

Pastor's Report
February 2022

The recent fire at Fox Elementary School has been devastating for many families in the Fan neighborhood. Eleven people have asked to talk with me and/or to simply sit quietly in the sanctuary. I've been stunned to learn how many people that I don't know, know me and know about MCC Richmond. It's incredible to think that these individuals also find comfort and hope simply by talking and sitting in the sanctuary. As they leave, many comment on the peace, comfort, and love they feel radiating from the church walls. A couple people have stopped by more than once ... I've welcomed them to come by the church as often as they need too. Some have even found solace by simply sitting on the front steps of the church. It's simply amazing.

This past Wednesday afternoon as I was walking Bentley and Bailey, a group of mothers ran out of Starbucks and identified me as ***the minister of the gay church that feeds people***. It was interesting to hear how they refer to MCC Richmond as ***The People's Church*** because of the volume and diversity of those who attend the food pantry and our willingness to let the community-at-large serve as volunteers at the food pantry as well as our accepting donations of food, clothing, and money.

They asked if we would consider allowing our *basement to be a safe place for their children to gather and simply be together with their friends*. Without hesitating ... you know I said, ***Yes, absolutely***. This opportunity came the same day I called Ginny Loving, a retired Richmond Public School principal, to ask who I should contact at Richmond Public Schools to inquire how we could serve Fox Elementary children, parents, and staff.

This kind of community involvement and ministry opportunity is becoming more and more the norm at MCC Richmond. The more people see the congregation actively caring for and serving others, the more opportunity we have to minister to people. It is our experience that people come to us when they need help, healing, or even a quiet place to simply ***'be.'***

This is why people identify MCC Richmond as *The People's Church*. It's because the help, healing, and safe place they need to simply ***'be'*** is God ... making God's self ... known and working in their lives. And, God is using each and every one of us to bring this reality about. It's ministry at its finest ... and it starts with the congregation developing a mission and vision with the intention of sharing God's love by *caring for and serving others*.

When did you think our ministry on the corner of Park and Davis would have such a positive impact on our community and have the reputation as ... *The People's Church*? God did ... and so did we!

Between January 14 – February 17, I have engaged in 24 pastoral counseling appointments, 3 Zoom meetings with community leaders, 2 lunch meetings with church members, 4 Zoom meetings with UFMCC staff, 2 meetings with visitors/newbies from the virtual service, 7 meetings with staff and ministry leaders.

After receiving four bids to replace the light bulbs in the sanctuary chandeliers, Green & David Services will replace the light bulbs with 10 watt 3000 Kelvin LED bulbs on Monday morning, February 21. Working on this project, I have learned more about light bulbs than I care to know.

Rev. Georgia hit the ground running and is doing a fantastic job developing a stronger and engaging congregational prayer ministry. The Prayer Hotline is receiving calls and prayer

requests. The Prayer Station is active throughout the week and people are taking the Affirmation Cards that are available. Rev. Georgia is following up with those who ask for further pastoral care. She is working well with the Ministry of Care Team and bringing a different and fresh spirit of leadership, enthusiasm, compassion, and love to the overall ministry of prayer. Mike Everhart and Ricki King have joined the Ministry of Care. After seven years of faithful service, Lydia Melton is taking a break from the Ministry of Care. The next time you see Lydia, join me in thanking her for her faithfulness and loving service to this ministry. The Ministry of Care is one of MCC Richmond's oldest ministries ... 30 years of service praying for and serving people. It has evolved and changed over the years and has a profound ministry within the congregation and beyond. I'm looking forward to our first prayer workshop *Practicing Power of Affirmative Prayer* led by Rev. Georgia next Wednesday, from 7-8:30pm. I am beyond grateful for this powerful ministry.

The Vicky Hester Food Pantry continues to be a blessing caring for and serving many every Thursday. The volume of people receiving food each week, the growing list of volunteers, and the generous donations received is mind-blowing. This month we started offering homemade soups which have been welcome during our winter weather. Volunteers are making a variety of delicious soups ... its fun to discover on Thursday what kind of soup we'll be serving and who made it and brought it to the church kitchen. While making sure there was no trash on the sidewalk or streets around the church, a neighbor yelled out, *Hey Pastor ... how many did we have today?* It's really great that even our neighbors are excited by the number of people we are blessed to serve. They also take pride in donating, volunteering, and feel a part of this ministry. One person who was new to the food pantry noticed there is a selection of hygiene products available. After stuffing their pockets, they walked out of the Celebration Hall telling those waiting in line ... *They have lotion and razors, I boosted some if you need some.* To which someone in line responded: *You don't have to steal here ... you just have to ask and they'll give it to you.* Isn't it great that our guests realize if they need something all they have to do is ask. The miracle is we usually have what people ask for because of the generous support and dedication to the ministry. And, if we don't have it, Tigger makes sure to get it for the following week. It warms my heart to see people leave with bags of food, and seeing them enjoying their lunch and sitting on the steps of the church ... even in the cold weather! There's nothing like it ... pure love in action. I am often moved to tears seeing volunteers happy engage in setting up, serving, dropping off food and other donations, and cleaning up. Everyone is always welcome.

Al Canary has started to learn how QuickBooks works and he's doing a fantastic job. He has learned how to enter invoices, record debit card transactions and the weekly deposits. Next, he'll be learning how to print checks, pay bills, and print the financial reports for our Treasurer Extraordinaire. Al's attention to detail and follow through is incredible and will serve the congregation well. There is no doubt in my mind that he will know all I know about QuickBooks before my sabbatical.

UFMCC's *Thriving in Ministry* program invited pastors to attend a four week workshop on *Self-Compassion* during January. The workshop was limited to 12 people and met Friday mornings. I was fortunate to attend and enjoyed the workshop very much. It was the absolute best workshop I have attended in years. In the coming months, I plan to share the material in a workshop format with MCC Richmond. In March I will be attending a second workshop, *Grounded in Empathy* which will also be offered through the Thriving in Ministry ministry. I'm

grateful UFMCC has this ministry to empower and help pastors and other leaders within UFMCC.

Ash Wednesday is March 2. How can it be the season of Lent already? I'm beginning to consider various options for Lent activities and devotions. Ginny is working on Easter music and Anne Herbst is writing the script for a presentation that will be used as part of our Holy Week and Easter services. I can't wait to see how God will use their creativity to bring blessing to our spiritual community and beyond.

Calvin continues to provide excellent administrative support to me, our staff, and the congregation. His job responsibilities are growing slowly, he completes tasks with excellence and is attentive to the needs of the overall church ministry. We are fortunate to have the quality of professionalism and loving care he provides.

Susie Larios continues to make sure the church is clean and ready for ministry activity. She cleans every Saturday morning and has been with us long enough to have a rotation of cleaning above and beyond the every week regular routine. Last Saturday she was wiping down every door in both buildings to make sure they were *fingerprint clean*. She's incredible.

Macon is simply wonderful and is enjoying leading a song here and there while Ron Guiles plays the piano. There are no words to describe the positive impact he makes through the music ministry. It is remarkable to also see him grow personally as he dedicates himself to doing whatever he can to make a positive contribution to people's lives. MCC Richmond is fortunate to have this type of dedicated and loving staff members.

Kirk and I enjoyed a restful and needed Florida vacation January 28-February 5. I was grateful to not receive many phone calls while in Florida. Thank you for making that possible. I plan to be away for a long weekend March 25-28. These times away are great practice for sabbatical!

Thank you for all you do to serve and care for the people and ministries of MCC Richmond. We are blessed beyond reason to serve this incredibly loving and thriving congregation.

-Pastor Kenny Callaghan