



CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

301 East 4th Avenue, Mitchell SD
uccmitchell.org

**No matter
who you are
or where
you are on
life's journey,
you are
welcome here.**



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

ANNUAL MEETING

February 14, 2021

PASTOR

Rev. Matt Richards

Congregational United Church of Christ

301 East 4th Avenue, Mitchell SD 57301

2021 Schedule of Activities

SUNDAY MORNING

Youth gathering (alternating Sundays)	9:00 AM
Worship	10:00 AM
Fellowship Time	11:00 AM
Cracker Barrel (Sunday following Council)	during Fellowship

MONTHLY EVENTS

Missions/Education Ministry	1 st Thursday	5:00 PM
Finance/Building/Grounds Ministry	2 nd Monday	5:30 PM
Church Council	2 nd Monday	7:00 PM
Women's Fellowship	2 nd Thursday	2:00 PM
Men's Fellowship	2 nd Saturday	8:30 AM
W.O.W. (Women of Worth)	Scheduled Saturdays	6:00 PM
Potlucks and meals	as scheduled	11:00 AM

COMMUNION SUNDAYS

1 st Sunday of each month	1 st Sunday of Lent
Maundy Thursday	Pentecost
World Communion Sunday	1 st Sunday of Advent

5 of 5 OFFERINGS

March - One Great Hour of Sharing
May - Strengthen the Church
All Year - Our Church's Wider Mission
October - Neighbors in Need
December - Christmas Fund

FELLOWSHIP TIME OFFERINGS

Jan - Mar Our Church's Wider Missions
Apr - Jun Placerville Camp
Jul - Sept Benevolence Fund
Oct - Dec C.U.E

CHURCH STAFF

PASTOR	Rev. Matt Richards
CHURCH MINISTRY ASSISTANT	Wendy Figland
CUSTODIAN/MAINTENANCE	Isaac EagleStar
FINANCIAL TEAM	Margo Taylor & Dave Epp

Thank you for your regular giving to the church:

Mail a check to - 301 East 4th, Mitchell, SD
OR set up automatic payments through your bank
OR use Givelify on
our phone, mobile device or through our website.



Women's Fellowship Report

The last Women's Fellowship meeting of 2020 was March 12 at Country Side Living.

We were told country Side would be closed for COVID-19 at 5:00 PM that day.

We asked if we could meet and then asked permission to meet at Bonnie William's apartment. Sue Burris arrived with nuts and sweets and Judy Magstadt came shortly after with a lemon meringue pie.

Bonnie's hospitality, Judy's pie and Sue's treats and good fellowship made this a very special meeting. Made even more special, in hind sight, by all the happenings of 2020.

The Women's Fellowship Cornerstone Investment was redeemed with the consensus that the funds be used for the East Stained Glass Window restoration.

Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas cards were sent to our homebound and military folks. Other appropriate cards were also sent.

Our mission projects – Back Bay Mission and the State Women's Scholarship Fund were completed. Christmas gifts were also given to our church employees.

We continue to collect and redeem County Fair Saver cards for our kitchen fund. Also, Coborn's receipts are redeemed each quarter for a 1% redemption. These funds are designated for OCM. Thanks to all who collect and bring these cards and receipts to the church.

Our treasury balance is \$937.42 as of December 31, 2020.

*Shirley Bowman,
Treasurer*

**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP REPORT
2020**

December 31, 2019	Total membership	63
	Deaths	- 1
	New members	+3
	Removals	<u>0</u>
December 31, 2020	Total Membership	65

