

Pastoral Report

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Community Mennonite Church

Markham, Illinois

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As we reviewed our past nine years as pastors of CMC, we found ourselves overwhelmed with gratitude. Gratitude for the countless ways in which we have experienced God's grace and mercy. We have summarized some of our reflections in the paragraphs below.

Why did we come?

We came because you invited us to join you in ministry! What delight we took in returning 1996—this time as pastors—to the place that had some twenty years earlier (1974) received us with the same open arms. Then we were a young, idealistic, often over-zealous and confused couple. And here we are, an older, idealistic, often over-zealous and sometimes still confused couple. But we know why we came; the first time, and this time: To join you in declaring the wondrous message of Christ's kingdom!

Why are we still here?

I recently asked a friend of mine (also a pastor) how long he thought one should stay at a church. He said that when he was at seminary—which is much more recent than I—the common wisdom was this:

- You better have a really good reason to leave before 10 years.
- You better have a really good reason to stay longer than 10 years.

So, where does that leave us? Right here, with great purpose and resolve. It's not that we haven't at times wondered *what* we are doing, but never have we yet wondered what we are doing *here!* Never! It is a profound gift not to wonder whether we should be here. It's a great comfort, to say the least.

Another reason we're here is your ongoing call. We are not here in some "resigned" or "there's nothing else to do" sort of way. No! We are here *because* of your ongoing call—the ongoing call of God! Is there any greater joy humans can experience than to know they are living in response to the voice of God? It is in this spirit that *we joyfully accept your call to continue as pastors for another three-year term.* We thank you for your confidence in our ministry.

What do we have to offer?

We believe we have much to offer! But, the only way we have the freedom to offer anything of ourselves as pastors, is to do so with the full acknowledgment of both our strengths and our weaknesses. Without attempting a full display of either, let us simply say that we know we have both: strengths and weaknesses. You surely have your own opinion of these by now; not only from the first 13 years we spent here from 1974-1987, but since we returned in 1996 as well. For your readiness to celebrate and receive our strengths, and to tolerate and forgive our weaknesses, we thank you. It is that spirit that will allow us to continue in our love-filled service.

What is our prayer?

Our prayer is deeply related to our vision. Our vision includes the deep conviction that CMC can and will continue to become more creative, more compassionate, more focused, more dedicated in all the areas it has already displayed its abilities in. CMC is a beacon for Christ's Kingdom. Having proved itself in this way, it has positioned itself for a challenge: a challenge to do even more, to be even better, to herald the cause of Christ with even greater urgency. Our prayer? That CMC would continue its glorious assignment of being a community—however small—that displays the will of God: to be a reconciled community giving evidence of Christ's miraculous gospel.

There's no more significant a recent event than Pastor Horace's resignation from the CMC pastoral team to pursue employment options in Mississippi. As ready as we are to acknowledge God's leading in this, it still comprises a momentous occurrence that is hard to face. We are eager to respond to the Spirit's prodding—yes, even in matters related to this change. One thing is certain: We want to do all we can to promote and facilitate CMC's vision to have its pastoral staff reflect who we are as a multi-racial community. While we are not stressed out about the matter, we are poised to discern God's leading with regard to the vacancy Pastor Horace's departure has caused. *"Thank you, Pastor Horace, for your loving and faithful service!"*

What do we know for sure?

- That Christ is here among us.
- That we are Christ to each other.
- That we honor each other as gifts too precious to compromise.
- That the Gospel of Christ— which is all about peace & justice—calls us to treasure each other as precious children of God made in the image of God.

To be asked to pastor a community that makes such claims is truly an honor!

What lies ahead?

Growth! Growth of every kind. Growth in spirituality, hospitality, numbers, knowledge of scripture, understanding of Christ's call, prayer, resolve to engage, celebration of racial reconciliation & harmony... One could go on and on, for it is in **all** areas that we desire—and anticipate—growth. Be reminded of this: we plant and tend to the seed, but God gives the growth!

We are ready and eager to hear God's ongoing call; for us as pastors, but also for us as CMC.

A thoroughly incomplete list of things that happened in the past six months:

This list does not even attempt to include all the countless activities that go on week after week—many behind the scenes. Activities such as visitation, counseling, worship, prayer services, kids clubs, youth events, service activities, special meetings, administrative work, plus any number of other things that happen without ever being specially noted. Thanks to all who have contributed in so many ways.

- March 11-13 Damascus Road Conference (Barbara Lee, Mertis Odom, Cathy Arsenault, Ivorie Lowe, Tobin Miller Shearer.)
- March 18 CMLC Chapel (Pastors Chuck & Bonnie.)
- March 19 "So Glad You're In Our Life" Banquet (CMC men for CMC women and girls.)
- March 20-27 Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter Sunday.
- April 8-9 IMC Spring Conference at Menno Haven. (Pastors Chuck & Bonnie and Ken Hawkley.)
- April 13-17 Iowa Christian School came for a service week.
- April 15-17 Pastors Chuck & Bonnie resourced Yellow Creek Mennonite Church.
- April 24 Spring Tea at First Church of the Brethren in Garfield Park. The CMC Gospel Choir was one of the featured choirs. Did a great job!
- April 27 Canadian Mennonite University Choir came to CMC! Our choir sang as well. We had a great time.
- May 1 Keith Wilson's Baptism.
- May 13-15 CMC Annual Church Retreat.
- May 21 Church work day!
- May 22 Christ Community Mennonite Church Barn Dedication. (Pastor Chuck & Bonnie attended.)
- May 22 CMLC Choir came to visit CMC; they sang in our morning worship service.
- June 4 CMC Car Wash — "Charlotte fundraiser."
- June 5 CMC Youth Dinner — "Charlotte fundraiser."
- June 11 Men's Fishing Trip.
- June 18 Bake & Rummage Sale — "Charlotte fundraiser."
- June 23-25 Central District Conference gathering. (Ken Hawkley represented CMC.)
- July 3 Farewell to the McMillon family.
- July 3-10 Charlotte Mennonite Convention. (Our youth were accompanied by Horace and Monique McMillon and Sandy McDowell.)
- July 17 Farewell to Kimberly Kirchmer and family.