

Pastor Kenny's Annual Report - 2020

Looking Back ... *a retrospective look at 2020*, and **Moving Forward** ... *a prospective look into 2021*, because *where we're going* is most certainly shaped by *where we've been*.

Every year we take time to review and celebrate what God has done through the life and ministry of our congregation. We also discern how God is leading us and what God is calling us to in the coming year. God has accomplished a lot through the people of MCC Richmond, undoubtedly God has much more in store for us. Thank you for being an amazing congregation. Thank you for being amazing people, amazing leaders, amazing servants of God. Thank you for your generosity, your leadership, your encouragement, and your unwavering commitment to *Loving God by caring for and serving others*.

2020 has not been an easy year for us as individuals, as a congregation, for our community, or for our world. We had no idea the realities we would encounter with Covid-19, the devastating social unrest, economic uncertainty and more. Yet because of the internal work we have done within our congregation in addressing conflict, hurtful and dysfunctional behaviors, and dedicating ourselves to serving one another and our community, MCC Richmond continues to make a positive difference in people's lives. With a growing passion for God, and confident that the Holy Spirit would lead and guide us ... we have experienced God's presence and blessings as we together have discovered new ways of being church, serving God, one another and our community through the life and ministry MCC Richmond.

As we made necessary changes and adjustments in re-inventing and imagining our ministries, many of you transitioned seamlessly to keep our ministries and witness alive and relevant. Thank you for your emotional agility, your willingness to adapt to new realities, to connect with each other online through Zoom or conference calls, to participate in worship virtually through Facebook Live, to welcome and engage new people, to continue to give financially, to deliver groceries to people in need and so much more. **I am so proud of the ways you have kept our congregation open, meaningful and thriving this year.** It is a great joy to serve among you, to witness your faithfulness to God through spiritual practice, and to serve as your Pastor. We miss greeting each other, giving hugs, seeing each other's smiling faces, and being physically present with each other. Even though we must stay a safe distance from one another, we realize God is never distant from us.

Utilizing the Congregational Strategic Plan, the Board of Directors had a clear roadmap of ministries the congregation is passionate about and worked hard to ensure the Mission, We Believe statements, and Our Vision were followed and emphasized. With the excellent and gifted leadership of the Board of Directors, a creative and hard-working staff, the dedication of ministry leaders and volunteers, our church has never closed during the realities of Covid-19. We have been able to serve our community safely, passionately, and effectively.

Zoom and Conference Calls have provided a way for us to be in community, share and pray together, support and encourage each other, listen to others, learn, welcome newcomers, and enjoy each other. Developing our virtual worship service has provided an opportunity for people to participate in worship and hear the good news of God's transforming love and acceptance ... literally around the globe. Many people feel welcome, ask questions about God while exploring spirituality and spiritual practice, and are learning about the relevance of God in their lives. More than ever, people are engaging in ministry in ways that works for them and many feel empowered to safely serve in meaningful ways.

Our outreach ministries remain vibrant and more needed than ever. The number of people struggling with food insecurity is growing among the homeless, the under employed, the unemployed, those who are between jobs, and seniors needing to choose between purchasing food or needed medications. The Vicky Hester Food Pantry, The Lounge and the Bread Ministry are serving more than 350+ people each week with new people utilizing this needed ministry all the time. Every week people can select non-perishable food items they enjoy, order sandwiches complete with condiments of their choice, shop for clothing, shoes, and hygiene items while wearing masks, social distancing and interacting with a host of volunteers. The love expressed during the food pantry is infectious, healing, and life-giving. This ministry is sustained by generous donations from our

congregation, neighbors, community partners, and dedicated and talented volunteers. The only requirement to receive food is a hungry stomach ... **no one is ever turned away.**

Those receiving assistance from the Good Neighbor Fund is greater than ever and those asking for more assistance than we can provide is astounding. Thank you for your generous financial gifts which make this ministry possible. People from MCC Richmond have participated in each of the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, rallies, and other social justice events throughout Richmond as we stand for justice for ourselves and others. When it comes to social justice and community activism, MCC Richmond is always present demonstrating, marching and working for equity of **ALL** God's people.

Because of your faithful and generous giving to the Capitol Campaign we have started renovations of the church building. Another generous gift was given which allowed us to have the woodwork around the stain glass windows in the sanctuary to be repaired and painted. The walls in the sanctuary will be painted in November. Thank you to all those who have honored their pledge to the Capital Campaign. If you have not made a pledge, please feel free to do so. Gifts can be given at anytime along with your regular offering.

We are in a time of pandemic ... not only related to Covid-19, but also a pandemic of racial hostility, racial injustice, racial challenges, gender identity and bigotry, political disparity, and social unrest that have plagued our nation for far too long. With this reality, may we re-establish and vocalize our commitment to be a community who serves **ALL** God's people with justice and equity. As the Beloved of God, my prayer is that we will deepen our values and continue to care for and serve others. We are people who are serious about serving others by working to dismantle and shatter racial, economic

and social injustice, and gender barriers in God's name. While times are turbulent and hostile, we are people who bring the blessings of God's salt and light to one another, our community and our world. Believing in our shared values in God, let us continue to follow in the ways of Jesus by giving of our time, talent and treasure as we insist and stand for God's equity, justice, transforming love and grace. May we always be a congregation that touches the lives of everyone we meet as we usher in the kin-dom of God ... here and now ... on earth as it is in heaven.

I invite and encourage each of you to join me in the following:

Pray - for discernment of God's will for your life, our congregation, and the courage to step out into whatever God has for you and MCC Richmond.

Give – Over and over again the congregation has proven to be a generous group of people. Whether the economy is great or not so great, you continue to give generously. As we continue to develop new ministries and creatively maintain existing ministries, it is your generosity that allows us to touch lives with God's transforming love. Your giving makes a difference in helping our church thrive.

Lead – God has blessed many within our congregation with amazing gifts ... great leadership abilities and skills as well as the ability to effectively lead others. Take the initiative to develop a new ministry you are passionate about and know you are empowered to do so. Lead by praying for, supporting, and encouraging our elected congregational leaders and ministry team leaders. Great leaders are those who delight in and know the value of following.

Serve – As we strengthen and discern what God is calling us to as individuals and as a congregation, it is not going to be just a few, the pastor and staff, the Board of Directors, or ministry team leaders who further God's



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work ... it takes all of us working together to usher in the gifts of God's transforming love. We all have a part to play in God's family and we are gifted and blessed to serve. Whether your role is visible or invisible, whether it is something that appears grand or may seem insignificant, all of us are needed and have unique gifts to share in furthering God's kin-dom. My hope is that you would serve in whatever way possible, in whatever way makes sense for you, and in whatever way God is leading you.

Who knows what God will do among us in 2021? I believe God has many great things in store for us as we thrive and commit ourselves to ministry by *Loving God by caring for and serving others*. We know this is true because God wants to make all things new. God invites and empowers us to participate in accomplishing God's will and plan for our world. Thanks be to God!

Many blessings and much love,

~ Pastor Kenny Callaghan