Deaths 2020

December 28, 2020 Georgia "Bonnie" Williams

New Members

Pastor Matt Richards

Karrie Richards

John Richards

Removals

None

Baptisms

August 9, 2020 Hazel AnnMarie Harder

Parents: Hercules & Briana Harder



**CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
MEMBERS & FRIENDS**

Bowman, Shirley 40792 247 th Street Mitchell, SD 567301	605.996.8569	Figland, Dave & Wendy 520 East 54 th Street Mitchell, SD 57301 Email: figlandfamily@santel.net	605.770.2740
Burris, Sue Braught, Arne* 210 West 10 th Avenue Mitchell, SD 57301 Email: sbburris.new@gmail.com	605.996.0047	Jasper Figland, Dick & Peggy 420 South Wisconsin Mitchell, SD 57301 Email: dpfigland@mit.midco.net	605.996.4890
Cartagena, Nereida* 905 East 3rd Avenue Mitchell, SD 57301	605.933.2577	Figland, Grant & Amanda* 172 Lakeforest Trail Sanford NC 27332 Madison* Hayden*	
Colwell, Chad* & RaShara 40750 259 th Street Mitchell, SD 57301 Email: colwell4@santel.net Ben, Victoria Ann	605.996.0359	Figland, Leola* 1532 East Hanson Avenue Apt. 1 Mitchell, SD 57301 Email: oldersis57301@midco.net	
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Eagle Star, Isaac	605.299.6535		
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Epp, Steven			
Figland, Clinton & Michelle* 512 East 54 th Street Mitchell, SD 57301 Paige TJ (Tanner) Shayne		Geary, Marilee* Email: j_geary@yahoo.com	605.201.1191
		Goehring, Bethel Countryside Living 2100 North Wisconsin Street #233 Mitchell, SD 57301	605.996.4094

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Holm, Dale & Marla 804 Firesteel Drive Mitchell, SD 57301 Email: daleholm@mit.midco.net	605.996.2462	Richards, Matt & Karrie 720 West 3 rd Avenue Mitchell, SD 57301 Email: mateo7436@gmail.com Andrew* Alex* Elizabeth*	605.656.1792
Holmen, Johannes* & April Stilley Vogtsgate 61-1 0477 Oslo Norway Oslo, Norway		Runge, Karen 710 West Hwy 44 Parkston, SD 57366 Email: k.adkinsrunge@gmail.com	605.770.1067
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Magstadt, John & Judy 1015 East 8 th Mitchell, SD 57301	402.336.1892	Stehly, Rane 40240 250 th Street Mitchell, SD 57301	605.996.2762
Margheim, Kyle Mawhiney, Billy 1410 South Center Avenue Sioux Falls, SD 57104 Email: bmawhiney@gmail.com Alex* Carter*	605.770.8494 605.770.8534		

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Tessa*

Weidenbach, Joan 605.280.2689
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Young, BJ* & Sarah
11280 Jere Layne
Elgin OK 73538
Brock*
Emma Leigh*
Abigail Marie*

*Non-member friends

INACTIVE MEMBERS

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Bakhtiar Nick* & Laura
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Mitchell, SD 57301

Barington, Marty
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Margheim, Ryan
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Allysa*
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Struble, Keith & Bonnie 605.996.9810
400 East 1st Avenue
Mitchell, SD 57301



Mitchell Congregational United Church of Christ *Ministry of Missions*



2020

Annual Report

Theme – Year of the Tree: We raised a total of \$780.00 for 817 trees in 2020 to support “Creation,” one of the 3 great loves of the National UCC.

Purpose Statement: The Ministry of Missions Committee continues to look for ways that our church can serve the world, both near and far, in Christ’s name and through Christ’s love.

Officers: President – Margo Taylor, Vice President – Victoria Valdres, Secretary – Wendy Figland

Meetings: The meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 5:00 p.m.

All are welcome to join the committee, bring ideas to share, or just help with various projects.

We had a very blessed and active year with our missions - for our own church, our community, country, and around the world. Thanks to everyone for your generosity and support. God is truly helping those in need through these projects, which are summarized below.

