

# Pastoral Report

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Community Mennonite Church  
Markham, Illinois

*January 31, 2007*

We greet you as servants of Christ Jesus. To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Markham and surrounding communities: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank our God every time we think of you — which is pretty constant — praying with joy for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel. We are confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for us to think this way about all of you, because you hold us in your hearts, as we hold you in ours. All of us share in God's grace with each other. Hallelujah!

— *Adapted words of the Apostle Paul from Philippians 1* —

## GRATITUDE

Every one of our pastoral reports has begun by offering a word of gratitude for this congregation. We have also declared our deep joy for the privilege of pastoring this bunch. It is indeed an honor to participate in God's work with Community Mennonite Church. One of the joys of pastoring is that we get to witness your service and your determination to be Christ to the world around you. Knowing that we're never done in our learning and training to become more Christ-like, we, nevertheless, want to pronounce without hesitation our delight in the extent to which you have become like Christ.

We, your pastors, aren't the only ones saying this. You, too, are naming and claiming the missional reality that is a part of our very being. I believe the following quotes are accurate in spirit, if not verbatim:

From an email Tobin sent MCC:

*"For more than thirty-five years this small but faithful congregation [CMC] has lived and breathed what it means to come together across racial lines on a natural, normative, and frequent basis. Amid struggle and joy, members of Community have in many ways embodied the anti-racist values that the Mennonite Church has claimed as its own."*

Doug, after church on Sunday:

*"I'm excited that our ministry is moving beyond those already a part of CMC."*

Karen after youth retreat:

*"We had a great time! They [the kids] were great!"*

Johnny:

*"We behaved a lot better this year than last!"*

Lee:

*"When I come here [church] I feel peace!"*

Keith:

*"Something important is gonna happen — is happening — with CMC! I just know it!"*

## CALL

Bonnie and I are excited about continuing our pastoral ministry with CMC. We are energized and thrilled by recent evidences of God's many blessings. Some of the more visible developments include: the prospect of inviting Cyneatha & Steve Millsaps, new attendees, growing youth group, neighborhood kids attending Kids Club, etc. As your pastors we are eager to participate in the ongoing ministries to which God is calling CMC.

CMC's calling includes focus on a rich array of missional activities: Anti-racism work, reaching

out through evangelism, discipleship training, ministering beyond those already a part of the church, offering relevant social services to the surrounding community, developing and facilitating empowerment resources to our community, etc.

## **HELP NEEDED!**

When Bonnie and I look at the myriad of needs and activities that are already a part of the overall picture, and when we then add the list of things that we wish or know we could or should be doing, and when we add the realities of increased growth in the number of youth attending CMC, we know without doubt that we need help!

Our present need — ours as pastors, but ours as a congregation as well — has intensified right at the time when we as a church had decided to begin in earnest the search for an African American person to join the pastoral team. Bonnie and I have stated rather emphatically that, given CMC's stated vision regarding leadership, it is imperative that the pastoral team be a racially integrated team. What joy there is in exploring with Cyneatha & Steve Millsaps God's call to them with regard to resettling in Markham and becoming a part of CMC; she, as a member of the pastoral team, but both of them as active leaders in the congregation. Let there be no mistake: Given the congregation's resolve on this matter, we need an African American person on the pastoral team. But let there be no mistake about this either: we need Cyneatha & Steve here because of their particular gifts and interests that relate very directly to the increased needs we are facing at this time.

## **NOT MAINTAIN — ATTAIN!**

As your pastors we are urging you to recognize the unique and wonderful situation we are in. In truth, we are facing an opportunity! Bonnie and I are confident that God will lead us as a

congregation. We are excited about the increased needs we are facing. There's a harvest out there! We are in a position to bring that harvest in. May it not be left in the field!

We don't need any increased activity, increased prayer, increased money, increased staff, increased vision, if our desire is just to maintain the present. We ***DO*** need an increase in all of these areas and more if our vision is to act boldly and creatively to the new call coming our way.

With regard to Cyneatha & Steve: We don't need them here to "maintain." We need them here to "attain!" To attain the calling to which we have been called.

## **GOD'S WILL?**

Brothers and sisters, as excited and poised as we are, and as certain as we are that God has led us to Cyneatha & Steve, we also want to assure you that discerning "God's will" is an ongoing task. Many details must be looked at and explored before any of this is a done deal. Discerning next steps, identifying a long-term arrangement will be a task not just for the pastors, but for the whole congregation. Successful discernment can and will only happen, however, when we devote ourselves to prayerful and careful process.

It is in this hope and spirit that we, your pastors, are ready to issue a call to the congregation. The call is to great courage, to ongoing faithfulness, to active visioning, to joyful service. God will not put us up to something for which we will not also be equipped.

## **THANK YOU!**

Thank you for letting us be your pastors. May God's purposes be assisted by you and us as we offer our unique and loving service as members of the body of Christ.

“...lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”

— Ephesians 4:1 —