

PASTOR'S REPORT TO OVERSEERS

October 19, 2018—Sarasota Community Church

The Love of Church Business

It's not our job to grow the church. Jesus said that's his job (Matthews 16:18). Our job is to love God with all we are, and our neighbors with the same concern we show ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). That's not to say we don't have practical decisions to make about how best to foster and nurture that love. Whenever our conversations shift to the "business" of church let's make sure that it is always about building up love.

Conference Affiliation

Sarasota Community Church (SCC) belongs to a multi-cultural network of 25 likeminded churches throughout Florida, known as the Southeast Mennonite Conference (SMC). In 1973 the SMC became a regional conference of a denomination known as the Mennonite Church (MC). In 2002 MC merged with the General Conference Mennonite Church (GCMC) to form a new denomination, Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA). And with that, SMC became one of 22 conferences relating together as MCUSA.

Historically, the MC was more conservative and less congregational than the GCMC. Specifically, they differed somewhat in their beliefs about sexual immorality, and moreso about how much authority the denomination should have over congregations and conferences (networks of congregations) with regard to those doctrinal differences. MCUSA has lived with this unresolved tension since its inception.

In 2015, MCUSA delegates were asked to vote on two resolutions. One affirmed the Church's historic belief that sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage between one man and one woman, meaning we believe all other sexual intimacy is immoral. The other recognized a growing interest in LGBTQ inclusion, and called us to forbear with rather than discipline those who believe differently. This became known as the Forbearance Resolution. Both passed.

For most of the SMC churches this created a conflict of conscience. In March of 2017, our SMC delegates voted 17 to 3 that if forbearance became the permanent practice or position, we would leave MCUSA. In the year following, SMC leaders learned that there were no plans to revisit forbearance. So two weeks ago, on October 6, our SMC met for its annual meeting. Twenty-seven delegates were present, representing 16 of the 25 congregations as well as affiliate organizations. The new MCUSA Executive Director, Glen Guyton, spoke and fielded questions. Finally the vote was called for: "Yes, we should leave" or "No, we should stay." Such a decision required a 2/3 majority. Eighteen voted yes, eight voted no, and one abstained. The motion passed, and with that, the SMC became the fourth conference to withdraw from MCUSA.

Our congregation, SCC, has been generally unified in our doctrinal position, but split in our opinion about MCUSA. "How can we stay in a denomination that tolerates sexual immorality?" But "how can we be an influence for godliness if we take ourselves out of the conversation?" The second question has caused us to move with careful patience, even at the risk of being misunderstood. But ultimately the first question caused us to vote in favor of separation, even at the risk of being misunderstood.

Let me be clear: Here at SCC, we passionately and gently and humbly call people to repent of any and all immorality, to be forgiven and made whole again. We accept the Bible's teaching that same-sex intimacy is immoral, so we hold out the same promise of forgiveness and wholeness through repentance. But we also recognize that many have colored our theology as hate speech. We tenderly lament that, and will continue to be thoughtful and gentle and loving in our part of the conversation, helping people understand the hope we have (2 Timothy 2:25, 1 Peter 3:15).

As for leaving the denomination, I lament the pain this causes our members who felt we should remain with MCUSA. I specifically recognize the difficulty it creates for SCC member, Dawn Graber, who sits on the MCUSA Executive Board. Likewise, I acknowledge the relief others experience at no longer being identified by a denomination they feel is in error. It's sad anytime Christians divide. And it's sad anytime Christians embrace sin. This division is no victory for the Body of Christ, even if necessary as a matter of conscience.

The SMC leadership has committed to bringing considerations for future affiliation by March 2019. Our plan is to stay with SMC in this discernment process, helping determine the benefits and costs of various options.

Global Disciples

The "Multiplying Disciples" conference was attended by 25 pastors. The Sarasota cluster of churches will decide how to implement what we learned.