1st Quarter: January – March

- January 5, 2020: Church pot-luck dinner – money raised for church banners \$ 42.00
- Feb. 9: Church pot-luck – money raised for “Keep Hope Alive” (*olive trees in Palestine*) \$ 300.00
- March-April: Lenten Noisy Change Offering – SD St. Dymas Prison Ministry \$ 101.57

2nd Quarter: April – June

- April: Additional Noisy Change – SD Conf.: Dakota Association and Scholarships \$ 108.11
- April-may: Faith Climate Action Week – (*U.S. National Park trees*) \$ 102.00
- June 9 & July 7: Church cleaning days – cleaned and organized costume closet and Christmas decoration room in Parish Hall, and flower closet in Parlor
- June 28: Pride Sunday – Dan Ryder and Dani Beaner speakers, held chicken dinner

3rd Quarter: July – September

- July: Placerville Camp – donations for fellowship treats & Wendy’s cloth masks \$ 154.00
- July-August: Food Pantry – collect rice, tuna, cereal, etc.: 95 items, 100+ pounds of food
- August 16: Banana Split Sunday (*banana trees for Haiti*) \$ 128.00
- September 13: Lasagna dinner, donations for Pathway of Mitchell \$ 100.00

4th Quarter: October – December

- October 11: Mitchell Habitat for Humanity \$ 134.00
- November 8: Special offering for Servicemen’s Memorial Cemetery upkeep \$ 685.00+
- November: Thanksgiving dinner, donations (*A Living Tribute-Calif. wildfire tree replacement*) \$ 250.00
- December: Spirit of Christmas program & brunch, cash donations for Christmas family \$ 130.00 and about an additional \$150.00 value in food and gifts.

THANK YOU TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU WHO SUPPORTED PROJECTS AND EVENTS IN 2020!

Margo Taylor, Wendy Figland, and Victoria Valdres

UCC FINANCIAL REPORT
01.01.2020 – 12.31.2020

OFFERINGS & CONTRIBUTIONS	
General Ministry (basic contributions)	57783.85
Mitchell UCC Missions	2556.24
UCC National Missions (5 for 5)	2710.74
Miscellaneous	387.00
Memorials	240.00
Stained glass windows	100.00
Sales – Equal Exchange Products	392.60
Total for all categories	64170.43

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OUTREACH/STEWARDSHIP/TECHNOLOGY MINISTRY

Annual Report – 2020

2020 was the first year for the Technology outreach. Pastor Matt began with broadcasting midweek devotionals over Facebook during Lent on his smartphone. Then with the assistance of Pastor Matt's wife Karrie, the Sunday broadcast was going out over Facebook Live with that same device. Jim Taylor wanted to increase the outreach and started recording the services on his laptop and webcam, later on Sundays, he would broadcast that recording on YouTube. Wanting to free up Pastor Matt so he would not have to worry about starting and stopping Facebook Live, I, John Richards, volunteered to do the Facebook Live using my own smartphone.

At that time, the internet was not always dependable. If there were more people attending the service and using the internet as well then once or twice the service could not be broadcast due to the lack of broadband availability. After a few discussions with the leaders of the church and board meetings it was decided to increase the speed and access of the internet here at the church. With that the equipment in the church office was getting a well overdue upgrade. The board also decided to get equipment to handle the broadcast of the Sunday service. Jim Taylor and I agreed to be the technicians to run the new equipment. Slowly expanding our knowledge of the different software options, our productions are beginning to look more professional. Each week we broadcast live to Facebook and YouTube simultaneously.

We plan on expanding to a third camera for a different view of the sanctuary displaying more of our stained-glass windows. Looking at different microphone options to make the sounds of the church congregation come out in the broadcasts to make those at home feel like they are a part of the service. Hopefully will be training in the future for others to follow in our footprints. And after the pandemic is done and we are back to more normalcy we will continue to broadcast the services extending the church's outreach to spread the Gospel.

