

Pastor Kenny's Annual Report

MCC Richmond: **THE UNSTOPPABLE CHURCH!**

Jesus once said, *I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* In the book of Acts we see the formation of that promised church. It was a crazy time. Tongues of fire descended on people, people were healed, there were brushes with the law, people died, there were fights and disagreements, and there were missionary journeys. It was a messy but beautiful time, an uncertain but exciting time, a dangerous time but a fruitful time. And as you finish the book of Acts, you can't help but notice one thing: NOTHING is able to stop the Church as it moves forward in fresh faith and biblical truth.

A year-and-a-half ago none of us saw the Covid coming. Neither could we imagine the devastation, suffering, and horrific realities and trauma we would experience as we did our best to live through during the pandemic. In what seemed like the blink of an eye, life as we knew it was altered significantly. Our church and spiritual community faced a scenario where everything needed to change nearly immediately, without any instructions, without any ending in sight. An entirely new normal was forced upon us ... one that has brought tremendous change where *normal* means constant change, awareness and a new, *new normal*. Without the leadership of excellent ministry leaders, clear, consistent guideline from the Board of Directors, and the blessings of God's loving presence we would have literally lost our minds.

I admit, at first it was quite unsettling ... no one had any answers, and everyone was scrambling. Yet, as we began to enter these uncharted waters, the truth is we began to see and experience God at work in amazing and surprising ways. Together, we as a spiritual community, have learned how *to be and do* church differently. At every step of the journey we have discovered creative and meaningful ways to be together and continue to serve one another through the many ministries of the congregation.

We began by implementing conference calls and recording worship on our cell phones. Before long we learned how to use Zoom as a way for groups and ministry teams to be together. We were so grateful to be together in this way and made sure everyone knew how to navigate technology while also doing our best to make sure people's needs were met.

Through the generosity of the congregation and leadership of our social media team, we were able to purchase equipment that allows us to broadcast worship literally around the world. As we began to slowly invite people to in-person worship, we knew those participating in our ministries could not be left out. We have now transitioned to a complete hybrid of in-person and virtual ministry. Persons from our virtual reality have become active member of MCC Richmond and are fully engaged.

The Vicky Hester Food Pantry, The Lounge, and Bread Ministry have completely transitioned to safely met the needs of those struggling with food insecurity, homelessness, making ends meet due to job insecurity or the lack of employment. It is profound to realize this ministry has not missed a beat or a Thursday of serving the community of Richmond. The number of people we serve has more than quadrupled. Donations and volunteers are plentiful and include people who are not members of the congregation ... yet. Food and clothing donations from the congregation and our neighbors continue to be a blessing. Through our partnership with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) we were given 7,000 masks to be used and given away to those who need them. VDH is also present at the VHFP once a month for health check-ups, as well as providing literature and information regarding a variety of health related issues.

Watching all this ... and more ... transpire has been mind-blowing and reminds me over and over again the brilliance of being the people of God and God's design of the Church. We are a simple organism of called-out people doing our best to *Love God by caring for and serving others*. Keeping our mission statement as our motivator, we are seeing that our church can and will survive anything. We as the Church of God can adapt to any reality, to every culture, and every people group. And people everywhere will be attracted to us ... the people of God being the Church of God.

The early church likely didn't see the great persecution against the church in Jerusalem coming but God used it to scatter the people of God in order that they might share the good news of God's transforming love with others. My hunch is the early church also didn't anticipate all the struggles they would face as Jews and Gentiles struggled to find unity in and through Jesus, but the Church prevailed.

Just as we could not have anticipated Covid, we don't know how long this pandemic will continue. The truth is we don't even know for sure what it will mean for us in the future. But what I am growing more and more convinced of is this: MCC Richmond, as part of God's Church, will prevail. In fact, we will continue to thrive during these crazy, uncharted, and challenging days.

We are far from perfect, yet we are willing to continue learning how *to be* the Church of God differently. I believe MCC Richmond is one of the safest places to invest your life, your time, your talents, and your money. We will never go bankrupt. We will never scale down or cut back on ministries. We will never compromise the quality of our ministries or turn people away. We will continue to be a light for God on our corner of Park and Davis, throughout Richmond, and literally around the world. What a privilege to be a part of something so powerful, life-changing, and glorious!

I'm grateful for each and every one of YOU. You have remained faithful during an uncertain time. You have reached out in love during a fearful time. You have been siblings in the family of God when it has mattered most. I'm honored to be your pastor and your friend.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this annual report. As you read it, take pride in knowing YOU make a positive difference by being part of the fabulousness of God in action through the life and ministry of MCC Richmond. Give thanks for the abundance of blessing and ministry taking place each and every day through our spiritual community.

Thank you to all our ministry leaders, our staff and volunteers, and the Board of Directors who serve with enthusiasm and passion as servant-leaders. MCC Richmond is blessed to have ALL of you. Your fine example encourages this spiritual community to serve well and be the best we can be ... in all circumstances and realities.

We, together as MCC Richmond, a Church of God, are experiencing the abundant blessings of being God's *Unstoppable Church* ... and we are a blessing to God!

May it ALWAYS be so,

-Pastor Kenny Callaghan