Hurricane Response

Our church has family and friends affected by Hurricane Michael. James is heading up a response and is in contact with churches in the panhandle to determine how best to help. We are currently taking donations, hoping to provide generators and other tangible needs. Dennis Bontrager recently visited the area and is bringing a recommendation. We hope to take a team of volunteers as soon as it is feasible to do so.

Our impulse is to follow the lead of Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) but we they do not seem to be best equipped for immediate response, and instead shine brightest after the news has lost interest. To that point, we affirm our members who are working with the Irma recovery work now underway in Ft. Myers.

Master Plan Implementation

We have slowed down the conversation about facilities so that we can hear a broader representation of the church. We have already had three Sunday evening Church Family Meetings about proposed changes to the facility. Such meetings typically attract 60-80 people, with a disproportionate representation of seniors. We value the input we've received, but we need to know the opinions of the whole church, so we are hosting a lunch meeting this Sunday after church, hoping to attract more to the conversation.

Budget Preparation

James is meeting with staff, and ultimately with the Finance Team, to propose a 2019 budget for the board's approval on November 19, and the congregation's on December 2.

Staff

- **Executive Minister.** Shirley and I met with James for his 90 day review and gladly report mutual enthusiasm for continuing in this role.
- **Worship Minister.** We are in conversation with the worship teams from both services about what to look for in a worship minister. Again, we do not want to force-fit a hire for this key position.
- **Families Minister.** We have begun conversations about filling this position again.

May all Sarasota be filled with love, joy, and peace as many come to faith in Jesus Christ. And may Sarasota Community Church be filled to overflowing with the same. Amen.



Sarasota Community Church
Overseers Minutes
October 22, 2018 5PM
Green Room

“Befriending all with the love of Christ through community, worship and service.”

Members Present: Danny Remchuk (Chair)
Mike Gervasio Miriam Nauman
Nic King Mike Christner
Dave Kniss Karissa Miller

Members Absent: None

Pastoral Team Present: Pastor Roger Shenk James Read
Dennis Bontrager Shirley Good

Pastoral Team Absent: None

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Danny Remchuk declared the meeting open at 5:04 pm.
2. **Devotional:** Danny Remchuk opened with a challenge to the Overseers and opened in prayer.
3. **Minutes:** Danny Remchuk declared September, 2018 minutes approved as distributed.
4. **Open Floor for Members Comments:** None
5. **New/Unfinished Business:** Given the need to fill positions temporarily, the Overseers decided on the following:
 - a. **Appoint Nic King to Treasurer and Miriam Nauman to Secretary (expires 12/31/2018) – M/S/A – Karissa Miller/Mike Gervasio**
 - b. **Appoint Mike Christner as Overseer to replace Dave Polen through December 31, 2018. – M/S/A – Nic King/Dave Kniss**
 - c. **After thorough discussion as to the Chair position, the following was decided: “Danny Remchuk to remain as Chair serving remotely. Karissa Miller, Vice-Chair, will lead meetings as needed. This will last through the expiration of their terms, 12/31/2018” -M/S/A – Miriam Nauman/Dave Kniss (Danny and Karissa abstained)**
6. **Reports:**
 - a) Pastor Roger Shenk reviewed his monthly report. (attached)
 - b) Finance: James Read reported. (attached)

7. Committee Reports

- a) Finance Committee: None
- b) Membership Policy Task Force (verbal)
- c) Pastor Roger Shenk reported on the Conference Affiliation Task Force: (See Pastor's Report)
- d) Building Fund Committee (none)
- e) Safety Task Force (none):

8. Recommendations: None

9. Other Business: (None Scheduled)

10. Executive Session: (None Scheduled)

11. Closing Prayer: Pastor Roger closed in prayer.

12. Adjourn: 6:20 pm

Upcoming Events:

- Overseers, Monday November 19
- Annual Business Meeting, December 2
- Overseers, Monday December 17

Secretary, Nic King

Recording Secretary, Danny Remchuk for Catharine Christner.

If you would like a copy of the attachments listed above, please email Danny Remchuk at dremchuk327@gmail.com