John Richards

FINANCIAL ASSETS

Great Western Bank: 12/31/2019

Great Western Bank – checking	\$ 5,905.02	
Great Western Bank – savings	\$ 2,000.24	
GWB TOTAL		\$ 7,905.26

CORNERSTONE: 12/31/2019

Women’s Fellowship (maturity 12/18/20)	\$ liquidated for stained glass window fund	
60-Month Step Up Term (maturity 2/20/21)	\$ 15000.00	
Cornerstone TOTAL		\$ 15,000.00

DICE FINANCIAL: 10/31/2019

Endowment Fund		
Royal Alliance: Cornerstone – cash	\$ 3,000.82	
Royal Alliance: Cornerstone – mutual funds	\$160,258.28	
Snow Memorial Fund	\$ 4,079.53	
Combined Investment Holdings TOTAL		\$167,338.93

TOTAL FINANCIAL ASSETS **\$190,244.19**

RESTRICTED FUNDS - YTD

Funds Received:

Placerville Camp (Conference)	\$ 154.00	
Scholarship Fund (Conference)	\$ 50.00	
Dakota Assoc. (Conference)	\$ 50.00	
CUE Seminaries (Conference)	\$ 100.00	
5 For 5 (Conference) Total	\$2,718.74	
OCWM	\$1,753.74	
OGHS	\$ 215.00	
Str. the Church	\$ 240.00	
Neigh. in Need	\$ 245.00	
Christmas Fund	\$ 265.00	
Back Bay Mission (Wms Fellow.)	\$ 25.00	
Benevolence	\$ 327.88	
Memorial Fund	\$ 866.69	
Youth Group	\$ 404.44	
Men’s Fellowship	\$ 760.95	
Women’s Fellowship	\$ 937.42	(does not include Cornerstone)
Sunrise Guild/Camperships	\$ 198.48	
Organ Fund	\$ 609.23	
Stained Glass Windows	\$6,111.96	(includes \$3,794.91 Women’s Fellowship Cornerstone Fund)
Missions (for banners)	\$ 71.00	
COVID Memorial	\$ 95.00	
Education Fund	\$ 40.50	
Miscellaneous Missions	\$ 190.00	

Funds Dispersed: (\$2,718.74) paid to SD Conf. of UCC
TOTAL RESTRICTED FUNDS **\$ 10,542.55**

TOTAL UNRESTRICTED/AVAILABLE FUNDS **\$179,701.64**

Mitchell Congregational UCC
 Operating and Mission Expenses – 2020

Month	Expense Total
January	\$ 9,899.03
February	\$ 8,270.47
March	\$ 7,273.34
April	\$ 9,630.08
May	\$ 5,775.92
June	\$ 5,787.11
July	\$ 10,017.48
August	\$ 11,191.25
September	\$ 8,128.12
October	\$ 10,055.17
November	\$ 8,339.98
December	\$ 9,229.46
TOTAL	\$103,597.41
Non-operating Expenses	Totals to Deduct from Operating Expenses
UCC Missions	\$ 2,556.24
5x5 National & Conference Missions	\$ 2,710.74
Equal Exchange Sales	\$ 392.60
NET TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$ 97,937.83
<i>*There were boiler repair expenses of \$2,767.61 in April and \$338.27 in November. *We also had roughly \$9,000 in updating technology for livestreaming and office work.</i>	<i>*There was also new signage put up both indoors and outside, new painting in several rooms of the Parish House, and the purchase of a snowblower and other maintenance supplies.</i>
<i>*These “one-time” extra expenses total about \$14,000.00. (This puts our general operating expenses at \$83,597.83, which is normal.)</i>	<i>* We received \$7,770.00 in PPP money from Great Western Bank, leaving only about \$6,230 actual out of pocket money for these extra expenses.</i>

Congregational United Church of Christ
Proposed Budget 2021
(Based off 2020)

Income

General Ministry (basic contributions)	\$ 58,800.00
Mitchell UCC Missions	\$ 2,500.00
UCC National & Conference Missions	\$ 2,500.00
Miscellaneous	\$ 400.00
Memorials	\$ 260.00
Stained Glass Windows	\$ 200.00
<u>Sales of Equal Exchange Products</u>	<u>\$ 340.00</u>
TOTAL Income	\$ 65,000.00

