

Pastor's Report August 2021

On a regular basis I am amazed by the ministry activity that takes place through the life and ministry of MCC Richmond. Everything from learning to use technology more effectively, a genuine curiosity about spirituality and God, appropriately challenging others through sharing and learning, holding each other appropriately accountable for our behavior, welcoming new people and those who have been worshipping with us virtually and more.

All of this is wonderful, but our strongest spiritual gifts are the gifts of hospitality and generosity. I am amazed by the love and grace people share with each other and those within our community. Regardless of the need or if it is convenient or not ... MCC Richmond folk show up to help, give encouragement and support to one another while also doing your best to share the love of God by serving and caring for others. This is demonstrated in each and every one of our ministries. People's lives are touched by the ways they are treated and loved through the people of this spiritual community. And in return, as we witness God working in the lives of others, we are challenged to work on ourselves ... little by little doing the work to free ourselves for the pain and brokenness of the realities of life and living. Experiencing freedom, renewal, healing, hope, and love ... these are the gifts of God given to us so that we can share them with others. MCC Richmond does this very well. This is yet another reason the congregation continues to thrive and change.

Between July 19 – August 12 I have had 18 pastoral counseling appointments, 2 Zoom meetings with community leaders, 6 Zoom meetings with church members, 3 Zoom meetings and 1 webinar with UFMCC staff, 1 meeting with visitors/newbies from the virtual service.

With God's help, after more than 3 years of working, dreaming, and the generosity of the congregation supporting the Capital Campaign, Daniel Construction Company has started the renovations to the Celebration Hall bathrooms. The professionalism of the workers is fantastic. They will be working from 7am to 3:30pm Monday -Friday, taking a lunch break Thursday from 12-1:30pm ... when the food pantry is open. They have hung heavy plastic over the bathroom doorways to cut down on the dust going into the Celebration Hall. A bright orange netting is placed in the doorways of the bathrooms so people cannot go in them. This is a safety measure for groups using the Celebration Hall. So far, there are no surprises or reasons for concern. Everything is going smoothly ... with *NO change orders!* Let's keep praying for this to continue.

Chuck Bateman has volunteered to complete architectural drawings for the sanctuary ceiling. Before Daniel Construction provides a formal bid for the new ceiling, they recommend a structural engineer *sign off* on the drawings. The goal is to have the bid before the Congregational Meeting in November.

Philip Adams and I attended the UFMCC webinar **What Now? Delta Variant of Covid** on August 5. Three pastors, one from Florida, Louisiana, and California, shared how their congregations are responding to the realities of Covid. All are doing different things and shared the effects of Covid and how the enforced guidelines are affecting their respective ministries. We were broken into small groups for further discussion and sharing. The takeaway from this webinar for me was a greater appreciation for the realities of Covid in different places. Congregations should be aware of the effects of Covid in their area and respond appropriately. I am also clear that regular communication and consistent reasons for guidelines is important. We have and will continue to do both. Because of the Board's effective leadership in providing clear guidelines based on recommendations by the CDC, Governor Northam, and Covid Act

Now, the congregation has been empowered to know what to do in keeping themselves and others safe. This is clearly demonstrated by people independently returning to wearing masks and respecting social distancing during church activity without being requested to do so.

We continue to engage with our community partners in solving issues and doing our best to make a positive difference within our community. The Virginia Department of Health provided 7,000 masks for us to use, and they have also asked me to share during a Zoom meeting the impact of their support on the ministries of MCC Richmond. We were also able to assist Daily Planet with a need they had as well as work with Vicky Hester in supporting someone in need of assistance. Vicky also is making wearing masks a requirement at Babe's on Tuesday evenings to help keep Line Dance Lessons not suspend activity. Isn't it great that we have a reciprocal relationship with these organizations that they are comfortable asking us for help.

Community Groups are actively using the Community Center and Celebration Hall. Everything appears to be going smoothly with no problems or issues. Our neighbors have not complained or voiced any concern with the increased activity at the church ... thanks be to God!

The Vicky Hester Food Pantry continues to thrive with effective volunteer leadership and many people being served. The Bread Ministry is up and down with donations from Panera, but the bread, bagels, and pastries continue to be appreciated by those receiving them. Even with the rain and intense heat people show up whenever they need assistance and are grateful to receive food. Besides all the nonperishable food given away, here's what we served this month: 278 to order meatloaf, chicken salad, tuna salad, bologna and cheese, cheese and veggie sandwiches, 240 chili dogs, 80 lbs. of homemade Sloppy Js, 60 lbs. tater tots, 60 lbs. homemade Mac 'n Cheese, 20 lbs. of Georgia's snaps aka green beans, 4 gallons of sweet tea. Who knows how many bottles of water, soda, bags of chips, veggie packets, bananas, cookies, cinnamon rolls were served. 540 bags of bread or pastries were distributed. 1872+ people benefitted this month through MCC Richmond's feeding ministries.

The shocking death of Tempestt Southall has affected many at MCC Richmond. Even though people realize that for people of faith death does not have the final word this kind of unexpected experience is difficult. Several have made appointments to talk about Tempestt sharing how much they loved her and looked forward to seeing her at church. People have also been reflecting about their own lives, their relationships and friendship, and most importantly their relationship with God. While we do not expect it, even in the death of others, we grow and have opportunity to do our best to taken actions to make right the wrongs in our lives we have ignored or the things that we have left undone. I give thanks for all that God taught us, and continues to teach us, through Tempestt and all that her memory will mean for MCC Richmond. As we gather to celebrate her life, may we all give thanks to God for the person and ministry of Tempestt Southall.

Thank you for all you do to help lead and guide the ministries of MCC Richmond.

-Pastor Kenny Callaghan