he used when he raised Christ from death and let him sit at his right side in heaven. There Christ rules over all forces, authorities, powers, and rulers. He rules over all beings in this world and will rule in the future world as well. God has put all things under the power of Christ, and for the good of the church he has made him the head of everything. The church is Christ's body and is filled with Christ who competely fills everything.

This is God's Church!

One morning lately I was feeling overwhelmed by one too many disappointments and one too many feelings of personal failure at being a pastor. "If only I would have seen this coming — if only I could have had a program in place that could have met those needs, perhaps then things would turn out differently — if only I had the ability to inspire people to fall in love with God all over again — if only — if only..." And then an old song that I learned as a child in my church growing up came into my head: "Die Sach is Dein, Herr Jesus Christ..." The thing — the issue — the whole deal is **yours**, Lord Jesus Christ. I began to cry as I wrestled with this thought. I know it is my head — that CMC is God's church — but to remember it in my gut? Yes, as one of your pastors I certainly have a

role to play in leading you. But ultimately, and at the very core, this is **God's** business. And all the preparation, all the worrying, all the plans, all the energy, and even all the love will not be enough to affect change in people's hearts and lives. The only lasting power is that of the Holy Spirit. And what a power that is! The **same power** that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us! In CMC! To do abundantly more than we can ask or think. Do we — do I — really believe that this power is available? That it is **in** us? To change us and to then help change each other, our neighbors and our community — indeed, the whole world?

Many of you have helped me believe this in a new way when I've felt discouraged. Michelle Mares told me the other day: "Just look at me! Look at what God has made out of me! If God can do this for me, He can do it for anyone!" (*Used with permission.*) It is this transforming, life-changing, habit-changing, attitude-changing power that is at work in us when we passionately fall in love with God again. Can we dare to believe that this is true for each of us — and for CMC?

This is God's church and God has said: "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." Jeremiah 29:11. Let us joyfully embrace this truth once more!

Please join together in singing:

"Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage"

As your pastoral team — Chuck & Bonnie Neufeld and Horace McMillon — we are eager to lead and serve you in ways that honor CMC's very special calling. Pray for us as we seek to fulfill the various assignments you've entrusted us with.

We pray that CMC will grow in its resolve to demonstrate even more clearly the presence of the Holy Spirit among us. Let us bask in the knowledge of God's love — AND — let's remember that the Gospel of Jesus Christ invites us to share God's love with each other and the world all around. Blessings to all!

(Please turn for church events and activities.)

CMC at work!

The past six months (January – June 2003) have been filled with many events, ministries and activities. A small and thoroughly incomplete and jumbled sampling includes:

- Sr. High Youth Retreat at Camp Friedenswald, Jan. 17-19.
- Pastors Chuck & Bonnie were resource people at Pastor's Week at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, VA, May 20-23.
- Ken Hawkley became a member — Feb. 2
- Jr. High Youth Retreat at Amigo Centre, Feb. 14-16
- Ivorie Lowe, Barbara Lee, Pastors Chuck & Bonnie and Horace attended the Pastors & Congregational Leaders Workshop at Mennohaven Feb. 14-15.
- Multi-Cultural Sunday and Feast was held on February 23.
- McMillons moved to Markham on March 1. We praise God that they were finally able to make this transition.
- Pastors Chuck & Bonnie attended two conferences: Central District Conference (March 6-8) and the Illinois Mennonite Conference (April 11-12).
- The men of CMC hosted the annual "So glad you're in our life" banquet on March 29.
- We were heartened by the generous efforts of the Iowa Youth Group that donated \$2,500 to our Building Expansion project for the demolition work they did on Doug Swartz's house in Dolton; April 2-6.
- Holy Week Services were held Thursday — Sunday, April 17-20.
- The Good Sense Workshop on May 10 was attended by Mertis Odom, Ivorie Lowe, Dave & Marlene Suter and Bonnie Neufeld.
- CMC Church Retreat was held at Camp Friedenswald May 16-18. The theme related to the "minimum factor" identified in our congregational review; i.e., Passionate Spirituality. We chose the theme "With all your heart." As has become tradition of late, various small groups presented dramas related to the weekend's theme. Amazing talent!
- Monique McMillon's baptism — May 18
- Jeanine Banner completed her first year of college.
- Graduations were celebrated by: Candace Jackson, Joyce Banner, Derek Newell and Sherise Miller.
- We were sorry to see Evan & Tonya Bontragers and their girls move to Indiana at the end of January.
- We sought to be creative and faithful in our witness and opposition to the Iraq War.
- We have eagerly anticipated the beginning of the Building Expansion project. That's about to get underway!
- The Bible Discovery Series, led by Ken Hawkley and Pastor Horace McMillon, was a wonderful nine-week introduction to the Bible.
- We appointed two new members to the Brementowne Manor Board: Louise Hawkley and Chuck Kozlowsky.
- Pastor Bonnie was elected to the Leadership Commission of the Illinois Mennonite Conference.

Many other items could be added. The purpose of this list is to document our church's life. If there are items that should have been listed, please let us know so we can make those additions.