Expenses

Payroll	\$ 55,200.00
Payroll Taxes	\$ 4,500.00
GW Bank Treasury Suite	\$ 456.00
C. Buskohl, CPA – tax preparation	\$ 160.00
Insurance Board (Cleveland)	\$ 5,808.00
Midwest Insurance	\$ 600.00
CCLI License	\$ 122.00
CCLI Broadcasting License	\$ 68.00
CVLI License	\$ 119.00
Churchtrac Software	\$ 150.00
Northwestern Energy	\$ 9,100.00
Mitchell Telecom	\$ 1,500.00
Schumacher Elevator Maintenance	\$ 1,155.00
Arctic Refrigeration	\$ 895.00
Termite Inspection	\$ 267.00
City of Mitchell (W,S)	\$ 675.00
Miedema Sanitation (G)	\$ 200.00
Maintenance (painting, repairs, etc.)	\$ 1,000.00
Aadland Pipe Organ Maintenance	\$ 685.00
Postage	\$ 300.00
Supplies (office and janitorial)	\$ 600.00
Worship Supplies	\$ 300.00
Education Supplies	\$ 300.00
Equal Exchange Products	\$ 340.00
<u>Missions (national and local)</u>	<u>\$ 5,000.00</u>
TOTAL Expenses	\$ 89,500.00
Net Total	- \$ 24,500.00

FINANCE/BUILDING/GROUNDS MINISTRY

It has been an interesting year in regards to dealing with the changes we have made due to COVID. We decided that as long as our church building wouldn't be in use as it is normally, it would be a good time to focus on some much needed improvements. Here is a list of the projects complete or still in the works:

- Eric Winter resigned his position for Custodial/Maintenance due to moving out of town. In his place we hired Isaac EagleStar and Nereida Cartagena. Nereida later resigned because she obtained full-time employment elsewhere. Isaac is still with us.
- Wendy Figland was hired as Church Ministry Assistant.
- A bearing was replaced in the boiler, costing approximately \$2,800.00.
- We purchased signage for directing visitors to the various locations in the building. At the same time, we purchased a vinyl overlay for the outdoor sign on the corner. We have received positive responses on our new signs.
- We applied for and received \$7,770.00 from the Paycheck Protection Program through the CARES Act. The application to have the loan forgiven has been submitted.
- We had problems with the copier. It was estimated to cost \$1,758.00 to repair it or \$2,500.00 to replace it. We decided to let it die and at that time to purchase a copier to meet our reduced needs.
- Once COVID has been reduced to the point that we can safely gather in large numbers, we will begin an advertising campaign about our church.
- We will look for a changing table to place in the main floor bathroom of the Parish House.
- Premier Pest Control did a termite inspection. No termite activity was detected. They will annually inspect our property. They reported that during the inspection they found we had a major problem with bats in the attic again. It would be well over \$20,000.00 to take care of the problem. After much discussion we decided we would try an idea that was done by a university. We installed very bright LED lights in the attic to discourage the bats from making it their home.
- We upgraded our internet ports and wiring throughout the building. We also upgraded our internet speed through Mitchell Telecom. A new computer was purchased for the office. Software was purchased through Tech Soup.
- We obtained estimates for repairing our stained glass windows. The largest windows, especially, are in dire need of repair. As the estimates are obtained and a plan of action is decided on, we will present all information to the congregation for a vote.
- Our CCLI license was renewed and expanded to cover our online streaming presence.
- Painting has been completed in 2 upstairs classrooms, upstairs bathroom, north wall in upstairs main room of Parish House, duct work in dining room and parlor, and the main room of the Parish House. Scheduled to be painted are a 2nd coat of the ground floor main room of the Parish House, the kitchenette, stairwells and halls of Parish House.
- The elevator received its regular inspections and an emergency switch was replaced.
- The fire extinguishers were inspected. We were told that some of them will have to be replaced next year.
- We had a stainless steel overlay installed on the pass-through serving counter in the kitchen.
- A new snow blower was purchased.
- We received estimates for repairing/painting the damaged areas in the sanctuary. Work on this is scheduled to begin in February.
- The 1st floor windows of the Parish House were scraped, caulked and painted.

