

To: Congregation
From: Church Board (Elders and Pastoral Team)
Date: June 22, 2008
Re: Transitional Period Six Month Review

This memo invites the congregation to reflect on where we have been, and to be informed about the next phases of our transition. We are pleased with the congregation's progress to date. We are on track to complete our work in the original 18-24 month projection. Participation has been strong both in numbers and in the quality of engagement. Many have affirmed the overall process. Others have expressed confusion, criticism, and even anger. But that's a good sign. Having none of this might indicate that little transitional work is taking place.

In the last several years, the Pastoral Team had a growing concern that some foundational problem areas needed attention. When transition became an option, the Pastoral Team provided leadership for the congregation in this direction. After clarifying the benefits of a transitional period, the Church Board approved this direction.

The only agenda that Gary brings is a commitment to lead the congregation as we:

- understand and embrace the past
- clarify and embrace our current identity
- discern a clear, energizing and congregationally owned vision for 3-5 years
- evaluate the current structure in light of that new vision, and revise if needed
- search and prepare for new long term pastoral leadership.

It's normal to have some gaps between perception and reality. To accomplish his work, Gary attempts to balance affirmation and care with promoting self-evaluation. Maintaining this balance is a challenge for a transitional pastor, and dealing with reality can be a challenge for a congregation. That is why *grace needs to flow freely* among us.

As a pastoral leader specializing in transitional ministry, Gary brings a Bible-based vision for what Jesus intends for his Church, specifically for Mennonite congregations. But much of this vision was present within the Pastoral Team before the transitional period, and is being articulated by them both in sermons and in other forms of ministry. *The specifics of CMC's unique vision*, including possible structural changes, will be determined *by the congregation*.

We have openly reported both what the congregation stated in the December survey, and our interpretation of this information. Each step of the process is shaped initially by the Pastoral Transition Committee (Becky Horst, Del Good, Kristen Hooper, Willie Kanagy, Paul and Ann Gingrich and Gary Martin), and then tested with the Church Board.

Some congregational consensus has emerged in recent years regarding areas needing attention:

- configuration of the Pastoral Team (roles, not personnel)
- an over-structured organization
- low participation by the under 50s in worship and congregational meetings;
- growth in inviting and welcoming efforts
- clarification and strengthening relationships with Goshen College and with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

We are prayerfully providing biblical instruction in plenary and elective formats through a variety of teaching resources. Many find the instruction helpful in a variety of ways, including the stimulation to think in new ways about being the church. The congregation is being prepared to focus on the corporate process of listening for the Spirit's direction this fall, as follows:

Summer: Let's take time to "smell the roses" and find renewal with friends and family in the brilliant colors and warmth of summer. Take in one or more of the many options to learn and grow at CMC. And as you are able, keep up with the weekly gathered worship experiences which are designed to prepare us with a common reference for visioning work.

Wednesday, 6:30 P.M. August 27: *Embracing our Differences.* The Board is discerning different perspectives within the congregation. Questions with multiple choice options reflecting our diversity will be distributed in advance, and those present will move to positions A, B, C, or D in the fellowship hall. The goal is not to come to agreement, but rather to openly recognize our differences and find greater appreciation for the diversity the Holy Spirit has assembled at CMC.

Sundays, September 7, 14, and 21: *Communication & Conflict Transformation Skills Seminar.* Refreshing our skills in this area benefits all of our relationships: marriage, family, friends, and co-workers. It will also prepare us for the Wednesday Discovery Groups (see below). Our goal is to conclude worship services by 10:30 a.m. We invite as many as possible to remain seated for an additional 15 minute teaching session by Carolyn Shrock-Shenk. Everyone will be dismissed at 10:45 for brief fellowship followed by regular Sunday School classes from 11:00-11:45. Classes may decide how to use that time; but we encourage at least some discussion of the plenary teaching. Homebuilders will have their discussion on the following Sunday at 8.

September Wednesdays: *Congregational Vision and Goals Discovery (CVGD):* This process is built on the premise that the Spirit speaks wisdom for the body through *everyone*, not just those with extensive formal education, leadership experience or exceptional verbal skills. CVGD is significantly different from past processes: group leaders will have skills to limit the talkers and draw out the hesitant, and groups are composed primarily of those who are not in our social circles. All ages (high school and up) will be invited to sign up in August. Participants will be randomly assigned to groups of 8-10 with attention to balancing gender, age, and length of involvement at CMC. Groups remain the same for all sessions. The format is identical each night:

5:30 meal
6:00-6:10 plenary Bible Study in Fellowship Hall
6:15-7:30 meet in small groups throughout the building

October-December: Discovery Group leaders and the Church Board will meet to prayerfully reflect on the conclusions of all groups on October 5 and 12. From this process, we hope to present a simple vision statement and specific goals for congregational discernment, discussion and action in November or December.

After the vision is approved, the Church Board will appoint a task force to discern if our present organizational structure is adequate to accomplish the vision, and if it is not, to recommend changes. When any potential changes are approved by the congregation, the search process for long term pastoral leadership will begin.

We welcome your observations, concerns, feedback and questions at any time during this transitional period. Please contact any Elder or Pastor.