

Pastoral Report

Pastors Chuck & Bonnie Neufeld and Cyneatha Millsaps
Community Mennonite Church, Markham, Illinois

January 13, 2008

Report prepared by Pastor Chuck Neufeld

Every pastoral report for the past twelve years has begun by offering a word of gratitude for this congregation. This one should be no different. As we've said on any number of occasions, it is indeed an honor to participate in God's work with CMC. One of the joys of pastoring you is that we get to witness your service and your determination to be Christ to the world around you.

We, your pastors, — *and the joy is that this year "your pastors" includes Cyneatha Millsaps* — aren't the only ones saying this. You too are naming and claiming the missional reality that is a part of our very being — as individuals and as a congregation.

In the pastoral report of a year ago, I wrote: *"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, greater collaboration between the various agencies present on the CMC campus, etc."*

Continuing from the January 31, 2007 report: *"CMC's calling includes focusing 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."*

The reason I am quoting from a report of a year ago is to remind you of what we were feeling then, and to demonstrate what we are feeling today. The help we so clearly desired a year ago, we desire today.

What joy we have known this past year as we became acquainted with Cyneatha & Steve Millsaps and then as we confirmed their call to Markham; she, as a member of the pastoral team, but both of them as active leaders in the congregation. A year ago I wrote about our need for Cyneatha and Steve. Today I reiterate that by simply adding a big AMEN! May God grant us wisdom, resolve, courage and a spirit of freedom as we seek his guidance for all the things that still need clarification.

From Pastor Cyneatha Millsaps

To God be the glory. One year has passed since Steve and I have had the pleasure of being welcomed into this faith community. We have been blessed beyond measure. As I consider the things God has done and is doing in our lives I am excited. I have been honored to share in our 50th celebration. During this time I was able to see the history of CMC; a history of community activism and social justice. CMC has not simply been a gathering of believers but a gathering of believers seeking to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world, which is right in line with Steve's and my beliefs.

CMC has also shown that we are open to new ideas and ways of being. The willingness to try a new Sunday School was refreshing. The church members showed how we honor one another's thoughts and concerns. Processing how everyone experienced the Sunday School and taking all concerns into account shows love and compassion for one another.

Living an hour away from our new family has been difficult at times, but it is a small price to pay in order to be part of the great assembly of believers. Bless you all.

— *Pastor Cyneatha*

From Pastor Bonnie Neufeld

It doesn't seem possible that so much has happened at CMC over the past six months — beginning with the amazing gift of everyone working together to get ready for the 50th anniversary. And then, ready or not, the weekend of July 27-29 arrived — and with it dozens and dozens of dear friends from near and far — folks who were part of CMC at all different times of our history — from the very beginning in the 50s to the present. It was amazing to hear stories of God's leading during times when the way ahead seemed almost impossible. It was also moving to hear of forgiveness offered and received — whether person to person or as a group. And throughout the weekend I was delighted to see everyone pitching in to help with anything that needed doing — old and young, newcomers and old-timers — all working together, laughing, crying and just treasuring being together as a CMC family.

One of the tender realities of that weekend was realizing how much Pastor Larry Voth would have enjoyed being there. Only a few months later, on October 27, we got to say our final

good-byes to him and rejoiced with the family that he was finally well, free, and with our Lord and Savior.

These last six months have been both very good and very difficult as we wait for Cyneatha and Steve to relocate to Markham. In this season of waiting — working — stumbling — wondering — proceeding — I am encouraged by stories of God's faithful leading. How I pray that each of us will eagerly keep listening for God's call and that we will keep watching attentively for God's sign, whenever and however it appears.

We can be certain that we will indeed be led by the Spirit — "...if you seek me with all you heart, you shall **surely** find me." — "Ask and it **will** be given; seek and you **will** find; knock and the door **will** be opened..." We can confidently and joyfully take each step as it becomes clear, even if we can't see around the next corner — God already knows what's there!

— *Pastor Bonnie*

What has been given is good!

Throughout our history we have claimed God's benevolent guidance. We have done the unbelievable, considered the unlikely, pursued the impractical, and benefited from the completely surprising. The greatest blessings have come to us through projects that required much from us. We should not be surprised that the present time and set of circumstances require our attentive care yet again!

You know what I'm talking about!

We have been led by...

- the guiding star
- the hovering cloud
- the pillaring fire
- the burning bush
- the rolled stone
- the stilled sea
- the sopping fleece
- the tamed lions
- the crumbling walls
- the rattling bones
- the flaming heads
- the low swinging chariots...

You know what I'm talking about!

As we've sought God's guidance in the past, we do so again. Brothers and sisters, young and old, this is a time for our confidence. There's no reason to hesitate — no reason for despair, although I've done my share. So let's quit it! This is no time for despair, but a time for our trustful longing. Yes, it's time for our confidence!

That's about all I know to say this time 'round. I feel like I've written a lot this year that gives evidence of my passion and vision for CMC's life and mission. (*CMC website, CMC 50th Celebrative History, letters to conference and individual donors, articles, etc. They're all available for your review.*) All my efforts grow out of a deep and constant desire to act on the vision held forth by CMC — now and throughout its history.

I pray that we will let God, let Jesus, and let the Holy Spirit guide us in this the hour of our need.

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.

— *Pastor Chuck Neufeld*