We have had a busy and productive year. Our church home is looking better and more welcoming all the time. If there are areas you would like to see taken care of, please contact a member of the F/B/G Ministry.

Wendy Figland-Chairperson, Margo Taylor, Dave Epp, Jim Taylor, John Richards

2020 WEEKLY ATTENDENCE

January 5	35	July 5	17
January 12	20	July 12	18
January 19	17	July 19	13
January 26	19	July 26	12
February 2	23	August 2	13
February 9	31	August 9	21
February 16	26	August 16	18
February 23	20	August 23	10
March 1	27	August 30	8
March 8	28	September 6	14
March 15	16	September 13	15
March 22	6	September 20	7
March 29	6	September 27	17
April 5	6	October 4	15
April 12	6	October 11	14
April 19	6	October 18	14
April 26	6	October 25	6
May 3	6	November 1	18
May 10	10	November 8	15
May 17	14	November 15	17
May 24	14	November 22	13
May 31	19	November 29	19
June 7	16	December 6	13
June 14	17	December 13	21
June 21	23	December 20	17
June 28	31	December 24	23
		December 27	12

2020 overall average attendance: 16

2020 PRE-COVID-19 average attendance: 23.8

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Due to COVID-19, the Youth activities of our church, like so many other things, have been limited. We did, however, complete a few activities.

We created an outdoor display, which was placed on the corner, for PRIDE month in June. We painted doors with the words "God's doors are open to all". Once the painting was completed we shared some pizza and fellowship outdoors.

The youth, with their families, have helped to tie prayer strips on the COVID Memorial.

During Advent, the youth met each Saturday via Zoom to participate in Advent devotions, message and song.

We look forward to a time when we can be together again to share in fellowship.



It is a true honor to serve God and be your pastor. What a first year it has been! Prior to 2020, pastoring a church through a pandemic really wasn't on anyone's radar. Strides that we were making suddenly shifted and our ministry became more technology based due to COVID-19. Zoom calls, YouTube, Facebook Live these became common means for us to share in ministry together and also offer it the community. I am truly thankful for the combined vision, efforts and improvements that have been made.

It certainly isn't easy being in a church leadership position. The dedication that is required, the added tasks and duties, the added stress to what may already be stress-filled lives, the risk of church tension and drama!!! Anyone who has been in a church leadership position before knows what I am talking about. I have DEEP respect for those who have responded to the calling of church leadership, it isn't easy, but it is deeply needed in any healthy church. As a Pastor, I strive to make sure people know that they are valued. And can you imagine what a church would be like if all the responsibilities involving church leadership rested on the pastor alone? A sinking ship.

Typically, pastors are NOT trained to handle every aspect of church leadership. A Master's of Divinity seminary degree usually provides the pastor with biblical and theological understanding and training, a historical overview of the Christian faith, a proficiency in preaching, a deepened understanding of ecclesial and social ethics including social justice, as well as pastoral care and field ed. experience. In thinking of the overall life of the church, you can clearly see where the leadership of laity is required. And so, for all our laity leadership and all the volunteer hours, I am so very grateful.

With that being said we look ahead to 2021 with vision and passion as we strive to be in ministry to all. In conversation with community leaders, we have identified 3 clear needs in the community of Mitchell, 1.) The need for mental health care, advocacy and awareness. 2.) The need for socialization and fellowship for those feeling abandoned and isolated. 3.) The issues impacting homelessness which include the aforementioned concerns as well as poverty and a myriad of others. 4.) Responses to COVID-19 i.e. economic support, grief support, spiritual and social reformation as we identify the new normal.

