

Pastor's Report

Rev. Colleen Darraugh for the 2026 Spring Congregational Meeting

At this Congregational Forum, we celebrate the one-year anniversary of Rev. Marie Alford-Harkey as our Digital Pastor and Rev. Bodhi Kahlil as our Associate Pastor of Pastoral Care. Their presence and ministry have added much support to me and to the members of our congregation. Thank you to both of you.

It is my honor and privilege to serve as your Lead Pastor. We are blessed with a healthy, functioning Board of Directors, supportive part-time staff, and many dedicated volunteers. You all make my job so much easier. Thank you to all who participate in leadership and service. This congregation is full of vitality! We are also on the verge of changes.

Lois Williams has been the leader of our Worship Arts team. Lois, along with Carrie, Vicki, and others, have made sure our worship space visibly reflects the liturgical season and theme. Thank you to all of you for always making our space look beautiful. This Easter was Lois' last time leading the team. Thank you Lois for sharing your creative gifts with us. You have been a blessing! Dwane Dishner and Gary Williford will now lead the team.

For many years, CB Morrison has been the person responsible for managing the Food Pantry. While Cathy Hunley has prepared baskets and delivered food, CB has maintained the inventory, placed orders with Second Harvest, communicated with CAC (the FEMA food distribution) and managed the Food Pantry Fund. CB is now retiring from this position and it is being taken up by Merci Chick. Cathy Hunley continues with distribution. Thank you CB for your years of service with the Food Pantry! What a blessing!

Opportunities to connect with our congregation socially are an important side-door to the church. These were recently promoted at the Aging With Pride Expo. Lay leaders plan and coordinate our monthly Game Night, Hikers and Walkers, Bowling, and Adult Coloring Group, in addition to the occasional Out and About. Thank you to Carri, Joyce and Linda, Lois and Vicki, Gary and Dwane, and Steve, for your efforts with these social groups. We also had a social/fundraiser "A Jazzy Valentines." Thank you Shelly and friends for sharing your musical talents. The Gay Men's Discussion Group meets at TVUCC although it started from MCC. Rick Sawyer facilitated that group for over 30 years! He has retired from that leadership. Thank you Rick for all your years of service!

Last fall, we began our Children's Ministry with once-a-month Sunday School and childcare. Thank you to Kathy, Lisa, Cindy, Shelly, Tina, Angie, Bodhi, Yvonne, and Anna, who have all assisted with either childcare or the class. We are now renaming this as Youth Ministry. Sadly, the Sheltons (and their three young children) will be moving to Birmingham,

Alabama. We are continuing to explore how best to meet the needs of our young people and to welcome families with children.

With Lent, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of Lunch 'n Learn. While this onsite Wednesday midday group began with Bible Basics, it has continued as a bible study group. We completed a study of the Gospel of John and all the Minor Prophets, plus a few one-shot classes on the Canon, the Liturgical Seasons, and a Lenten study "The Way" with video clips of the Holy Land related to the ministry of Jesus. Now, we are doing a Spiritual Gifts study with Rev. Bodhi leading. This group has an average attendance of 9-12.

Touchstone is the Zoom group that meets on Tuesdays at noon. This group began in 2020! This group switched to a Thursday for part of 2025-26 and has been back on Tuesdays since Lent. This group completed a book study of The False White Gospel and a video series "Entering the Passion of Jesus." Currently this group is following the video series by Amy-Jill Levine, "The Bible With and Without Jesus: How Jews and Christians Read the Same Stories Differently." This group regularly has 8-9 people participating.

Our Benevolence Fund has been able to assist with school registration for a young person in Rwanda; replacing a laptop for a young entrepreneur; and with utility bills for several people. If memory serves, our Medical Expense Support Fund was able to assist one person (although that might have been prior to our last Congregational Meeting).

Since our last Congregational Meeting, we have welcomed 5 new members through membership class and transfer. There are others interested in another Membership Class! We have had our annual Membership Covenant Renewal. Currently, we are following up with 16 people who have not yet signed their Membership Renewal forms. Including these folks, we currently have 62 members.

In this last quarter we have seen a dramatic increase in pastoral care needs. Four people who attend our church are dealing with cancer. Our oldest members are having increased needs as their health challenges expand. We have been able to provide visitation and prayer support for those in crisis as well as some practical support. Rev. Bodhi and I are working to build, equip, and deploy Congregational Care Ministers.

MCK has continued to support our sister church, Hope and Unity MCC, in Johannesburg, South Africa. As Pastor, I meet regularly with Rev. Elder Nokuthula Dhladhla and Rev. Paul Mokgethi-Heath and have sent video or written greetings for the MCC Africa Network and their Easter Retreat Gathering. I was able to assist with resources for the December ordination service of several new MCC Clergy. It is my hope to sometime be able to visit them and participate in the Africa MCC Network.

Worship since our last Congregational Meeting has included Advent (The Peace That Transforms), Epiphany (Following Jesus – Worth the Risk), Lent (The Last Supper: Conversations that Led to the Cross), and now Eastertide (Called to Be Church: Lessons from the Early Church). Original music was created by me with AI tools for Advent, Epiphany, and Lent. Preaching included me, Rev. Bodhi, Rev. Marie, and guest Rev. Dr. Lawrence Richardson. Icy conditions forced us to have worship online only for two weeks in a row. Lindsey and Jenni Cope were to be musical guests one of those weeks, but they graciously provided us with music videos. We hope to have them return in person.

In addition to my regular administrative, communication, and digital ministry duties, plus our Board Meetings, I have served with A Place at the Table Board, Pasta with a Purpose planning team, FACT-EPIC (Faith Communities Today), LinQ (Lavender Interfaith Queers), Queer Christian Leaders Coalition (QCLC), Carpenter Consultation (CC), and Pride Interfaith Knox. After 4 years as one of the co-chairs of Pride Interfaith Knox (PIK), I have stepped down. I'm happy to say that Rev. Bodhi was elected to the newly reorganized Board of PIK! I have also resigned from representing UFMCC to three bodies (LinQ, QCLC, CC). After making recommendations to the MCC Moderator, I met with those who will continue to represent MCC to these bodies. I have continued with Faith Communities Today although I did not go to Orlando for the winter meeting due to our icy conditions. I have completed co-writing a report on Digital Ministry based on the most recent survey of FACT. It should be published shortly. This month will be the Pasta With a Purpose event so those duties will end soon too. I also assisted MCC's Elder Velma Garcia and Rev. Elder Hector Gutierrez with hosting and facilitating three sessions of Define Church discussing the definitions of church, what the future of the church looks like, and what membership means in this era. Recently, I have also attended the new clergy and religious leaders group responding to immigration practices in Knoxville.

I am attempting to lessen my commitments, so I have time to complete my dissertation. I need blocks of time for writing and editing. As a full-time pastor plus the additional community involvements, it has been difficult to block out times for my dissertation. I will be taking more time for both this writing and for vacation.

Coming up, we have our Yard Sale in May. Bring us your good quality stuff to sell! We will be celebrating Pride despite the resolutions and laws of this State. We hope to participate in some of the local Pride events (WeKno – West Knox, SoKo – South Knox, Blount County). We are exploring new MCC T-shirts to wear anytime with pride. We are looking ahead to celebrating our 50th anniversary as a congregation! Individuals have been invited to be part of our Anniversary Committee to plan our celebrations.

Again, I am grateful for the health and vitality of this congregation spiritually, programmatically, and financially. Thank you for your contributions of time, talent, and treasure. Thank you for your support and encouragement of one another. Thank you for your support and prayers for me. Thank you for Being the Church!