What are some things that we can do immediately to help to address these concerns? We can continue strengthening our ties to the community by networking with organizations and agencies that are already working to meet these needs. We can continue providing awareness and advocacy through community forums with professionals who work in these areas of expertise. We can continue identifying with and relating to all people while providing a place of worship and Christian life practice that will be open, affirming and hospitable.

Lastly, I want to say, that it is with great hope that I continue alongside you as your pastor to make an impact for good and for us to be the people of God. I have vision for this church, a vision that can come to fruition with God's help and guidance through the Holy Spirit. A vision for Mitchell Cong. UCC to be an intergeneration faith community that truly practices what it believes and can prove to others that God Is Still Speaking.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Matt Richards



Internship Review

February 4, 2021

Dear UCC,

So far, there is nothing I can complain about except the low congregation count. I wish there were more people listening to the sermons every Sunday, because that would mean more people would be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ's blood. Reverend Matthew Richards has been a significant help and inspiration for my pastoral internship and spiritual growth journey. The other staff members have been of great help, too. I must say that I cannot thank them enough. I appreciate the privilege of reading Scripture, a few prayer lines, and preaching my beginning level sermons. I know I have a long way to go in order to obtain my metaphorical pastoral "sea legs," but God is working in my heart, soul, and mind to help me grow into the apostle and shepherd I hope to be one day

From,
Michelle Nuss



Bryan Parrish
Missionary Co-worker
Church of Christ in Congo

The Ministry of Missions and Education has spent several months researching and discussing various Global Ministries missionaries for our church to support, and has chosen Bryan Parrish in the Congo. As you may recall, our previous missionaries, Tom and Monica Liddle, returned home last May. Bryan Parrish is a long-term mission co-worker with Global Ministries, which is a partnership of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

How would you describe the mission of our partner where you serve?

My partner in Kinshasa, the Church of Christ in Congo, is the ecumenical Christian organization that brings together 60 different denominations working for reconciliation, justice, struggle against corruption and respect for human life.

What is your role in their mission?

My role as a mission coworker is to be of service where the partner needs me, especially in the development area. I am hoping to help the Church achieve its goals and to help set priorities in cooperation with the Church leaders.

Is there a passage of scripture that carries special meaning in your daily work?

The prophets, the psalms and the parables of Jesus have always been sources of inspiration, but if I have to choose one passage of scripture, I would have to say that I would go with the letters of Paul, especially Romans 8. In my ministry, I have often been confronted by situations where hope seems to be lost. Paul's letter to the Romans has always been an inspiration and a way to understand hope. In Romans 8:18–27, Paul reminds us that in hope we are saved. Paul recognizes that the world is suffering, and that hope is possible by the promise of God through Jesus Christ. When in suffering, we must wait patiently and search our hearts. Prayer is also a way to find hope.

To best serve the Good News of Jesus Christ, I think the church needs to be present in places and with people where hope seems to be lost. Where do we find our hope? Hope is like an anchor according to Paul (Hebrews 6 :19) "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure". It is the solid link with the promise of God in Jesus Christ. Hope is given to us, like grace. Hope that we see is not hope. Hope goes beyond us. "But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." (Roman 8:24)

Paul says that three things remain, and hope is one of them with faith and love. (Corinthians 13) We can as a church, help build projects so that hope may blossom.

What are some of the challenges facing the people where you serve or our partner?

For his work with women, victims of rape and excision, Doctor Denis Mukwege was awarded by the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018. In his acceptance speech, Doctor Mukwege described his country, the Democratic Republic of Congo as one of the richest nations on earth with a population that is one the poorest on the planet. The DRC is very rich in diamonds and minerals, but more than 73% of the 80 million habitants live below the level of extreme poverty. In December 2018, a new president was elected for the first time without bloodshed. Even though political observers have criticized the result, Antoine Tshisekedi was declared the winner. The country is still recovering after 25 years of conflicts and some areas are still marked with violence. Since August 2018, the DRC is faced with a new epidemic of Ebola, and additionally in 2020 with the COVID-19 epidemic.